SELF/PEER EXPLOITATION

Over the last few years, there has been a significant increase in the number of reported cases of young people involved in self/peer exploitation. This type of exploitation, coined in the media as “sexting,” is generally defined as youth creating, sending or sharing sexual images and/or videos with peers via the Internet and/or electronic devices. Self/peer exploitation usually involves exchanging images/videos through cell phone messaging, messaging apps (on iPhones, Blackberries, Androids), social networking sites, etc.

In consultation with educators, law enforcement officers, crown prosecutors, child development experts and psychologists, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection has created two resource guides; one for educators and one for families to assist in managing self/peer exploitation incidents.

RESOURCE GUIDES

The purpose of the Resource Guide for Schools is to:

• help educate school personnel on this issue;
• offer school personnel a structure and framework for dealing with self/peer exploitation incidents;
• minimize the circulation of the affected youth’s images/videos;
• minimize the negative impact on the school and community at large when these incidents occur; and
• challenge the normalization of self/peer exploitation and the misconception among youth who believe this is harmless activity.

The purpose of the Resource Guide for Families is to:

• offer families some practical guidance for supporting their child and addressing the situation;
• help reduce the potential negative impact on youth and their families if this occurs;
• help minimize the child’s involvement in this type of activity; and
• offer families guidance that may limit the circulation of their child’s sexual image(s)/video(s).

The guides are designed to assist schools personnel and families when responding to self/peer exploitation incidents, in addition to providing information on effective ways to prevent these types of incidents from occurring in the future.

The guides are available free-of-charge at protectchildren.ca/freeresources.

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