



Understanding the Consequences of Sharing Explicit Images (“Sexting”)

(In accordance with Texas Education Code §37.218 and Texas School Safety Center guidance)

What Parents Should Know

Texas law requires school districts to provide information each year to parents and students about the legal and other unintended consequences of sharing visual material that shows a minor engaged in sexual conduct. This includes sending, receiving, or sharing images or videos — sometimes referred to as “sexting.” Even when meant as a joke, a dare, or part of a relationship, sharing this kind of content can have serious lifelong consequences.

Legal Consequences

Under Texas Penal Code §43.261, it is a criminal offense for a minor to electronically send, receive, or possess explicit visual material of another minor. Consequences can include criminal charges ranging from a Class C to Class A misdemeanor, court appearances, fines or probation, and possible school disciplinary action. Even if an image is voluntarily shared, distributing it to others can still result in criminal penalties.

Unintended Consequences

Beyond legal issues, sharing or receiving explicit content can lead to emotional harm, bullying, embarrassment, loss of trust, and long-term digital consequences. Once an image is shared online, it may never be fully deleted.

How Parents Can Help

- Talk early and often about online safety, relationships, and consent.
- Model good digital habits and think before sharing content.
- Set clear boundaries for device and internet use.
- Encourage open communication and support without judgment.
- Contact the school counselor or trusted authority for help if your child is involved in sharing or receiving explicit content.

Resources

- Texas School Safety Center Sexting Prevention Program: <https://txssc.txstate.edu>
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (CyberTipline): <https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline>
- Stop Sextortion Campaign (FBI & NCMEC): <https://www.fbi.gov/sexortion>
- Local School Counselor or School Resource Officer – available for confidential support and guidance.

Once an image is shared, it can’t be taken back. Help your child make safe decisions.