

## How is the District Attorney's Office addressing teen **SEXTING**?

Sexting is the act of sending sexually explicit images electronically, primarily through cell phones. This has become a very common behavior for teens in middle school and high school. It is a serious problem when kids between the ages of 10 and 17 send or exchange these sexually explicit images of themselves with their friends, classmates, or even strangers. Sexting can have devastating social and personal consequences for kids, and it is illegal.

Youth involved in sexting behavior may be eligible for the District Attorney's Sexting Solutions program. This is a diversion program which addresses the specific issues underlying juvenile sexting behavior and can result in there being no adjudication. This program also includes a session for parents.

The DA's Child Sex Offender Internet Investigations (CHEEZO) Unit provides free educational programs for school and parent groups, focusing on preventing kids from engaging in sexting behavior and teaching them how to stay safe online.



### TIPS for parents:

- Teach your child to talk only to people they know face-2-face.
- Talk to your kids about their online activities.
- Know who your kids communicate with online.
- Be aware of what your teens are posting on social networking sites.
- Know what apps your child has on his or her electronics.
- Enable parental controls on your child's devices.



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# SEXTING

**Balancing the Law,  
Teens, Technology,  
and Choices**



*Photos sent are easily shared but impossible to retract. In addition to having potentially destructive personal and social consequences, **sexting is a crime.***

## Why is **SEXTING** an issue for teens?

Young people fail to recognize the danger of sending intimate photos electronically. They may think that the photo they send will go no further than intended. But once an image is sent, it is beyond the control of the sender. It cannot be “unsent.” These sent photos may be shared with others or be posted on social media.



Taking a sexually intimate selfie and sending it to one friend may seem like harmless behavior to a child. They never imagine this selfie making its way around their school and beyond. It could appear years later in a college or employment application process, or, it may end up in the possession of a stranger.



Nationally, there have been instances where images have been shared and resulted in harassment, bullying, and even suicide. These

are serious potential consequences.

Kids may think sexting is okay because everyone is doing it, but they may not consider the possible risk to the themselves or others.



### The law

Under the current law, two teens exchanging sexually explicit images of each other (no matter how voluntary) **may** be prosecuted under the child pornography statutes. See Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) 18-6-403. If a teen enters a guilty plea to any of these offenses they will have to register as a sex offender. This law was not designed to address youth involved in sexting behavior. The District Attorney’s Sexting Solutions program addresses the specific issues face by parents and teens involved in sexting.



### Ideas for your home

Talk to your child about what **they** think are the dangers of internet use and particularly sexting. Does your child understand and can they tell you how they think sexting may negatively impact themselves or someone else?

Get to know the electronics in your home and whether they can connect to the internet. Did

you know that you can text using an iPod?

Set rules and expectations for the use of technology and internet access. The District Attorney’s Office recommends a “curfew” for electronics. At a set time, all electronics are turned in to parents, where they can be charged overnight in the parents’ bedroom. Not only does your child need their sleep, the risk of your child encountering an online predator is greater late at night.

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For more information on **SEXTING** contact the **CHEEZO** unit

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### Other Resources

