



# PROJECT SAFE CHILDHOOD: Keeping Kids Safe and Secure Online

## Sextortion

“Sextortion” (sex + extortion) is a crime that occurs when an adult threatens to distribute a child’s compromising pictures, videos, or other sensitive material in order to obtain something in return – more or more serious sexually explicit material, money, an in-person meeting, or access to the child’s social media accounts. Real-life experience shows us that sextortion is an equal opportunity crime; that is, both boys and girls can become victims by sharing just one compromising photo.

How it happens: <https://www.justice.gov/psc/video/sextortion-public-service-announcement-90-seconds>

How you can help your child avoid becoming a victim:

- Sit down with your child and review their friends and followers’ lists
- Cover the basics: no sharing inappropriate pictures or personal information
- Have them tell you about the people they are following or gaming with – do they know these people in real life? Do other players say or do things that make your kids uncomfortable?
- Remind them about the dangers of communicating with “strangers” – should they believe everything they read? Could a man pose as a younger boy? Or as a girl?
- Tell them it’s okay to say no to a friend request from a stranger or a request for pictures from an online or real-life friend – try practicing ways to say “no” to different types of requests
- Establish yourself as an ally: remind your children that they can come to you if someone online makes them feel uncomfortable. Establish a back-up – identify other trusted adults they can go to if they are embarrassed to talk to you

If you believe your child has been a victim of sextortion:

- Remember this is not their fault! You can discuss safety (and consequences) moving forward
- Gather as much information from your child as you can
- Do not report to the social network site or gaming platform before you call authorities
- Do not delete evidence from your child’s device; instead, put the phone in airplane mode, restrict child access to any cloud-connected devices, and *report to law enforcement immediately*

If you know of a child in immediate risk or danger, **notify law enforcement right away.**

Online child exploitation can be reported to your **local police department** or to the

**National Center for Missing and Exploited Children’s**

CyberTipline: [www.CyberTipline.com](http://www.CyberTipline.com) or by calling 1-800-843-5678

Resources:

[www.justice.gov/usao-ma/outreach/project-safe-childhood](http://www.justice.gov/usao-ma/outreach/project-safe-childhood)

[www.missingkids.org/theissues/sextortion](http://www.missingkids.org/theissues/sextortion)

