



Sexting

20% of all teens say they have sent nude or semi-nude pictures or videos of themselves.

These statistics are from a recent survey of 1,280 students conducted by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

The Facts

Sexting is Illegal: If you or your children take or send nude or sexually suggestive photos of yourself or anyone else you could be charged with producing or distributing child pornography. If you keep them on your phone or computer you could be charged with possession. If they are sent to someone in another state (and that happens really easily), it's a federal felony.

Personal Ramifications: The emotional damage that can come from having intimate photos of yourself sent to everyone you know is severe. Then there is the character and reputation damage that occurs because not only can these damaging photos be sent around; they can be distributed and archived online for people to search for pretty much forever.

This is Not Just a Phone Issue: Sexting can be done on any media-sharing device or technology - including email and the Web. Teens have been convicted for child porn distribution for emailing sexually explicit photos to each other.

There are Many Causes: Sometimes it's malicious behavior such as jealousy, blackmail, hate etc. In other cases it is impulsive behavior such as revenge, flirting, pranks etc. In all cases it's a bad idea that has potentially grave consequences for all involved.

Communication: Parents should discuss sexting with their teens in a relaxed setting. Ask them what they know about it (they may not have heard the term, so "naked photo-sharing" works too). Encourage honesty and express how you feel in a conversational, non-confrontational way. A two-way dialog with your kids can go a long way toward helping them understand how to minimize legal, social and reputation risks.

The Bottom Line: Stay alert when using digital media. Your kids should know that people aren't always who they seem to be and sometimes they change and do mean things. Critical thinking and honest communication about what we upload as well as download is the best protection you can offer your loved ones.

The AFIM is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization formed by experienced video game developers and former interactive entertainment executives to provide parents with the information, tools and resources they need to guide and protect their families in the use and enjoyment of video games, interactive entertainment and the Internet. To learn more about the AFIM and how we can help your church or organization just call us at:

1-866-795-2433 or go to: **www.afim.org**