

SEXTING: What is it? What Parents Need to Know

Nearly 25% of teens say they send sexually graphic texts to their dating partner or friends. This is called “sexting.”

Sending, owning, or taking sexually graphic pictures of someone under 18 is illegal, even if there is consent, and even if that consent is within a romantic relationship. Teens tend to see sexting as no big deal and most parents are unaware of its pervasiveness. Both parents and teens are unaware of its harm and the potential serious legal ramifications.

In Georgia, sexting falls under the state’s child pornography laws. In general, a teenager who creates, distributes or possesses a sexually explicit image, could be charged with a misdemeanor or felony, depending on the facts and circumstances, and could result in prison time and having to register as a sex offender.

ADVICE FOR PARENTS

- Talk to your teen about sexting and its possible life-altering, long-term consequences.
- Make sure they understand it’s illegal and has real legal ramifications that could follow them throughout their life.
- Remind your kids that once an image is sent, there is no getting it back.
- Talk to your child about peer pressure and find out if they feel like they are pressured by friends to do things that make them feel uncomfortable, like sending inappropriate texts
- Talk to them about making good choices and that sending sexually explicit images will not end well.
- Let them know that if someone sends them a sexually explicit photo, do not share it with anyone and delete it immediately and tell that person to not do it again.
- Talk them about the potential embarrassment, public humiliation, and trouble it could bring to him/her and their friends if they forward and share sexually explicit texts.
- Sit down with your teen and Google “sexting cases in Georgia’s high schools” and read about numerous sexting news stories and all the serious consequences.

Source: Team GCAPP & Georgia Child Pornography Laws

