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join the fight against violence and abuse.



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Are you guilty of Sexting?

Getting caught sexting can get you kicked off sports teams, expelled from school and jail time... You might even have to register as a sex offender!

- **Have you ever taken nude or semi nude photographs of yourself or someone else under the age of 18 on your cell phone or other media sharing device?** 20% of teenagers have admitted to sending or posting sexually explicit pictures of themselves. This is sexting and it is illegal in Pennsylvania because these pictures are considered child pornography. There are strict laws to protect children from being exploited in this way.
- **Have you ever saved or forwarded (disseminated) sexually explicit photographs of someone under the age of 18 that you received from someone else?** Whether you took these pictures or not, if you sent them on to others or saved them to any media device, you violated Pennsylvania Child Pornography Laws by being in possession of and distributing child porn. For each time a picture is forwarded, you could face one felony count.
- **Have you ever "gifted" a boyfriend or girlfriend a private image through internet or phone?** Maybe you did it because you wanted to "be fun and flirty" or maybe you felt pressured by a boyfriend or girlfriend to "be sexy." If you are under 18, you are guilty of sexting. You could not only face legal consequences, the repercussions of this act could be socially and emotionally devastating if that picture were to fall into the wrong hands. 44% of teens say it is common for sexually suggestive text messages to be shared with people other than the intended recipient.

Before you sext, think about what could happen next.....

What's the big deal?

Anything you send via text or picture message can be shared with others around the world. Nothing is temporary on your computer or on your cell phone. There is no "taking it back" once you push send. Consider the consequences...



Social and Emotional Effects

Think about what could happen if that picture you meant for someone special got into the wrong hands. A friend can become an ex-friend and send your sexually explicit pictures to everyone you know. They can be distributed and archived online forever. This can lead to humiliation and embarrassment to you and family, isolation from others, loss of friends, ridicule and exploitation or blackmail. The effects of something meant to be so innocent may even lead to depression or suicide.



Sexting in School

Sneaking into the bathroom at school to snap a nude photo of yourself to send to your crush? You are putting yourself in a very dangerous situation! There is potential for the picture to be seen by someone you didn't intend, and school administrators are expelling and prosecuting students who create and share sex text messages.

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Employment / Higher Education Opportunities

Do you plan on furthering your education after high school? Are you looking to gain employment after graduation? Most college and job applications require that you answer questions about criminal history and conduct background checks. Having a criminal history as a result of sexting could ruin your chances of securing a job or getting into the school of your choice. What will someone find if they Google you?

Legal Consequences

Very simply, it's against the law! If you are under 18, it is a felony offense under PA Child Pornography Law to take nude or semi-nude pictures of yourself or other minors. It is also against the law to disseminate or share these pictures with others. You and/or your parents could be charged criminally, fined thousands of dollars, be sued or even required to register as a Megan's Law Sex Offender.

Think about this!

One felony count is added for each picture and for each time it was forwarded to someone else. Each charge could bring up to 7 years in prison and hefty fines. So if you received a nude picture of your girlfriend then forwarded it to 5 of your friends, you could face up to 6 felony charges. That would mean you might face 42 years in prison and thousands of dollars in fines and court fees!

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Safety Tips

If you receive a sexually explicit or nude photo:

- The best thing to do is delete it. Do not save or forward it!
- Talk to your parents or an adult that you trust. Tell them the full story so they know how to support you. Don't freak if they decide to talk to the parents of those involved. It could be the best way to keep you all out of serious trouble.
- If you continue to receive these photos, continue to delete them. You and a parent might have to speak with school authorities or the police to get them to stop. The deleted data can be traced and obtained from the server that the picture was sent through to prosecute those responsible for the illegal photos.

If you have sent or are thinking about sending a sext message:

- Don't let friends influence your better judgment when you are texting or online together. Research suggests that youth take more risks when they are online together. If you find yourself in a risky situation where you are being pressured to take and/or send a sex text, end the conversation or log off.
- Talk with a trusted adult such as a parent or school staff member. Believe it or not, they were once curious teenagers too. Give them a chance.
- Stop to think twice before pressing send. Is it really worth it considering all of the consequences?

Sexting And The Law:

Sexting falls under the Pennsylvania Crimes Code Statute 18 Pa. C.S. 6312.b,c,d. Sexual abuse of children:

- **Photographing, videotaping, depicting on computer or filming sexual acts -** Any person who causes or knowingly permits a child under the age of 18 years to engage in a prohibited sexual act or in the simulation of such an act or knowingly photographs, videotapes depicts on computer or films a child under the age of 18 years engaging in a sexual act or in the simulation of such an act is guilty of a felony of the second degree.
- **Dissemination of photographs, videotapes, computer depictions and films -** Any person who knowingly sells, distributes, delivers, disseminates, transfers, displays or exhibits to others material depicting a child under the age of 18 years engaging in a prohibited sexual act or in the simulation of such act commits a felony of the third degree. Second or subsequent offenses become a felony of the second degree.
- **Possession of child pornography -** Any person who knowingly possesses or controls any book, magazine, pamphlet, slide, photograph, film, videotape, computer depiction or other material depicting a child under the age of 18 years engaging in a prohibited sexual act or in the simulation of such an act commits a felony offense.

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