

Protecting Children in a Digital World: Online Safety and Human Trafficking Prevention

Protecting our youth starts with education. Together, we can safeguard children ages 11-14 from online exploitation through awareness, vigilance, and open communication.



What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is the exploitation of individuals through force, fraud, or coercion for labor or commercial sex acts. For minors under 18 involved in commercial sex, coercion need not be proven—they are automatically considered victims.

Contrary to common misconceptions, trafficking doesn't require movement across borders or even physical transportation. It can happen in victims' own communities, neighborhoods, and even homes while connected to the internet.

Victims can be any age, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background. Anyone can be targeted, making education and awareness crucial for all middle school students.



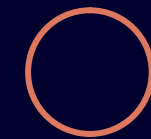
Force

Physical restraint, violence, or physical confinement



Fraud

False promises about jobs, wages, working conditions, or relationships



Coercion

Threats, psychological manipulation, debt bondage, or blackmail

What is an Online Predator?

Online predators use social media and online gaming apps to target children between 10-14 years old by using fake profiles to connect with them.

Predators often stalk online meeting places, such as chat rooms and social media sites, to identify and lure their victims.

How Traffickers Target Youth Online



Online predators strategically hunt for potential victims across platforms where young people gather. They meticulously scan social media profiles, gaming platforms, and chat rooms looking for vulnerabilities they can exploit.

These traffickers specifically target youth who display signs of emotional vulnerability, including:

- Expressions of loneliness or isolation
- Family problems or conflict at home
- Low self-esteem or need for validation
- Desire for affection or attention

Online recruitment has surged by 22% since the COVID-19 pandemic began, as youth spend more time online and predators have adapted their tactics accordingly.

Common Tactics Used by Traffickers Online



False Identity Creation

Traffickers create elaborate fake profiles portraying themselves as peers, mentors, or romantic interests. They study their targets' interests to craft the perfect persona that will appeal specifically to them.



"Romeo" Manipulation

The predator poses as a romantic interest, showering the victim with excessive compliments, understanding, and gifts. They create a false sense of deep connection and dependency.



Sextortion

After building trust, traffickers coerce victims into sharing explicit photos, then blackmail them with threats to share these images with friends and family unless demands are met.



Control Tactics

Using threats, intimidation, and psychological manipulation, traffickers isolate victims from support networks and establish control through fear and shame.

Recognizing Signs of Online Grooming and Trafficking

Early intervention is critical to preventing trafficking. Parents, teachers, and peers should watch for these warning signs that a middle schooler might be targeted for trafficking:

Secretive Behavior

Sudden secrecy about online activities, quickly changing screens when adults approach, or password-protecting everything

New Possessions

Unexplained gifts, money, clothing, or electronic devices appearing without clear source

Behavioral Changes

Withdrawal from family and friends, mood swings, declining grades, or changes in sleep patterns

When you notice these warning signs, approach the situation with care and compassion rather than accusation. Open communication provides the best chance of intervention before exploitation occurs.

From this.....



To this....

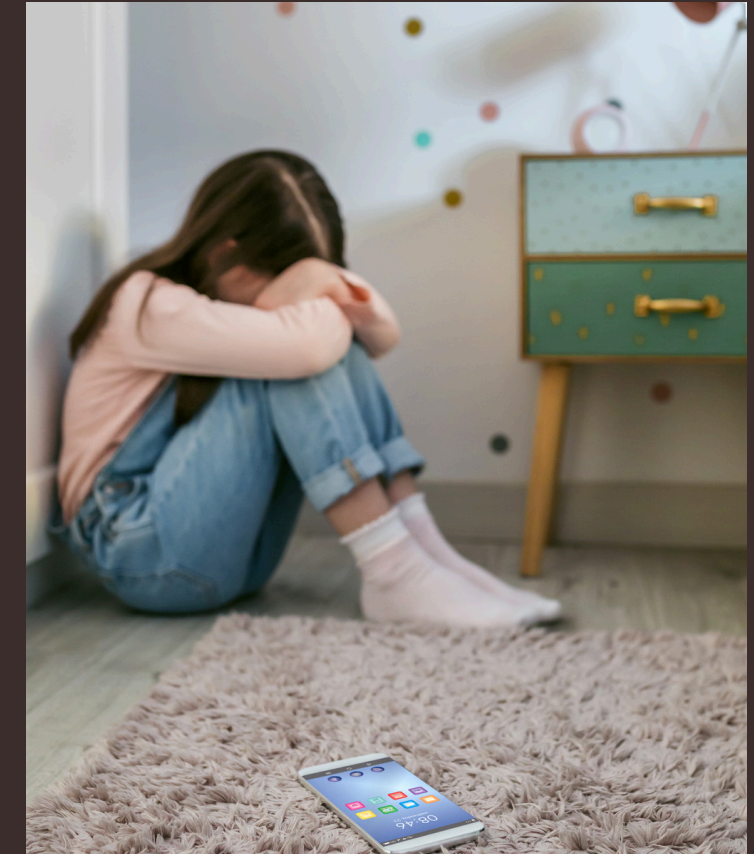


Language Used By Online Predators

"You're so mature for your age."

"I understand you better than your parents ever could."

"This can be our secret."



Traffickers and online predators use specific language patterns designed to manipulate and isolate potential victims. By recognizing these patterns, students can better protect themselves and their peers.

Isolation Phrases

"No one understands you like I do"

"Your friends are just jealous of what we have"

"Your parents are trying to control you"

Testing Boundaries

"Would you keep a secret for someone you care about?"

"Have you ever tried [drugs/alcohol]?"

"Send me a pic so I know you're real"

Accelerated Relationship

"I've never felt this way about anyone so quickly"

"We have such a special connection"

"I want to meet you in person as soon as possible"

Top 10 Apps that Lure Children 10-14

While no app is inherently dangerous, predators gravitate toward platforms with features that facilitate anonymous contact, location sharing, and private messaging with minors. Parents and educators should be aware of these high-risk applications.



Anonymous Chat Apps

Apps that allow users to chat with strangers without identity verification pose significant risks. These include Omegle, Whisper, and Monkey, which randomly pair users for conversations.



Disappearing Content Apps

Platforms like Snapchat where content automatically deletes can encourage sharing of inappropriate images with a false sense of security, as screenshots can still be taken.



Location-Sharing Apps

Apps that broadcast a user's location can give predators critical information. Even mainstream apps like Snapchat (Snap Map) and Instagram can reveal locations through features or metadata.



Online Gaming - Dangers of Discord Dating Servers

Discord has become one of the most popular communication platforms for gamers, but it hosts numerous "dating servers" that pose serious risks to middle schoolers. These servers often claim to help users find romantic connections but can facilitate inappropriate minor-to-minor interactions or adult predatory behavior.

Many gaming platforms contain chat features where predators can initiate private conversations after building rapport through shared gaming experiences. The casual, friendly nature of gaming creates an atmosphere where guard is naturally lowered.

Protecting Young Gamers:

- Set strict privacy settings on all gaming platforms
- Disable direct messaging from strangers
- Use age-appropriate games with moderated content
- Game in common household areas rather than behind closed doors
- Establish clear rules about not sharing personal information



Keep gaming fun and safe by maintaining open communication about online interactions and encouraging children to report uncomfortable conversations.

Child Sex Trafficking

In 2024, NCMEC received more than **27,800** reports of possible child sex trafficking.

1 in 7 of the more than **29,000** cases of children reported missing to NCMEC in 2024 were likely victims of child sex trafficking.

15 is the average age of child sex trafficking victims reported missing to NCMEC.

Of the children reported missing to NCMEC in 2024, who had run from the care of child welfare, **18%** were likely victims of child sex trafficking.

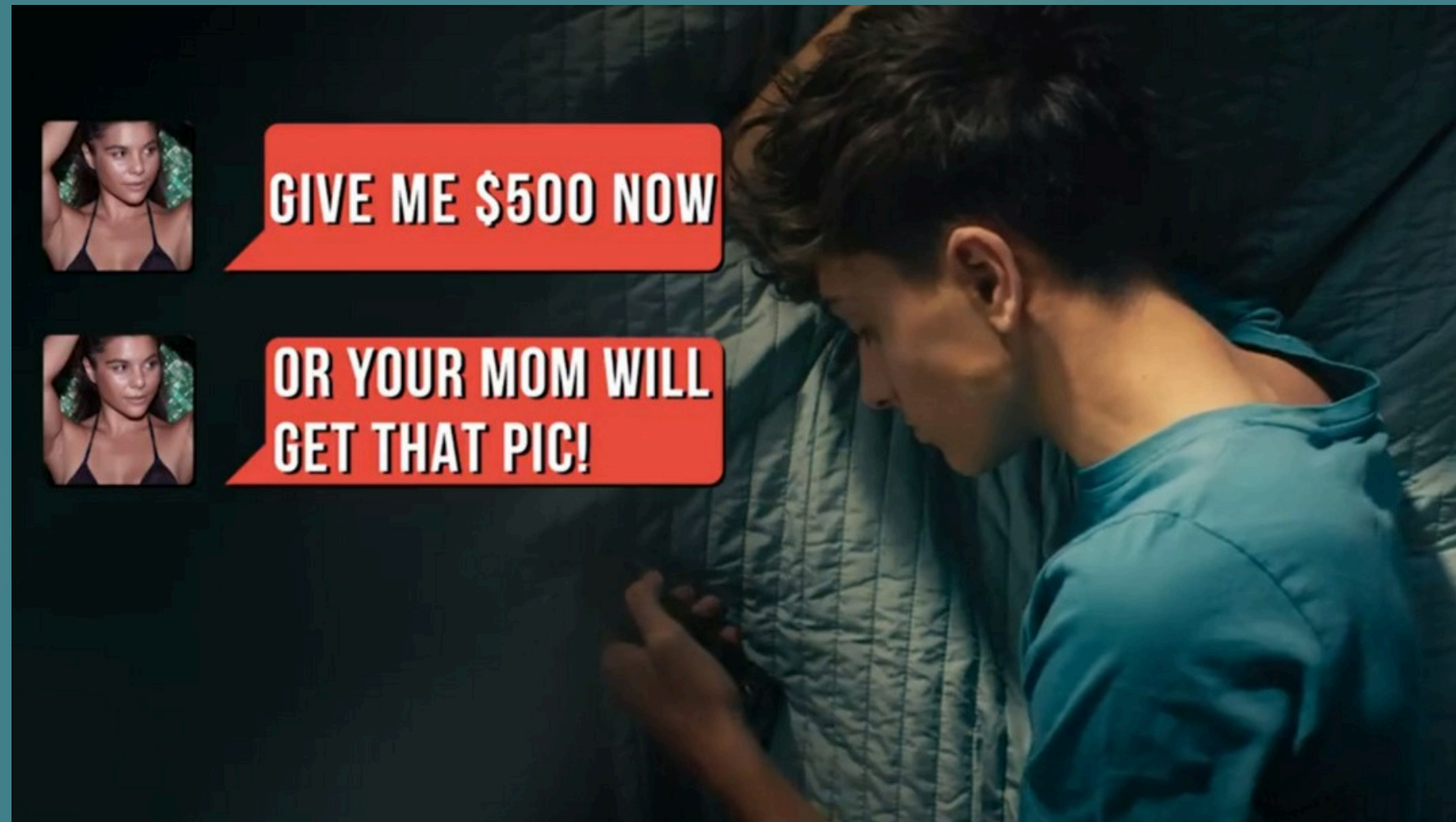
What is Sextortion?

Sextortion occurs when an adult, through threat or manipulation, coerces a minor into producing a sexually explicit image and sending it over the internet.

Most Sextortionists lure victims through social media apps by creating multiple FAKE profiles that the potential victims would find interesting or appealing.



Gavin's Law - H3583



Gavin's Law (H. 3583) is South Carolina legislation that makes sexual extortion, the act of blackmailing someone using sexually explicit images or videos, a felony offense and an aggravated felony if the victim is a minor, vulnerable adult, or if the victim suffers bodily injury or death directly related to the crime.

" In 2022, 17-year-old Gavin Guffey was a victim of sexual extortion, resulting in him taking his own life. "

Did You Know?

Did you know that sharing nudes of yourself and sexual videos among your peers is against the law?



A single wrong decision can destroy your future. Not only can you be arrested for distributing "Child Porn," but you could also be registered as a sex offender, and it can prevent you from the college your dreams and career.

Pornography Statute-State and Federal



Sexual exploitation of a minor generally refers to the creation, distribution, or possession of child pornography.

South Carolina State Statute

According to South Carolina Code Section 16-15-405, anyone who in any way distributes sexually explicit images of a minor could face up to between 2 and 10 years in prison.



U.S. Federal Government

A first-time offender convicted of producing child pornography under 18 U.S.C. § 2251 faces fines and a statutory minimum of 15 years to 30 years maximum in prison.

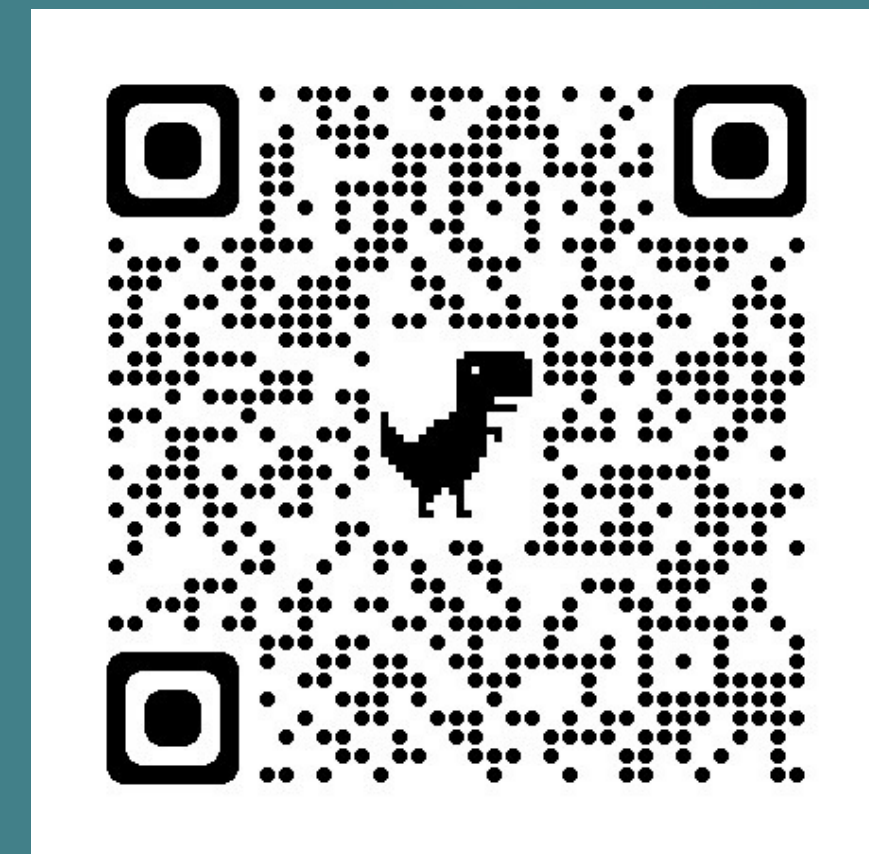
If YOU have posted or shared inappropriate pics or video there is HELP!

Thanks to the efforts of The Centers for Missing & Exploited Children Cyber Tipline, you can now request your inappropriate picture to be taken down. Take out your phone and take a pic of this QR Code TODAY!

This service is one step you can take to help remove online nude, partially nude, or sexually explicit photos and videos taken before you were 18.

www.missingkids.org

Take It Down



How to protect yourself from being Sextorted

Open lines of communication with a parent, teacher, or trusted friend are the best line of defense. People pretend to be anything or anyone online NOTHING “DISAPPEARS” online. Pictures have power. Set certain limits on internet use, spot check, and consider shutting off WIFI at night. Review settings on all your social media accounts Keep accounts private so predators cannot gather information about you.

How To Help A Victim

Let the person know that your first move will be to help, **ALWAYS**.

The predators are powerful because of fear, and the victims suffer ever more negative consequences as the crime carries on over days, weeks, and even months. If you're the adult that the child comes to, **COMFORT THEM**.

Help them understand that they are a victim of a crime and **HELP** them report to local law enforcement.

PREVENTION THROUGH EDUCATION IS KEY!



<https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/trafficking#overview>

Help Us Educate And Save..... One Child At A Time.



www.onechildrescue.com

