

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 designed as an intervention to divert low-risk juveniles. The gender-specific curriculum is preventative and is designed to provide guidance, insight, and intervention to adolescents who have engaged in sexting behaviors. The class address concepts such as: boundaries, body image, self-respect, healthy relationships, self-esteem, risky behaviors, and peer pressure as well as specific issues underlying juvenile sexting behavior. This program also includes a session for parents.



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?

Sexting continues to be a serious issue for youth and their families. Young people fail to recognize the danger of sending intimate photos electronically. It often does not occur to them that the photo they send can go 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 without the knowledge of the sender.



Taking a sexually intimate selfie and sending it to one friend may seem like harmless behavior to your child. They never imagine this selfie making its way around their school or beyond. It could re-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 themselves or others.



The law

Prior to 2017, Colorado laws regarding teen Sexting were severe and often inappropriate disproportionate. Prosecutors and others in the juvenile justice system worked with the legislature to develop more appropriate consequences for these offenses. Under a new law passed in 2017, most sexting activity between youth are misdemeanors or petty offenses. The classification of the offense depends upon factors such as: whether the images were posted online or distributed to others; how many images are found in a youth’s possession; whether there was coercion involved in obtaining the images; whether this is a first contact for the behavior; ages of youth involved, etc. In each of these cases, youth involved in the behavior may be required to complete the Sexting Solutions Program.



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.

RESOURCES

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1-877-542-SAFE

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FOUNDATION

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