

Domestic Violence Coordinating Council of Delaware TEEN SEXTING FACT SHEET

This fact sheet is based on two studies; the 2009 research finding from Cox Communications Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey, in Partnership with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) and John Walsh, and also, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and CosmoGirl.com, 2008 Sex and Tech results from a survey of Teens and Young Adults.

➤ **What Teens, Parents, and Educators Need to Know...**

About 1 in 5 teens have engaged in sexting – sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photos through text message or email – and over a third know of a friend who has sent or received these kinds of messages.

Given their activity level online, it comes as no surprise that many teens have posted personal information on a public blog or social networking site, most commonly photos of themselves.

1 in 4 teens surveyed know someone who has had something bad happen to them because of information or photos posted electronically on a publicly accessible site.

While about 3/4 of teens surveyed say their parents have talked to them about online safety, only half say they are given some kind of limits or controls when they use the Internet. Among those who have controls, about one in four has figured out some way of getting around them.

Although most teens and young adults who send sexually suggestive content are sending it to boyfriends/girlfriends, others say they are sending such material to those they want to hook up with or to someone they know only online.

Sexting can be used as a tool to control when one partner threatens to e-mail private pictures if the other does not adhere to demands, or tries to leave the relationship.

Getting caught has a wide range of consequences. Teens could be being kicked off extra-curricular activities and expelled from school. They face being denied admission to college and losing federal financial aid. Getting caught sexting could lead to child pornography charges and having to register as a sexual offender. Money damages could be assessed against teens or parents.

Sexting can do terrible emotional damage to its victims and can lead to suicidal tendencies.

Receiving such pictures can be upsetting, teen should block the person who sent the text and tell a trusted adult.

Just because a message is meant to be fun doesn't mean the person who gets it will see it that way.

More than 40% of teens and young adults say "pressure from guys" is the reason girls and young adults send and post sexually suggestive messages and images. "Pressure from friends" is a reason guys send and post sexually suggestive messages and images.

➤ What Parents and Educators Should Stress to Teens...

Parents and educators must be clear with teens about what is appropriate “electronic” behavior. Just as certain clothing is probably off-limits or certain language unacceptable in your house, make sure you let your kids know what is and is not allowed online. **Be true to your word.** If you have told them there will be consequences for violating your rules, you must impose consequences when the rules are violated. Remind your children of your expectations from time to time. It doesn’t mean that you don’t trust your kids, it reinforces that you care about them enough to be paying attention.

Be clear -**Nothing is truly anonymous.** 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.

Do not give into pressure when you are told you need to do something to “earn” love. Think twice, ask for advice, and when in doubt, realize it isn’t worth it.

There is no changing your mind in cyberspace—anything you send or post will never truly go away. **A moment of bad judgment may last a lifetime.**

➤ Parents and Educators should talk to teens about what they are doing...

Just as you need to talk openly and honestly with teens about healthy and unhealthy relationships, you should discuss online and cell phone activity. Make sure your children fully understand that messages or pictures they send over the internet or their cell phones are not truly private or anonymous. Also pictures sent as a joke may not be received in the same manner, and may cause serious emotional harm to another. There may be legal consequences to their behavior that will last a very long time. Make sure they know that others might forward their pictures or messages to people they do not know or want to see them, and that school administrators and employers often look at online profiles to make judgments about potential students/employees. Parents and educators should be aware that some girls and young women may truly feel pressured to participate in sexting and in some cases a teen’s desire to send inappropriate pictures could be an indicator of bigger problems, like abuse. Do not hesitate to seek help such as calling the professionals at the School Wellness Center or Guidance Office, or the Delaware Department of Justice School Ombudsman.

It’s essential that teens grasp the potential short-term and long-term consequences of their actions; legal, social and educational. Stand ready to turn off the picture and or text messaging function on the cell phone.

TEACH THEM TO THINK BEFORE THEY SEND - SEND IS 4EVER!

RESOURCES:

Rape Crisis Hotline:

New Castle (800) 773-8570; Kent & Sussex 1-800-262-9800

Domestic Violence Hotline:

New Castle (302) 762-6110; Northern Kent (302) 678-3886; Kent & Sussex (302) 422-8058; Latino Population (302) 745-9874

Suicide Prevention 1-800-652-2929

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy: <http://thenationalcampaign.org>

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline 1-866-331-9474 or text “loveis” to 22522

Love is Respect: www.loveisrespect.org

That’s Not Cool: www.thatsnotcool.com

Additional Resources for Delaware Teens:

New Castle *safe + respectful*: www.safeandrespectful.org; Kent & Sussex *REAL Relationships*: www.realrelationshipsde.org

Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence: www.dcadv.org

Domestic Violence Coordinating Council: www.dvcc.delaware.gov

Delaware Department of Justice School Crimes hotline: 1-800-220-5414