



Internet Safety and Sexting – A Legal Perspective

Middlesex District Attorney's Office

Sharing Personal Information

- ▶ Real name
 - ▶ Photos / videos
 - ▶ Interests (movies, music, books, sports)
 - ▶ Birthday
 - ▶ School name
 - ▶ Where they live
 - ▶ Relationship status
 - ▶ Email address
 - ▶ Cell phone number
 - ▶ Current location
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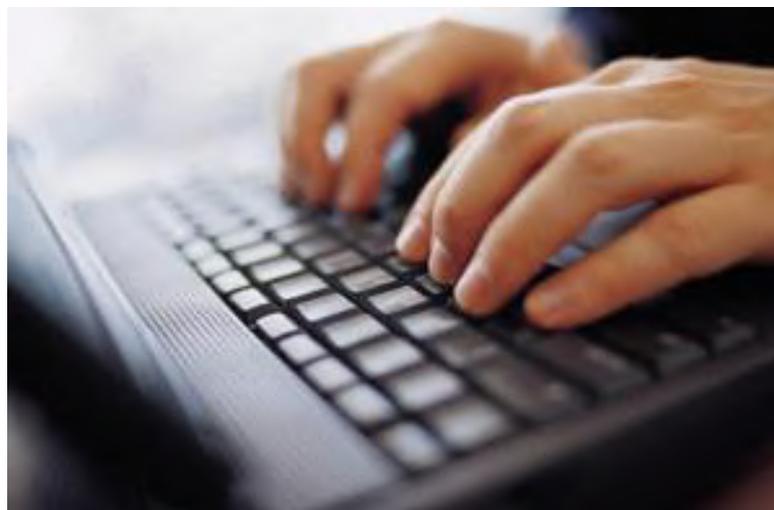
Online Predators

In **82%** of online sex crimes against minors, the offender used the victim's **social networking** site to gain information about the victim's **likes and dislikes**

65% of online sex offenders used the victim's **social networking** site to gain **home and school** information about the **victim**

Online Enticement Tactics

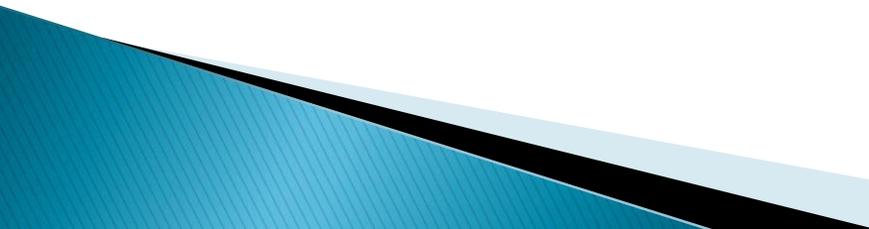
- ▶ Grooming through compliments and shared interests
- ▶ Asking for sexually explicit images or sharing these images
- ▶ Offering an incentive (gift card, alcohol, drugs, housing, transportation, food)
- ▶ Pretending to be younger



(National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, *Executive Summary: The Online Enticement of Children*. 2017.)

Sexting

“Sexting” is the act of sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photos, or images via cell phone, computer, or other digital device



Example

An 18 year old high school senior, Jack, asks his 16 year old girlfriend, Diane, to prove that she is interested in a serious relationship by sending him a cell phone photo of her in the nude. Jack asks her repeatedly and ultimately she agrees. Diane wasn't forced to send the photo, she was only asked. By just asking, Jack violated this law and could be charged.

Example

If Jack forwarded that nude picture of 16 year old Diane from his cell phone to his friends, he'd be disseminating child pornography

Diane could also be charged for sending the nude photo to Jack

Example

By just having that nude photo of 16 year old Diane on his computer or cell phone means Jack is in violation of this statute

All of the friends that he sent the photo to can also be charged with possession of child pornography if they kept the photo

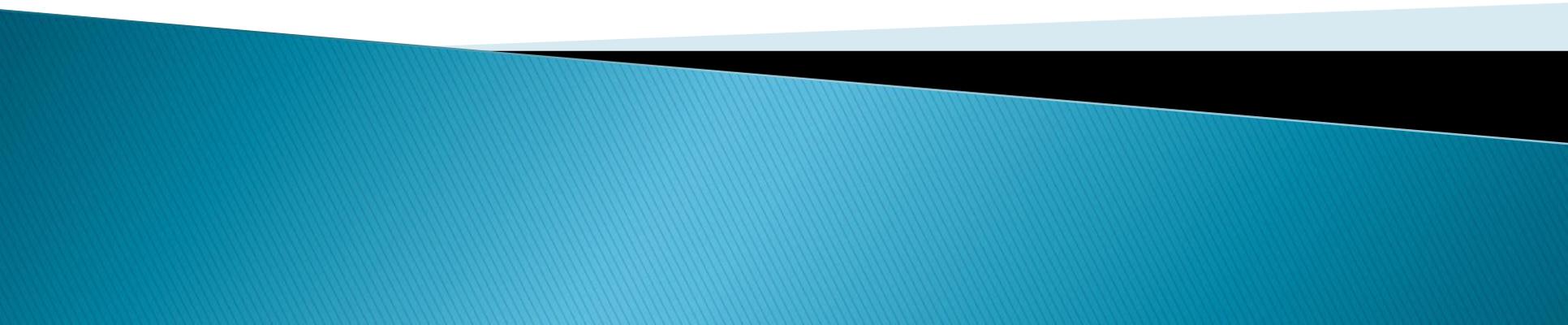
Example

18 year old Jack now decides to send a nude photo of himself to 16 year old Diane to thank her for the photo she sent him. By doing that he has violated this law

Serious Criminal Consequences

- ▶ Felony conviction
 - ▶ Up to 20 years in state prison
 - ▶ Fines of up to \$50,000
 - ▶ Registration with the Sex Offender Registry Board
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Keeping Safe in A Dangerous World



Before You Hit Send

- ▶ Once Someone hits 'Send', They Lose Control!
 - ▶ Do you know the person they're sending it to?
 - ▶ Do you trust that person?
 - ▶ Do you trust their friends? Their friend's friends?
 - ▶ You don't know whose hands your photo might fall into
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Actions Have Consequences

- ▶ The Internet is Forever!
 - ▶ Your Relationship Might Not Be!
 - ▶ Future employers, colleges – everybody Googles
 - ▶ Choices you make now could be held against you later
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Cyberbullying

- ▶ Cyberbullying is the use of internet, cell phones, social media, and other technologies to spread hurtful or embarrassing pictures or messages about another person
 - ▶ A key distinction between traditional bullying and cyberbullying is that before, the victim was only in a position to be bullied during the school day.
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Responsive Action

- ▶ Determine the scope of the problem.
 - ▶ Are you/someone else at immediate risk?
 - ▶ If there is a crime, call the police
 - ▶ Save all printouts. They're admissible in court and corroborate the victim. They also lend some helpful clues to identifying the perpetrator.
 - ▶ Time is of the essence.
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Short Term Solutions

- ▶ Change your password(s)
 - ▶ Change screen name and e-mail address
 - ▶ Try not to respond to inappropriate messages
 - ▶ Closely monitor your child's Internet activities
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**Some
strategies
to keep
kids safe**



Establish Guidelines for Using Devices

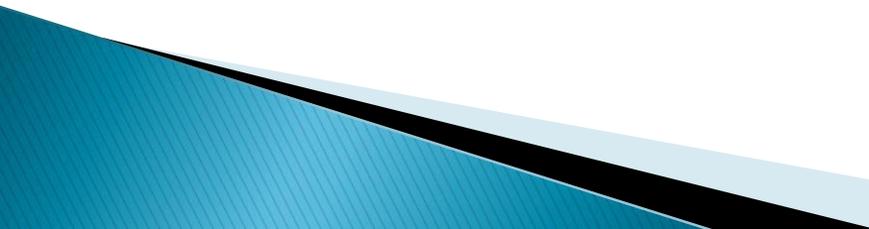
- ▶ Keep the computer/have them use device(s) in a central place
- ▶ Turn devices in at bedtime
- ▶ Parental controls– use them, but don't depend on them
- ▶ Know their passwords
- ▶ Set time limits if needed
- ▶ Discuss the information that should not be shared online
- ▶ Change profile settings to private

Monitor Sites and Apps

- ▶ Discuss what apps and sites they are using and **ask them to show you how they work**
- ▶ Check browser history
 - Remember that this can be cleared or private browsers can be used



Discuss Online Behavior

- ▶ Think before you post
 - ▶ You are responsible for the choices that you make and the damage that you cause
 - ▶ Privacy is a myth
 - ▶ Tell your friends!!
 - ▶ Don't try to resolve situation alone. If you're in over your head ask a trusted adult for help
 - ▶ We're here to help you too
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Additional Resources

- ▶ Take our online cyber education course at (cyber-ed.middlesexcac.org)
- ▶ Common Sense Media (commonsensemedia.org)
- ▶ Connect Safely (connectsafely.org)
- ▶ Family Online Safety Institute (fosi.org)
- ▶ National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (netismartz.org/parents)
- ▶ [Stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov)

If you believe your child is in danger, contact your local police.