



CANADIAN CENTRE *for* CHILD PROTECTION®
Helping families. Protecting children.

Model in image and intended as illustrative.

SELF/PEER
EXPLOITATION

IT'S **NOT** OK.

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS

ADDRESSING SELF/PEER EXPLOITATION

This guide is designed to assist school personnel in responding to *self/peer exploitation* incidents. This includes school personnel supporting the *affected youth*, the *acting-out youth*, *other involved youth* and their families.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The **Canadian Centre for Child Protection** is very proud of the work that went into creating the ***A Resource Guide for Schools: Addressing Self/Peer Exploitation***. We are optimistic that this guide will assist school personnel and families in responding to *self/peer exploitation* incidents as well as preventing youth's involvement in this activity. We offer the following professionals/agencies our sincere gratitude for their contribution to the development of this critical resource: Dr. Lawrence Ellerby (Psychologist), Dr. John Wiens (Education Professor and Former Dean), Dr. Debbie Lindsay (Pediatrician, Child Protection Centre), Danielle Kolton (Ph.D), Lisa Henderson (Ontario Provincial Strategy Crown Coordinator), Jan Sippel (Coordinator — Abuse Prevention, Vancouver School Board), Dr. Beth Veale (School Support Officer, Peel District School Board), Toronto Police Service Sex Crimes — Child Exploitation Unit, Ontario Provincial Police — Child Sexual Exploitation Section, Ottawa Police Service Internet Child Exploitation Unit, RCMP E Division Integrated Child Exploitation Unit, Southern Alberta Internet Child Exploitation Unit, Saskatchewan Provincial Integrated ICE Unit, and Halifax Integrated Child Exploitation Unit.

Special thanks goes to the tireless efforts of the **Canadian Centre for Child Protection** staff for their persistence and dedication to delivering an outstanding resource guide for educators, school-based police officers, families and youth impacted by *self/peer exploitation* incidents. In addition, our sincere thanks to Justice Canada, Public Safety Canada and Bell for providing critical funding support.



CANADIAN CENTRE for CHILD PROTECTION®

Helping families. Protecting children.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection is a registered charity dedicated to the personal safety of all children. Our goal is to reduce child victimization by providing programs and services to the Canadian public.

protectchildren.ca

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This guide is intended to provide general information to assist a school in dealing with an incident of self-peer exploitation. It is not intended to provide legal advice and should not be relied upon for such purpose.

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NEED HELP NOW

Many youth take pictures/videos and send them to friends or post the content online. When a sexual image/video ends up on the Internet, the primary focus of the *affected youth* is getting the content down. If you know of a youth that has been impacted by a sexual picture/video being posted on the Internet, let her/him know about **NeedHelpNow.ca** for some practical steps about regaining some control over the content. The Additional Resources section of this guide also walks through what youth can say to a website/online service to expedite a picture/video being removed.



NeedHelpNow.ca

How can we help you today?

- I need help removing a sexual picture/video from the Internet
- I need help with cyberbullying and dealing with my peers
- I need help on how to talk to and support a youth in crisis
- I need tips for helping a friend I am worried about

LEARN MORE ABOUT

REMOVING PORN/SEXUAL IMAGES	DEALING WITH PEERS	GETTING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	THE LAW AND REPORTING
SAFE	ADDITIONAL HELP RESOURCES	HELPING A FRIEND	RESPONDING TO SEXUAL ABUSE

VIEW DOWNLOADABLE RESOURCES

"When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the winds often shift against the wind, not with it."

#ChangeTheStory

About NeedHelpNow.ca

If you or a friend, peer or colleague have been negatively impacted by a sexual cyber-image being posted online, you are not alone. The NeedHelpNow.ca website is designed to provide youth (17 years and older) with practical steps to regain control over the situation. The website will provide direct, confidential, and secure support to request a picture/video be removed. Being able to control the image from being on the internet, the importance of emotional support and collaboration on certain online offences. The site also provides resources for peers who are seeking youth impacted in these types of situations.

Model in image and intended as illustrative.

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INTRODUCTION

There has been a significant increase in recent years in the number of reported cases of young people involved in *self/peer exploitation*.¹ 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, apps, social networking sites, etc. For the purpose of this document, the term *self/peer exploitation* will be used, as this includes both the original transmission (one to one) and further distribution of the content.



Self/peer exploitation is defined as youth creating, sending or sharing sexual images and/or videos with peers via the Internet and/or electronic devices. Involved youth are defined as:

Affected Youth: Youth whose image/video has been taken and/or distributed whether by themselves or someone else.

Acting-out Youth: Youth who have taken and/or distributed an image/video of someone other than themselves.

Other Involved Youth: Bystanders who are in receipt of the distributed image/video, whether by the *affected youth* or the *acting-out youth*.

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

In an effort to assist schools in managing the growing problem of *self/peer exploitation*, the **Canadian Centre for Child Protection** (protectchildren.ca) has created this resource guide. This includes school personnel supporting the *affected youth*, the *acting-out youth*, *other involved youth*, and their families. Schools have a moral and legal responsibility to protect and assist children in their development. The ramifications associated with *self/peer exploitation* are often played out within the school environment, and school personnel are in the best position to respond and take action.

The purpose of this guide is to:

- help educate school personnel on the issue of *self/peer exploitation*;
- offer school personnel a structure and framework for dealing with *self/peer exploitation* incidents;
- reduce the circulation of the *affected youth's* image(s)/video(s);
- minimize the negative impact on the school and community when these incidents occur; and
- challenge the normalization of *self/peer exploitation* and the misconception among youth who believe this is harmless activity.

¹For the purpose of this document, the term *self/peer exploitation* does not include text messages involving sexual content.



Model in image and intended as illustrative.



Voluntary/Non-voluntary Creation:

Understanding the nature of the creation of the image(s)/ video(s) can assist school personnel in assessing the potential harm and impact on the *affected youth*. Knowing if the content was self-produced, whether the individual in the image agreed to its creation, or determining if any pressure was placed on her/him to create the content will aid in outlining the course of action and school response. **In non-voluntary incidents, consultation with law enforcement should occur.**

Schools have a major role to play in this issue because:

- the problem often arises from a breakdown in peer relationships within the school environment;
- schools have a responsibility to raise awareness, influence beliefs and shape values concerning the use of social media; and
- the results of this behaviour often include a significant negative impact upon the school environment, regardless of whether the behaviour occurred on school grounds.

As a companion to this guide, the **Canadian Centre for Child Protection** has also created *A Resource Guide for Families: Addressing Self/Peer Exploitation* to help parents support their child through a *self/peer exploitation* incident.

WHY YOUTH ENGAGE IN SELF/PEER EXPLOITATION

Young people engage in *self/peer exploitation* for the following reasons:

Romantic Relationships or Sexual Experimentation

- During a relationship (on or offline), images/videos may be produced and shared voluntarily between romantic partners or experimenting youth. These images/videos may also be circulated to others with or without the knowledge of the *affected youth*.
- After the breakdown of a relationship, images/videos may be shared with others impulsively or with malicious intent (e.g., to embarrass the ex-partner or ex-friend).

Attention-seeking Behaviour

- Adolescents may produce and share images/videos among friends as a joke, a dare or a challenge. These images/videos may be circulated to others with or without the knowledge of the *affected youth*.
- Images/videos may be produced, shared or posted publicly (e.g., Facebook®, YouTube®) in an attempt to gain acceptance or popularity.

Coercive Circumstances

- Peers, romantic partners or online acquaintances may demand images/videos through coercion. This could involve threats to release information, chat logs or other images/videos if the adolescent does not comply with the demands. This behaviour may be sexual in nature and/or for controlling purposes.
- Images/videos may be obtained during circumstances where the adolescent is unaware, unwilling or in a compromised position (e.g., sexual images taken at a party and posted on a social networking site).



“Just as the body of an adolescent undergoes great physical changes, the brain also develops and changes but at different rates. The pre-frontal cortex of the frontal lobe is one of the last areas to develop; studies have shown that it does not fully mature until individuals are in their 20s. This area is involved in insight, judgment and impulse control. This means that although teens may logically understand the consequences of actions, they are more likely to act from their emotions and without consideration of these consequences. Teens first develop the ability to be objective and critical of others’ actions and later, they develop the ability to analyze and understand their own actions. Moreover, as these functions are developing, the changing hormonal environment of puberty also drives an adolescent’s behavior.”

– Dr. Debbie Lindsay

Developmental Considerations

When assisting youth involved in *self/peer exploitation* incidents, remember the following developmental considerations:

Children 13-15 years of age:	Children 16-17 years of age:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel as though acceptance and belonging are the most important things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experiment with various roles in an effort to figure out who they are
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are extremely influenced by peers and their behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appear to have a fully developed identity but are not yet fully mature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are vulnerable to those who offer insincere flattery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • object strongly to all narrow limitations on their self-image
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel that how they look and what others think of them is very important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have an established sexual identity and seek intimacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare themselves to their peers in an effort to define who they are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek independence and expect privacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take huge emotional risks in search of their identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have an increased focus on what will happen in the future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a “pseudo-maturity” and feel they can handle more than they are ready for developmentally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prioritize friendship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are extremely sensitive and easily humiliated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can have intense romantic relationships and increased sexual desires



Models in image and intended as illustrative.

DIMENSIONS OF SELF/PEER EXPLOITATION

Self/peer exploitation incidents can vary significantly and each situation will present its own unique challenges and interventions. **There are three dimensions of *self/peer exploitation* that schools need to consider:**

1. NATURE: Degree of Sexual Explicitness

Of Concern		Of Serious Concern	
Youth clothed only in undergarments (e.g., bras, underwear)	Youth partially undressed (e.g., partial breast showing, partial buttocks showing)	Youth semi-nude or nude in an image/video (e.g., penis, breasts showing)	Youth involved in a sexual act, either alone or with another youth (e.g., masturbation, intercourse)

While this continuum serves as a general guideline for assessing the **nature** of any given *self/peer exploitation* image/video, it is not designed to be prescriptive.

2. INTENT: Impulsive Versus Malicious Intent

The **intent** behind the initial creation and sharing of the image(s)/video(s), and behind the continued sharing of the image(s)/video(s), is also critical. Consider whether the production or sharing of the image(s)/video(s) involved immaturity, poor emotional regulation, coercion, bullying, pressure (social and peer), sexual harassment or assault, and/or dating violence. Intent may vary among the individuals involved. For example, the initial creation and /or sharing of the image(s)/video(s) may have been impulsive by some individuals, while the motivation of those who continue to share the image(s)/video(s) may be more malicious in nature.

3. EXTENT: Range of Distribution

Information regarding where the image(s)/video(s) have been posted and/or who has received them will aid in understanding the **extent** to which the content has been distributed. The content may have only been distributed within a peer circle or may be more broadly available through the Internet to a much larger audience.



Each of these dimensions can influence the impact on the youth involved, the intervention(s) by the school and whether police involvement is required.

ADDRESSING SELF/PEER EXPLOITATION INCIDENTS: DOs & DON'Ts

DOs

- ▶ Do protect the privacy of the *affected youth* as much as possible. Only involve people on a need-to-know basis.
- ▶ Do support the *affected youth* by checking in with the youth and her/his family to see how they are doing throughout the process.
- ▶ Do use your knowledge of the backgrounds of all youth involved (including cultural, disciplinary, etc.) when determining an appropriate course of action.
- ▶ Do remain objective by focusing on the facts. Personal feelings, prejudices or interpretations should not be a part of the complaint follow-up process.
- ▶ Do encourage confidentiality when speaking with the *affected youth*, *acting-out youth*, *other involved youth* and their parents.
- ▶ Do empower the *affected youth* by letting her/him know that s/he will get through this.
- ▶ Do consult with appropriate school personnel to determine the level and extent of support that may be needed in the circumstances.
- ▶ Do carefully consider the steps you are able to take to limit further sharing of content (e.g., temporarily seizing mobile devices).
- ▶ Do consult police when the situation involves an adult, content that depicts a crime (e.g., sexual assault), or behaviour that is malicious in nature.
- ▶ Do consider any mandatory reporting obligations that you may have under applicable provincial legislation.
- ▶ Do encourage the *acting-out youth* to reflect and learn from the incident. Focus on the repair of social injury/damage.
- ▶ Do ensure an ongoing dialogue in the school about this issue and the potential impacts.

DON'Ts

- ▶ Don't, if possible, view the image(s)/video(s) in question.
- ▶ Don't be judgmental.
- ▶ Don't blame the *affected youth* for what has occurred.
- ▶ Don't minimize the potential impact on the *affected youth*. Cyberbullying often ensues after a *self/peer exploitation* incident and this can further victimize the *affected youth*.
- ▶ Don't suspend the *affected youth*.
- ▶ Don't treat the *acting-out youth* who sent the image(s)/video(s) like a delinquent, but rather as a youth who has made a mistake that s/he needs to make amends for. Suspending the *acting-out youth* should only be considered when intense intervention is required.
- ▶ Don't assume that a simple apology from the *acting-out youth* will address the situation.
- ▶ Don't make assumptions about the intent behind the behaviour of the *acting-out youth* or *other involved youth*. There is a big difference between being immature (upset and impulsive) versus being deliberate (angry with the intent to hurt).
- ▶ Don't treat the situation in isolation. The *affected youth* may be targeted by peers and subject to ongoing bullying/harassment.
- ▶ Don't assume that once police are involved there is nothing for the school to do. Also, recognize that if police decide not to intervene, that does **not** mean that nothing wrong has occurred.
- ▶ Don't assume that because content is online there is nothing that can be done. See the additional resources section for how to remove content from the Internet.



The ability of youth to manage **self/peer exploitation** will vary according to personality, temperament, support systems, and resiliency.

IMPACTS ON YOUTH

Schools should not underestimate the impacts that the distribution of images/videos via the Internet and/or electronic devices may have on the *affected youth*. It is important to consider the social and emotional well-being of the *affected youth*, *acting-out youth* and *other involved youth*. The ability of youth to manage *self/peer exploitation* will vary according to personality, temperament, support systems, and resiliency. Youth may be impacted by *self/peer exploitation* in the following ways:

Emotional Impacts

Depending upon the individual, there is a continuum of emotional impacts and corresponding behaviour. Emotions experienced may range from anxiety or fear to depression. The youth's thoughts might include an internal dialogue focusing on the perceived hopelessness of their situation, their helplessness and in severe cases, suicidal ideation. How the youth behaves may also vary greatly — from expressing little or no concern (acting "normally") to isolating and withdrawing or, in serious cases, engaging in self-harming behaviours or suicide attempts.



In instances where the activity appears minor (e.g., youth clothed in undergarments or image not widely distributed), the impact on the *affected youth* can still be profound. See the Additional Resources section for information on youth and trauma.

Social Impacts

Youth may experience cyberbullying, alienation and/or harassment (including sexual harassment) from peers, as well as current and future damage to reputation (school/peers, family, community, employers, etc.). Other consequences may include school suspension or expulsion. This type of shaming can impact the youth personally and socially.

Criminal Impacts

Depending on the circumstances surrounding the incident, behaviours associated with *self/peer exploitation* may also be criminal in nature. This can include the following:

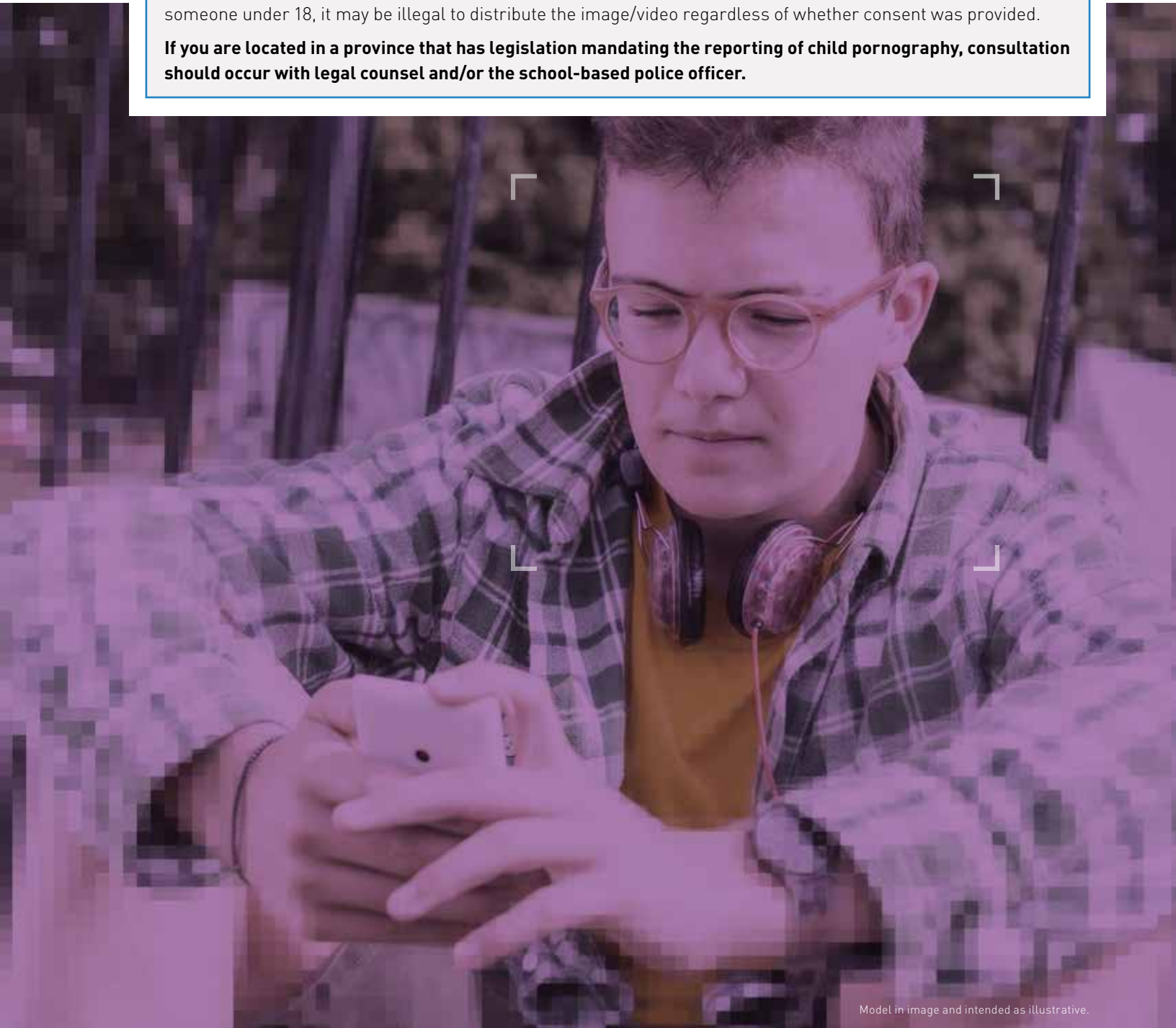
- a) Youth inadvertently creating child pornography.
- b) Youth engaging in the non-consensual distribution of intimate pictures.
- c) Youth intentionally producing pictures/videos that meet the child pornography criteria.
- d) Youth engaging in behaviour that involves intimidation and/or coercion of the *affected youth* in combination with the creation and sharing of child pornography.
- e) Youth engaging in other criminal acts such as: criminal harassment, extortion, voyeurism, impersonation, defamatory libel, intimidation and mischief in relation to data.



Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images

The non-consensual distribution of an intimate image is when someone has a private sexual/intimate picture/video of someone and they share it on purpose without the person's consent. When the image/video involves someone under 18, it may be illegal to distribute the image/video regardless of whether consent was provided.

If you are located in a province that has legislation mandating the reporting of child pornography, consultation should occur with legal counsel and/or the school-based police officer.



Model in image and intended as illustrative.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

The following are some key steps school personnel should consider when determining how to manage *self/peer exploitation* incidents. Throughout the process, assess the information gathered about the youth involved and carefully consider their reaction to the incident. Incidents that involve coercion, bullying, etc. – either at the time of creation or thereafter – may require a different level of intervention, particularly if the youth involved do not appear to understand the seriousness of their actions and the resulting impact on others.

Preliminary Steps:



Good Practice:

In the course of following up on an incident, it is very important that school personnel do not actively attempt to view the questionable image(s)/video(s). The need to view the image(s)/video(s) in question can be significantly reduced by obtaining a description of the nature of the content. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, parents/guardians should be discouraged from doing so as well. **Limiting the number of individuals who see the content is in the best interest of the child, regardless of how the youth presents.**

1

TALK TO THE REPORTING PERSON AND/OR THE AFFECTED YOUTH

Speak to the reporting person and/or the *affected youth*. Help the child feel safe, secure and supported during the process. The initial interaction should be framed to empower the youth to participate in solving the problem and, at the same time, address the feelings of fear and lack of control that s/he may express when first speaking about the incident.

If an *affected youth* is unaware that concerns regarding their image(s)/video(s) have been brought to the attention of school personnel, s/he may deny the incident took place or be embarrassed or fearful when approached by school staff. When first approaching the *affected youth* to discuss the incident, consider the following:

- Reassure the youth that s/he is not alone and that you are there to support her/him in solving the problem.
- Emphasize that you are not there to judge her/him and appreciate that this may be a very challenging situation.
- Explain your role to the youth and the steps you plan on taking.



Good Practice:

School personnel should assess the context surrounding the incident for how to approach the problem. In order to provide proper support, consider information known about the child and her/his circumstances prior to meeting. Focus on evaluating whether the *affected youth* is at risk and how best to support her/him. Consider how this incident is likely to impact the child based on the type of support available at home, from her/his peer group, within the community, etc.

2

ASSESS THE INCIDENT

Ask questions in a non-judgmental, supportive way that allows for a better understanding of the incident. Focus on the required information. Select and adapt the questions depending on who you are speaking with. See the worksheet on page 20 to help you record the answers to the questions below during or soon after your discussions.

Questions to start the conversation:

- Who took the picture(s)/video(s)?
- Who is in the picture(s)/video(s)?
- When was the picture(s)/video(s) taken?
- What was used to take the picture(s)/video(s) (e.g., smartphone, digital camera)?

Questions to ask to determine the NATURE of the image(s)/video(s):

- Do you know if any of your private body parts were exposed in the picture(s)/video(s) that was taken?
- Were you involved in any type of sexual behaviours when the picture(s)/video(s) was taken?

! In some instances, youth may choose to minimize or describe the content and circumstances in a more socially appropriate way. This may be discovered when talking with *other involved youth* that describe the nature of the image(s)/video(s) in a much different way than the *affected youth*.

Consider this in conjunction with the Nature of Self/Peer Exploitation Continuum on page 4.

Questions to ask to determine the INTENT behind the production/creation of the image(s)/video(s):

- Can you tell me what led up to the picture(s)/video(s) being taken? Before the picture(s)/video(s) was created, did you talk with anyone about it? Was anyone else involved?
- What happened to the picture(s)/video(s) after it was taken? Was it sent to anyone? Who was it sent to? Tell me about the decision to send it. Tell me about why you think _____ [*acting-out youth*] wanted to create/send the picture(s)/video(s). Do you have any idea why _____ [*acting-out youth*] shared/sent the picture(s)/video(s)?

Questions to ask to determine the EXTENT of the distribution of the image(s)/video(s):

- Was the picture(s)/video(s) posted on the Internet (e.g., Facebook®, Instagram®)? If so, where? By whom?
- Do you know who has received the picture(s)/video(s)? Do you know if any person has the picture(s)/video(s) on their phones/tablets, etc. and/or posted online (e.g., Facebook®, Instagram®)?
- Do you know how these people ended up receiving the picture(s)/video(s)?
- Do you know if the content has spread to others outside of this school?

💡 In Canada, youth aged 12 and 13 can consent to sexual activity with someone who is less than two years older than the youth, whereas youth aged 14 and 15 can consent to sexual activity with someone who is less than five years older than the youth. Youth under 12 cannot consent to sexual activity with anyone. For all youth aged 12 and over, *including youth aged 16 and 17*, there is no consent possible if the other person is in a position of trust or authority towards the child, the child is dependent upon the other person, or the relationship is otherwise exploitative of the child.

Other Considerations:

- Is there an age difference worth noting? Is there possibly a relationship of trust, authority or dependency between them or any other factors that might make the relationship with the *acting-out youth* and/or *other involved youth* exploitative of the *affected youth*?



Good Practice:

Consider the following strategies throughout the conversation with the *affected youth*:

- Be optimistic and reinforce that the youth will persevere. S/he will get through this.
- Empower the youth by encouraging positive self-talk and reframing how s/he may be viewing the incident.
- Encourage her/him to separate the incident from defining who s/he is. Assist the youth in moving past self-blame.
- Reinforce the importance of keeping good friends close by to help her/him get through this. Friends can act as a buffer from the harmful effects of *self/peer exploitation* for the youth and also help her/him to cope.
- Avoid judgment and advise the youth that the school will help her/him deal with the situation in a way that provides the dignity and respect that s/he deserves.

Questions should also be asked around the *affected youth*'s biggest fears, what s/he is most worried about happening, and what s/he would like to see happen moving forward. Responses to these questions may also indicate additional issues and/or concerns that require follow up. Consultation with other school personnel (e.g., school counsellor, school social worker, or school psychologist) may be required.

3

VERIFY THE INFORMATION

Carefully verify the information gathered from the *affected youth* with other involved peers or witnesses to the incident(s). Speak with *other involved youth* individually and reinforce the importance of students restoring the *affected youth*'s privacy by not discussing the incident with their peers (a safe adult would be the exception). Review the questions on page 9 to guide these discussions.

Ask the *affected youth* if there are other people who s/he would feel comfortable with you talking to about the incident. In cases where the youth chooses not to provide any information, you may choose to speak to select youth who you believe may have additional information to share. In order to limit over-exposing the *affected youth*, these decisions should not be made arbitrarily.

To help ensure objectivity and reduce the chance of misunderstandings about what was said and not said, it may be prudent to ensure that another adult is present when you speak with *other involved youth*.



Considerations of cultural diversity:

Within most school settings there will be diverse cultural differences and perspectives that schools may need to be sensitive to when determining an appropriate course of action for a given situation. For example, it may be wise to consider and account for the religious and/or cultural background of the *affected youth*, along with any other information that may be known about the youth and her/his relationships within the family. This should be assessed prior to notifying the family of the situation and while working with the family towards a resolution. This will help to ensure the approach to the situation is appropriately tailored and may also help the school to identify situations where additional supports may be needed.



If school personnel, based upon the discussions previously outlined, feel that the activity may be potentially criminal in nature (e.g., the image(s)/video(s) may be child pornography and the activity appears malicious, there was extortion or harassment involved), it is strongly suggested that consultation occur with administration, legal counsel, and/or police. See steps on page 15.

4

SPEAK WITH THE ACTING-OUT YOUTH

Talk to the *acting-out youth* and obtain her/his version of the incident. Be mindful of protecting those students who have shared information. Having another adult present during these discussions may be prudent.

Consider beginning the conversation with the *acting-out youth* with something like, "The reason you are here today is because it has come to our attention that you have been involved in distributing/possessing an inappropriate picture(s)/video(s) of another student, and we want to give you an opportunity to speak with us about it." Her/his reaction can range from fully acknowledging her/his involvement to outright denial. What the youth states will provide a better understanding of her/his intention behind the activity.

Review the questions on page 9 and mirror the steps with the *affected youth*. Adjust your questions where appropriate. Another round of follow-up questions with the *affected youth* and *other involved youth* may be required after your discussion with the *acting-out youth*.

Self/peer exploitation can involve a range of behaviours from **impulsive activity** among youth to **malicious and criminal activity**. Based on the information gathered in steps 1–4, school personnel are in a better position to determine whether the incident was based on an impulsive decision (see steps on page 12) or involved malicious intent (see steps on page 15).



Considering the involvement of the school-based police officer:

School-based police officers can be an important resource in dealing with *self/peer exploitation* situations. For example, a police officer can be of help in conveying the seriousness of the incident to the *acting-out youth*, the *other involved youth* and/or their parents. For malicious incidents, police can conduct a separate investigation and determine whether police action (e.g., formal warning, charges, etc.) is appropriate. Depending on the situation, the *affected youth* may feel safer as a result of police involvement.



Going to Police Immediately

Schools should separate the issue of *self/peer exploitation* from that of youth sharing sexual content with adults or sharing content that depicts a crime (e.g., a sexual assault). **If an adult is involved or if the content depicts a crime, the case should be immediately referred to local law enforcement (and where possible, to a specialized child exploitation unit).**

Next Steps When Addressing Impulsive Incidents

1 NOTIFY THE PARENTS OF THE AFFECTED YOUTH

Review what has been confirmed to date and consider arranging an in-person meeting. **Parents should be discouraged from viewing the content. Over and above limiting the exposure and humiliation for the affected youth, there could be criminal ramifications in accessing the content.**

2 INFORM PARENTS OF NEXT STEPS

Inform parents of the steps the school will be taking. Let parents know that *A Resource Guide for Families: Addressing Self/Peer Exploitation* is available to help them support their child through this situation. The guide is available free in print from protectchildren.ca/order or by download at cybertip.ca/self_peer_exploitation.

3 IDENTIFY THE YOUTH IN POSSESSION OF THE CONTENT

Where possible, identify the youth in personal possession of the content. Consider having the principal temporarily seize the mobile devices of the *acting-out youth* and *other involved youth* to limit any further sharing of the content and ideally protect the *affected youth* from further harm. **Policies in each school division will vary and appropriate consultation should occur in advance of this type of action.**

Model in image and intended as illustrative.

4

ARRANGE AN IN-PERSON MEETING WITH THE PARENTS OF THE ACTING-OUT YOUTH AND OTHER INVOLVED YOUTH

Contact the parents of the *acting-out youth* and *other involved youth* and arrange separate in-person meetings with those involved. At the meeting, advise the following:

- Their child has been involved in a *self/peer exploitation* incident and it has been confirmed that their child is in possession of/or has made publicly available the image(s)/video(s) in question.



These are sensitive conversations that can cause considerable upheaval in families. Providing parents with positive messages, whenever possible, will be important. This type of activity among youth is not uncommon and positive steps can be taken to address the error in judgment by their child.

- Any digital representation of an image(s)/video(s) that is exploitative in nature needs to be deleted. It is prudent to have this confirmed by the parent in writing to the school and kept on record. Even in cases involving a criminal investigation (e.g., child pornography), the image(s)/video(s) should be deleted from all devices, unless otherwise advised by police (e.g., school-based police officer or specialized child exploitation unit). See *Pictures/Videos Posted Without Your Consent?* on page 27, in the Additional Resources section.



If the parents of the *acting-out youth* or *other involved youth* refuse to co-operate by deleting the content, police will likely need to get involved.

- If applicable, review the steps that should be taken to have their child remove the content from their public profile (e.g., Facebook®).
- Involve the youth in the meeting with their parents. Consider either beginning the discussion with the parents on their own, to allow them time to get past the initial shock, then having the youth join the meeting, or having the youth present throughout the meeting. This may help hold the youth accountable for the mistake and her/his role in solving the problem.



Confidentiality should be maintained throughout this process. Discussions around the incident in question should be held only on a need-to-know basis and parents should be cautioned about maintaining privacy in order to limit the exposure and impact on the *affected youth* and others involved.

5 TAKE STOCK OF THE SITUATION

Carefully consider how the first four steps have gone. Were the students forthcoming with information? Do you believe the content has been adequately contained and is no longer being shared? Did the youth you spoke to appear to genuinely understand the seriousness of the situation? Did the parents/guardians seem willing to work with you and their child to address the problem? Have any other concerns about the students or the situation come to your attention in the interim that may warrant a different response?

6 EXPLORE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE OPTIONS TAILORED TO EACH UNIQUE INCIDENT

A restorative justice approach focuses on addressing conflict in a manner that attempts to repair harm. Often used within a criminal justice context where a crime has been committed, the principles of restorative justice can also be applied to other areas such as bullying and peer exploitation. In these contexts, restorative justice approaches:

- provide the opportunity for the *affected youth* to obtain reparation, feel safe and seek closure;
- allow the *acting-out youth* to assess the impact of her/his behaviour, take responsibility for her/his actions and gain insight into the factors that contributed to her/his conduct; and
- enable the community to understand the issues with regard to the behaviour of concern and participate in prevention initiatives that enhance community safety and well-being.

7 SEEK ONGOING SUPPORT FOR THE AFFECTED YOUTH, ACTING-OUT YOUTH AND OTHER INVOLVED YOUTH

Involve the guidance counsellor, school psychologist, and others if appropriate, in providing ongoing support to all of the youth involved and managing any residual issues that may arise for the youth involved in the incident. **Strongly consider any of the added pressure on the affected youth who might be viewed by peers as getting them into trouble.**

8 IMPLEMENT A SUPPORT PLAN

Implement a support plan and follow-up on a regular basis with all of the youth involved, particularly the *affected youth*. Ongoing monitoring of the incident and all those involved will be critical.

! MANAGING STUDENTS' REACTIONS/BULLYING:

Following a *self/peer exploitation* incident, schools have a responsibility to closely monitor exchanges among students as they pertain to the *affected youth*. As a result of the incident, the *affected youth* may be targeted by peers and subjected to cyberbullying, verbal bullying, and in some cases, physical bullying or harassment, as well as alienation. This can leave the *affected youth* feeling isolated, shamed and helpless. Feelings of self-blame, guilt and humiliation may also be intensified.

While respecting the confidentiality of all the youth involved in these types of incidents, school personnel must prohibit and denounce any bullying in conjunction with a *self/peer exploitation* incident. In addition to reinforcing your school's code of conduct, it is imperative to closely monitor student interactions and take action to intervene as necessary to ensure all students are safe and receiving adequate support and accommodations. This will serve to support and protect all of the youth involved from negative emotional/social impacts and consequences. See the Additional Resources section for information on youth who have experienced trauma.



ADDRESSING THE ACTING-OUT YOUTH

“In education, action, circumstance and intention are typically the starting point of a school’s complaint follow-up process. Context is critical as is the baseline behaviour for the *acting-out youth* (i.e., previous record of discipline). Oftentimes, suspensions are used as a disciplinary response; however, they predominantly communicate messages of power, blame and shame. Given the relative newness and seriousness of *self/peer exploitation*, institutions of learning need to begin with a stance that promotes reflection, teaching and learning as the core foundation in managing this growing social problem. It is essential for schools to look inward at their own cultures and how they support students with the challenges of the digital age – a process which must begin very early in order to be effective.”

– Danielle Kolton, Ph.D.

Suggested Next Steps When Addressing Malicious Incidents

1

REPORT TO POLICE OR DISCUSS INCIDENT WITH SCHOOL-BASED POLICE OFFICER

If the school determines, based on the type of assessment outlined in steps 1-4 on pages 8-11 of this guide, that the behaviour of the *acting-out* and/or *other involved youth* was malicious in nature (e.g., coercive), it must decide whether or not to escalate the matter to police. In some instances it will be obvious that police involvement is needed. In others, the school may find it helpful to first discuss the matter with the school-based police officer who can help the school better understand what actions are criminal in nature and what other options may be available to manage the incident. Either way, **it will be prudent to explore options for containing the content and limiting the harm to the affected youth.**

2

DETERMINE THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL AND POLICE GOING FORWARD

If the incident is reported to police, the police will determine whether or not to proceed with a criminal investigation. Keep in mind that police investigations can be lengthy, and in the interim, the school must continue to ensure the well-being of all of its students and address behaviours that are within its capacity to address. In these scenarios, the police and the school will have very distinct roles and responsibilities that will need to be carefully managed.



Ideally, the school will have a clear policy about how to proceed during a police investigation and any ensuing criminal proceedings. Even if such a policy does not exist, it will be essential to ensure the police and the school effectively communicate throughout the process to ensure each party understands the obligations of the other, and each can do what it needs to without negatively impacting upon the other.

3

NEXT STEPS WITH THE ACTING-OUT YOUTH AND HER/HIS FAMILY

If the incident is reported to police, consult with the police to determine when, how and by whom the parents of the *acting-out youth* will be notified and who should be involved in that discussion. If the incident is not reported to police, consider whether it would be helpful to involve the school-based police officer in an in-person meeting with the parents and the *acting-out youth*. The school-based police officer may be able to assist in conveying the criminal nature of the activity and its seriousness to all involved.

4

IF POLICE DECIDE NOT TO PROCEED

Not all matters that are reported to police will result in police action. If a matter has been referred to police, but police do not proceed with a criminal investigation/lay charges, review steps 1-8 on pages 12-14 titled Next Steps When Addressing Impulsive Incidents. Speak with the parents of the *affected youth*, *other involved youth* and *acting-out youth*. **Continue to monitor the situation, and if the behaviour of concern continues or new information comes to light, reassess the situation and do not hesitate to report to police again if the situation warrants.**

PREVENTION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Education is critical to preventing *self/peer exploitation* incidents and reducing the number of youth engaging in this behaviour. Providing youth with a standard of measure for how they deserve to be treated, including information on respectful and healthy relationships, can impact the decisions that adolescents make with their peers when creating, sharing and/or sending sexual images/videos.

Schools can proactively address the issue of *self/peer exploitation* by developing and implementing written sanctions against *self/peer exploitation* incidents under a school's **Internet Use Policy** or within the school's **Code of Conduct** that includes educating youth and parents that this type of activity will not be tolerated. This may include the following:

- A succinct definition of *self/peer exploitation* along with a statement denouncing this type of activity.
- A strong positive statement that encourages positive peer relationships and opposes harassment/bullying of any member within the school environment.
- A statement about the rights of individuals and groups to be free of victimization by others.
- A statement flagging the responsibility of peers and staff to stop and/or report concerns of *self/peer exploitation*.
- A general outline of the steps the school will take in addressing incidents of *self/peer exploitation*.
- A plan for ongoing evaluation of the *Internet Use Policy* and/or *Code of Conduct* in addressing incidents of *self/peer exploitation*.

Prevention messaging (safety education practices) that reviews *self/peer exploitation* incidents, the impact on youth, youth participants, families, schools, and the community is also important. Teaching youth to be responsible and respectful online citizens can reduce the occurrence of this type of activity.

The **Canadian Centre for Child Protection** has developed prevention materials to assist, such as:



Kids in the Know: A national interactive safety education program for increasing the personal safety of children and reducing their risk of victimization online and offline. Designed for children from kindergarten to high school, it focuses on building self-esteem through teaching critical problem-solving skills. This program has been purposefully designed to create a common language to help facilitate the way we teach kids about their own personal safety. For more information, visit kidsintheknow.ca.

Activity Booklets for Youth: In response to the growing issues of *self/peer exploitation* and cyberbullying, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection created two engaging, age-appropriate activity booklets that teach youth about boundaries, healthy relationships, sexual consent, communication and safe and respectful online behaviour. The Grade 7/8 activity booklet, *What's the Deal?*, and the Grade 9/10 activity booklet, *It Is a Big Deal*, can help parents start conversations with their youth, and the activities are intended to ensure that youth understand the risks associated with certain activities.

NeedHelpNow.ca: Created for youth, **NeedHelpNow.ca** is a website designed to help teens stop the spread of sexual pictures or videos and provide support along the way. The website also offers guidance on the steps that youth can take to get through a *self/peer exploitation* incident and for parents and other adults to respond to youth in crisis.

Understanding and teaching what it means to be part of a healthy and respectful relationship is central to addressing and preventing *self/peer exploitation* incidents. When youth make decisions that take into account what it means to be a good friend by demonstrating respect and dignity towards others, harmful activity among peers in the online and offline world is significantly reduced.

In addition to the development of resource guides for schools and families impacted by *self/peer exploitation* incidents, the **Canadian Centre for Child Protection** creates public awareness material regarding this social problem. Resources are targeted towards youth, parents, communities, educators, child-serving organizations and law enforcement agencies. Visit Cybertip.ca and NeedHelpNow.ca to view and/or request copies of our public awareness material.

CONCLUSION

While most *self/peer exploitation* incidents occur outside of the school environment, there is no question that youth can be negatively impacted within the school setting. In the same way that learning institutions have developed response plans to bullying, *self/peer exploitation* incidents and their impact on the school environment should be addressed. School personnel require the tools to take the necessary steps to better protect youth and to limit the harm done by sexual images/videos being created and shared among peers.

This guide is intended to support school personnel's efforts to manage a *self/peer exploitation* incident and find effective ways to prevent it in the future. Assessing the **nature, intent** and **extent** by which sexual images/videos are shared among peers is critical in determining the intervention(s) by the school and whether police involvement is required.

When dealing with these situations, schools need to remain optimistic and reinforce that the *affected youth* will persevere. This will go far in helping the child recover and move forward in a productive and empowered way.



Model in image and intended as illustrative.



CANADIAN CENTRE *for* CHILD PROTECTION®
Helping families. Protecting children.



Model in image and intended as illustrative.

SELF/PEER
EXPLOITATION

IT'S **NOT** OK.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS
AND RESOURCES

A school cannot fulfill its duty to keep students safe without fully assessing the situation and the associated safety concerns. This means fully following up on incidents it becomes aware of. The questions below are designed to help schools: (1) assess the safety issues raised by the incident and determine steps to address the issues; and (2) determine whether it can manage the issue or whether the issue is serious enough to warrant police involvement.

ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Student Information

Name: _____

Age and Grade: _____

Meeting Information

School Personnel Leading Discussion: _____

Date: _____

Time (start/end of meeting): _____

Other Meeting Attendees (if any): _____

Step #1: Talk to the Reporting Person and/or the Affected Youth

- Reassure the *affected youth* that s/he is not alone and that you are there to support her/him in solving the problem.
- Emphasize that you are not there to judge her/him and appreciate that this may be a very challenging situation.
- Explain your role to the youth and the steps you plan on taking.

Step #2: Assess the Incident – Select and adapt the questions depending on who you are speaking with

GENERAL	
Can you tell me who took the picture(s)/video(s)?	
Can you tell me who is in the picture(s)/video(s)?	
When was the picture(s)/video(s) taken?	



What was used to take the picture(s)/video(s) (e.g., smartphone, digital camera)?	
NATURE	
Do you know if any private body parts were exposed in the picture(s)/video(s) that was taken?	
Does the picture(s)/video(s) show anyone engaged in any type of sexual activity other than kissing?	
INTENT	
Can you tell me what led up to the picture(s)/video(s) being taken?	
Before the picture(s)/video(s) was created, did you talk with anyone about it?	
Was anyone else involved in the creation?	
What happened to the picture(s)/video(s) after it was taken?	

<p>Was it sent to anyone? Who?</p>	
<p>Tell me about the decision to send it. Tell me about why you think _____ (<i>acting-out youth</i>) wanted to create/send the picture(s)/video(s).</p>	
<p>Do you have any idea why _____ (<i>acting-out youth</i>) shared/sent the picture(s)/video(s)?</p>	
<p>EXTENT</p>	
<p>Was the picture(s)/video(s) posted on the Internet (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)? If so, where? By whom?</p>	
<p>Do you know who has received the picture(s)/video(s)?</p>	
<p>Do you know if any person has the picture(s)/video(s) on their phones/tablets, etc. and/or posted online (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)?</p>	
<p>Do you know how these people ended up receiving the picture(s)/video(s)?</p>	



<p>Do you know if the content has spread to others outside of this school?</p>	
<p>SCHOOL PERSONNEL NOTES/CONSIDERATIONS</p>	
<p>Is there an age difference worth noting? Is there possibly a relationship of trust, authority or dependency between them or any other factors that might make the relationship with the <i>acting-out youth</i> and/or <i>other involved youth</i> exploitative of the <i>affected youth</i>? Was there coercion/violence involved in the creation, or is that a risk now?</p>	
<p>WELL-BEING OF YOUTH</p>	
<p>How is this incident impacting you?</p>	
<p>How are you managing?</p>	
<p>Can you think of anything else that I might need to know?</p>	

Type of Involvement:

- Created image(s)/video(s)
 Possession of image(s)/video(s)
 Distributed image(s)/video(s)
 Depicted in image(s)/video(s)
 Observer

DIMENSIONS OF SELF/PEER EXPLOITATION

There are three dimensions of *self/peer exploitation* that schools need to consider:

- the **NATURE** of the image(s)/video(s) (in terms of sexual explicitness);
- the **INTENT** behind its creation and distribution; and
- the **EXTENT** to which the image(s)/video(s) has spread.

Each of these dimensions can influence the impact on the youth involved, the intervention(s) by the school and whether police involvement is required.

GOOD PRACTICE

Do not actively seek out viewing the image(s)/video(s). Unless there are extenuating circumstances, parents/guardians should also be discouraged from doing so.

Youth clothed only in undergarments (e.g., bras, underwear)

Youth partially undressed (e.g., partial breast, partial buttocks showing)

Youth semi-nude or nude in an image/video (e.g., penis, breasts showing)

Youth involved in a sex act, either alone or with another youth (e.g., masturbation, intercourse)

Of Concern

NATURE OF SELF/PEER EXPLOITATION

Of Serious Concern

PRELIMINARY STEPS ON FIRST NOTIFICATION

STEP 1 TALK TO THE REPORTING PERSON AND/OR THE AFFECTED YOUTH

Help youth to feel safe, secure and supported during the process. The initial interaction should empower the student to participate in solving the problem.

GOOD PRACTICE

The focus should not just be about an information-gathering session. It is important to evaluate whether the *affected youth* is at risk and how best to support her/him.

STEP 2 ASSESS THE INCIDENT

Schools should assess the incident by asking questions in a non-judgmental, supportive way. Questions may include:

NATURE:

- Do you know if any private body parts were exposed in the picture(s)/video(s) that was taken?
- Does the picture(s)/video(s) show anyone engaged in any type of sexual activity other than kissing?

INTENT:

- Can you tell me what led up to the picture(s)/video(s) being taken?
- What happened to the picture(s)/video(s) after it was taken? Was it sent to anyone? Who was it sent to?

EXTENT:

- Was the picture(s)/video(s) posted on the Internet (e.g., Facebook®, Instagram®)? If so, where? By whom?
- Do you know who has received the picture(s)/video(s)? Do you know if any person has the picture(s)/video(s) on their phones/tablets, etc. and/or posted it online (e.g., Facebook®, Instagram®)?

STEP 3 VERIFY THE INFORMATION

- Verify information with other peers/witnesses to the incident.
- Speak to *other involved youth* individually and reinforce the importance of restoring the *affected youth's* privacy by not discussing the incident with peers.
- Ask the *affected youth* if there are other people who know about the incident with whom s/he would feel comfortable having you talk to about the incident.

Prior to Step 4

If school personnel, based upon the prior discussions, feel that the activity may be potentially criminal, it is strongly suggested that consultation occur with administration and/or legal counsel and/or a report be made to police.

STEP 4 SPEAK WITH THE ACTING-OUT YOUTH

- Obtain the *acting-out youth's* version of the incident. Be mindful of protecting those students who have shared information.
- What the youth states will provide a better understanding of her/his intention behind the activity.

GOOD PRACTICE

During the conversation with the *affected youth*:

- reinforce that s/he will persevere
- encourage positive self-talk
- encourage separating an error in judgement from defining who s/he is
- reinforce the importance of keeping good friends close by to help her/him

Based on the information gathered in preliminary steps 1–4, school personnel are then in a position to determine whether the incident was based on an impulsive decision or involved malicious intent.



Note: Schools should separate the issue of *self/peer exploitation* from that of youth sharing sexual content with adults or sharing content that depicts a crime (e.g., a sexual assault). **If an adult is involved, the case should be immediately referred to local law enforcement (and where possible, to a specialized child exploitation unit).**

NEXT STEPS WHEN ADDRESSING IMPULSIVE INCIDENTS

1. Notify parents of the *affected youth*.
2. Inform parents of the steps the school will be taking. Let parents know that *A Resource Guide for Families: Addressing Self/Peer Exploitation* is available to help them support their child through this situation.
3. Where possible, identify the youth in personal possession of the content (consider having the principal temporarily seize the *acting-out youth's* and other *involved youth's* mobile devices to limit further sharing – **check school policies/consult as appropriate before taking this step**).
4. Arrange separate in-person meetings with parents of the *acting-out youth* and *other involved youth*. At the meeting, advise the following:
 - Their child has been involved in a *self/peer exploitation* incident, and it has been confirmed their child is in possession of, or has made publicly available, the image(s)/video(s) in question.
 - Any digital representation(s) of an image(s)/video(s) that is exploitative in nature needs to be deleted, **unless otherwise advised by police**.
 - If applicable, review the steps that should be taken to have their child remove the content from their public profile (e.g., Facebook®, Instagram®). Visit **NeedHelpNow.ca** for more information. If parents refuse to co-operate with deleting the content, police will likely need to get involved.
 - Involve the youth in all or part of the meeting. This may help hold the youth accountable for the mistake and her/his role in solving the problem.
5. Take stock of the situation.
6. Explore restorative justice options tailored to each unique incident.
7. Seek ongoing support for the *affected youth*, *acting-out youth* and *other involved youth*.
8. Implement a support plan.

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS WHEN ADDRESSING MALICIOUS INCIDENTS

1. Report to police or discuss incident with the school-based police officer. If the school determines that the behaviour of the *acting-out* and/or *other involved youth* was malicious in nature, it must decide whether or not to escalate the matter to police. Either way, **it will be prudent to explore options for containing the content and limiting the harm to the affected youth**.
2. Determine the role of the school and police going forward. If the police proceed with an investigation, the school must still continue to ensure the well-being of all of its students and address behaviours that are within its capacity to address.

It will be essential to ensure the police and the school effectively communicate throughout the process to ensure each party understands the obligations of the other, and each can do what it needs to without negatively impacting upon the other.
3. Determine when, how and by whom the parents of the *acting-out youth* will be notified and who should be involved in that discussion.
4. If police decide not to proceed with a criminal investigation, review steps 1-7 for Next Steps When Addressing Impulsive Incidents. Speak with the parents of all youth involved in the incident and continue to monitor the situation. Report to police again if the situation warrants.

Maintain confidentiality: Ensure conversations are held on a need-to-know basis and parents are cautioned about maintaining privacy to limit the exposure and impact on the *affected youth* and others involved.



Model in image and intended as illustrative.

Pictures/Videos Posted Without Your Consent?



While this reproducible sheet has been written to guide youth through the steps to request content be removed from a website/online service, educators can also utilize this resource when addressing *self/peer exploitation* incidents.

Many youth take pictures/videos of themselves, send them to their friends and/or post the content online. In some instances, peers who receive the content may post it online and/or send it to others without permission of the person who is in and/or created it. Once content is circulated on the Internet, it can be easily duplicated and shared with others. Pictures and videos may end up on social networking sites, blogs, video-hosting sites, peers' smart phones and/or computers.

The majority of websites and other online services that allow pictures/videos to be posted on their service do not review the content before it appears. However, most have specific policies and guidelines about what can and cannot be posted. They rely on people posting the content to ensure that their material does not violate the privacy of specific individuals or breach copyright laws. **Most websites and online services have a formalized complaint policy which provides individuals with a way to report content that has been posted in violation of their policies.**

1

PRACTICAL STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO GET YOUR PICTURE/VIDEO OFF THE INTERNET

Determine what service (e.g., YouTube®, Facebook®, Instagram®) the picture/video is displayed on and contact that service to request that they remove the picture/video. You will find a list of popular websites/online services, information about their policies and their instructions on how to remove the content at **NeedHelpNow.ca**.



When contacting the website/online service, get directly to the point. The service likely receives a large number of complaints daily so you need to quickly let them know why your request is important.

At a minimum, include the following information in your complaint:

- a. **YOUR AGE:** Let the website/online service know that you are a child. Websites/online services are more likely to prioritize concerns about content involving children. If the picture/video was taken when you were a different age than you are presently, include your age at the time the picture/video was taken as well as your current age.
- b. **IDENTIFY YOURSELF:** Say that you are the child in the picture/video. If you are identifiable (i.e., a person who knows you would recognize you), include this information in your complaint since the website/online service may take your complaint more seriously.
- c. **STATE THAT YOU DID NOT CONSENT TO THE POSTING OF THE CONTENT:** Say that you did not post the content on their site, did not give permission for the content to be posted and that you want it removed. This lets them know that you object to the continued posting of the content.



You may also want to include information in your complaint about who had access to the content. If you sent the picture/video to someone else, say so, and provide the name of the person you sent the content to. Let the website/online service know that you did not give this person permission to post the picture/video. This may help the website/online service trace who posted the content. Most websites/online services will have policies that set out rules for the type of content that can be posted and any user who breaches the rules may be prevented from posting content in the future.

SAMPLE COMPLAINT:

I am 13 years old and I am requesting the removal of a sexual picture/video of myself that appears through your service at the following URL: [insert the exact URL (website address) where the picture/video is located].

I did not post the picture/video on your site or give permission for it to be posted and I would like it removed.

If you do not know who posted the picture/video, you could say:

I do not know who posted the picture/video on your site.

I do not know who posted the picture/video onto your site, but I did send the picture/video to my boyfriend, [insert full name] and I did not give him permission to post it.

I am not sure who posted the picture/video onto your site, but I have reason to believe that it may have been [insert full name].

2

If you are involved in a *self/peer exploitation* incident that has gone too far and involves things like threats, intimidation, blackmailing, etc., we encourage you to report to police and/or talk to a safe adult about what is occurring. You may also want to send a report to **Cybertip.ca/report**.

For additional information on addressing a *self/peer exploitation* incident, please see **NeedHelpNow.ca**.



Model in image and intended as illustrative.

Trauma and Youth Who Have Experienced Online Exploitation

Youth who have had a sexual picture or video of themselves shared with others can experience significant distress about others seeing these images and how they will be perceived and treated as a result. In addition to the fear youth have about the reactions of their friends and peers, they can experience extreme distress about the reaction of adults in their lives. How adults (e.g., parents, teachers, child welfare workers, law enforcement) respond to a youth who has experienced this type of exploitation and trauma is important. It can make the difference between the youth being able to process and cope with the situation or the youth becoming further distressed.

Here are some considerations for adults dealing with youth who have experienced traumatic stress as a result of online exploitation. To help a child feel supported and safe, it is important for parents and other adults to understand issues related to trauma and how to shape their responses toward youth.

What can cause the traumatic impact on youth?

A child may experience traumatic stress from an online experience that:

- Was sudden or unexpected
- Was forceful or violent
- Is perceived by the youth as overwhelming or uncontrollable
- Left the child feeling helpless, unsafe and/or having a lack of control

(adapted from D. Bowers, presentation at the Missing and Exploited Children Conference, Winnipeg, May 2011)



Model in image and intended as illustrative.

What do youth in crisis need from an adult who is first responding?

- To feel safe and supported
- To not feel judged
- A model of how to react to this situation (e.g., a calm reaction from the adult)
- To know that they do not deserve what is happening to them
- A sense of control over what happens next
- A sense of hope for the future
- Concrete strategies for next steps to support them and to attend to the exploitation

What are possible behaviours youth might demonstrate?

Individuals have unique reactions to trauma. Not every child who has a traumatic response to online exploitation will show the same signs. The impact on an individual depends on a number of factors related to their personality, temperament, neurological make-up, past experiences, family dynamics, the type of support network they have and specifics related to the exploitation they experienced. **It is important not to assume that a child is not distressed because they do not act the way an adult might believe someone in distress should behave.** Sometimes the signs are obvious, and sometimes they are not easily detectable.

Responses may include:

- Feeling jumpy, nervous and easily startled
- Feeling agitated
- Having images, sensations or memories of the traumatic experience intruding into the youth's thoughts
- Feeling numb, frozen or shut down
- Pretending everything is okay
- Change in general behaviour, seeming "out of sorts"
- Difficulty regulating emotions – rapid, sometimes exaggerated, changes in mood, where strong *emotions* or feelings occur (such as uncontrollable laughter or crying, heightened irritability or temper cycle in a short period of time)
- Difficulty concentrating or learning new information
- Change in academic performance
- Resistance to going to school



Model in image and intended as illustrative.

- Trouble falling or staying asleep, nightmares
- Generalized fear and anxiety – a persistent feeling that they are not safe
- Difficulty trusting relationships
- Difficulty handling changes
- Substance misuse, cutting or disordered eating
- Withdrawal/lack of interest in activities they typically enjoyed
- Isolating herself/himself from friends
- Sense of helplessness, hopelessness and/or presenting a negative world view
- Extreme changes in the way s/he is dressing
- No observable behaviour changes
- Asserting that s/he is okay
- Acting as if nothing problematic has happened
- Stating s/he can deal with this on her/his own

How can an adult who is first responding intervene supportively?

- Put the youth at ease by letting her/him know you are here to help
- Keep the pace slow and calm
- Tell her/him that her/his safety and wellness are the most important concerns
- Tell her/him you care about her/him
- Tell her/him you are sorry this has happened to her/him
- Acknowledge the difficulty of the situation
- Allow her/him to tell what happened without interruption or insisting on a chronological narrative; ask her/him to try to tell you what happened as an observer looking at a movie of the situation to help her/him avoid reliving the experience
- Avoid asking “Why” questions and stick more to “Tell me more about that” or “Tell me how you responded to that” statements
- Listen without judgement or skepticism, providing positive feedback for the sharing of the experience
- If her/his account sounds confusing, avoid pressing for clarity at this time
- Don't make promises that may not be realistic
- Focus on problem solving and helping the youth clearly understand you are there to help sort this out and to assist in dealing with how this is affecting her/him, dealing with the exploitation and working toward attempting to bring resolution and closure to the matter



Model in image and intended as illustrative.



CANADIAN CENTRE *for* **CHILD PROTECTION**®

Helping families. Protecting children.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection (Canadian Centre) is a national charity dedicated to the personal safety and protection of children. Our goal is to reduce the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, to assist in the location of missing children and to prevent child victimization.

The Canadian Centre operates Cybertip.ca — Canada's national tipline for reporting child sexual abuse and exploitation on the Internet, as well as other prevention and intervention services to the Canadian public.

Our mission is to:

REDUCE the incidence of missing and sexually exploited children

EDUCATE the public on child personal safety and sexual exploitation

ASSIST in the location of missing children

ADVOCATE for and increase awareness about issues relating to missing and sexually exploited children



Learn more: protectchildren.ca/video-get_involved





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