



12-14  
years old

Text Messaging  
and Your Family

## The Truth About Sexting

### WHAT IS SEXTING?

When people take and send a sexually revealing picture of themselves or send sexually explicit messages via text message, it's called "sexting." While experts differ on statistics, sexting is a teen reality that's here to stay. Kids "sext" to show off, to entice, to show interest in someone or to prove commitment.

Sending these pictures or messages becomes even more troublesome when the content is shared broadly, but receiving sexting messages and images are just as harmful. In fact, a sexting recipient could be in possession of a highly compromising image or message that can be posted on a social networking site or sent to others via email or text.

### SEXTING FACTS

- ▶ 22% of teen girls and 20% of teen boys have sent nude or semi-nude photos of themselves over the Internet or their phones.
- ▶ 22% of teens admit that technology makes them personally more forward and aggressive.
- ▶ 38% of teens say exchanging sexy content makes dating or hooking up with others more likely.
- ▶ 29% of teens believe those exchanging sexy content are "expected" to date or hook up.

### WHY SEXTING MATTERS

In a technology world where anything can be copied, sent, posted and seen by huge audiences, there's no such thing as being able to control information. The intention doesn't matter — even if a photo was taken and sent as a token of love, for example, the technology makes it possible for everyone to see your child's most intimate self. In the hands of teens, when revealing photos are made public, the subject almost always ends up feeling humiliated. Furthermore, sending sexual images to minors is against the law, and some states have begun prosecuting kids for child pornography or felony obscenity.

### ADVICE FOR PARENTS

- ▶ **Don't wait for an incident to happen to your child before talking about the consequences of sexting.**
- ▶ **Remind your kids that once an image is sent, it can never be retrieved and they will lose control of it.**
- ▶ **Talk about pressures to send revealing photos.** Tell them that no matter how big the social pressure, the potential social humiliation can be hundreds of times worse.
- ▶ **Teach your children that the buck stops with them.** If someone sends them a photo, they should delete it immediately. Underscore that if your child forwards a sexually explicit image of another minor, they may be accused of distributing pornography which is against the law.