

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Talk to your kids about what they're doing in cyberspace. Make sure they fully understand that messages or pictures they send over the internet or their cell phones are not truly private and that those pictures may be forwarded to people they don't know. It's important that you help your kids understand the potential short-term and long-term consequences of their actions.

Know who your kids communicate with online, both on the computer and on their cell phone. Supervising and monitoring your kids in real life and in cyberspace doesn't make you a nag; it is part of your job as a parent.

Beware of what your teens are posting on social networking sites. This isn't snooping; this is information your kids are making public. If everyone else can view it, why shouldn't you?

Set expectations; make sure you are clear with your teen about what you consider appropriate behavior. Just as certain clothing is off-limits for your child, or certain language is deemed unacceptable for your child to use, make sure your child knows what is not acceptable on-line behavior.



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THE LAW:

In Michigan, the act of creating, soliciting, possessing, or distributing sexually explicit photos of a minor under 18 is a felony (MCL 750.145c).

These photos can be sent between computers or cell phones – it makes no difference. The inquiry is whether the photo depicts someone under 18; the medium and the age of the creator, requestor, sender, recipient, or possessor are irrelevant. The potential criminal penalty is significant incarceration and registration on the Sex Offender Registry.

There are other crimes that can be committed with computers and cell phones. They include, but are not limited to:

- Accosting, enticing, or soliciting child under 16 for an immoral purpose (sexual intercourse, act of gross indecency, or delinquency) MCL 750.145a
- Installing a device to observe, photograph, or eavesdrop on a person where the person has an expectation of privacy (exception for home security systems). MCL 750.539d
- Using a phone to threaten physical harm or damage to a person or property in the course of a conversation or message. MCL 750.540e

CONTACT INFORMATION

For presentations on sexting and laws in Michigan:

Oakland County Prosecutor's Office
1200 North Telegraph
Pontiac, MI 48341
Ph: 248.858.0656 Email: info@oaklandprosecutor.org

For additional resources:

Lynn Lieberman
Oakland Schools
2111 Pontiac Lake Road
Waterford, MI 48328
Ph: 248.209.2027 Email: lynn.lieberman@oakland.k12.mi.us
Website: www.oakland.k12.mi.us
Once link below is accessed, click "login as guest"
<http://moodle.oakland.k12.mi.us/os/course/view.php?id=797>



OaklandSchools

SEXTING

BALANCING THE LAW, TEENS AND TECHNOLOGY



**THERE IS NO CHANGING YOUR MIND
IN CYBERSPACE. NOTHING YOU SEND
OR POST CAN EVER BE COMPLETELY
DELETED OR REMOVED. THINK BEFORE
YOU HIT "SEND".**

"Sexting" is a cross between sex and texting. It is the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photos electronically, primarily between cell phones. "Sexting" is a relatively new practice among teenagers and with increasing frequency is bringing teens into the juvenile justice system.

A juvenile conviction for a sexual offense has serious consequences which include registering as a sex offender. Even if "Sexting" does not result in judicial system intervention, the impact can last a lifetime.



BEFORE YOU HIT "SEND"

Don't assume that anything you send or post is going to remain private — it won't.

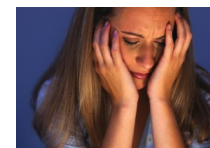
Your messages and images will get passed around, even if you think they won't. Forty percent of teens and young adults say they have had a sexually suggestive message (originally meant to be private) shown to them and 20% say they have shared such a message with someone other than the person for whom it was originally meant.

You can't change your mind once you send or post a photo in cyberspace.

Something that seems fun and flirty and is done on a whim can never really be retracted. Potential employers, college recruiters, teachers, parents, families, enemies, strangers, and others may all be able to find your past posts, even after you delete them. It is nearly impossible to control what other people are posting about you. Think about it: even if you have second thoughts and delete a racy photo, there is no telling who has already copied the photo and posted it, or forwarded it, somewhere else.

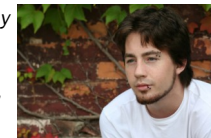
Don't give into the pressure to do something that makes you uncomfortable, even in cyberspace.

More than 40% of all teens and young adults say that pressure from guys is a reason that girls and young women send and post



1 in 5 teenage girls say they have electronically sent or posted online, nude or semi-nude images of themselves.

1 in 3 of teenage boys say they have had nude or semi-nude images, originally meant to be private, shared with them.



sexually suggestive messages and images. More than 20% of all teens and young adults say "pressure from friends" is a reason that guys send and post sexually suggestive message and images.

Consider the recipient's reaction.

Just because a message is meant to be fun doesn't mean the person who gets it will see it that way. Four in ten teen girls who have sent sexually suggestive content say they did so as a joke, but many teen boys (29%) agree that girls who send such content are "expected to date or hook up in real life." It's easier to be more provocative or outgoing online, but whatever you write, post or send does contribute to the real life impression you're making.

Nothing is truly anonymous.

Nearly one in five young people who send sexually suggestive messages and images send them to people that they only know online (18% total). It is important to remember that even if someone only knows you by screen name, online profile, phone number, or email address, they can probably find you if they try hard enough.

Used with permission of the Weld County District Attorney's Office, 915 Tenth St., Greeley, CO. Information in this brochure was taken from a national survey entitled "Sex and Tech," a combined endeavor between The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and CosmoGirl.com