

# Protect your children . . . and their futures!

## A parent's guide to the dangers of "sexting"

Your teens may be experts at racking up cell phone bills. But can using their cell phones ruin their reputations – and get them charged with a crime?



### "Sexting" tragedy

Consider the case of Jesse, a teenager from Ohio. She sent a nude photograph of herself to her boyfriend. That photo then made its way to hundreds of other students in Ohio and other states. Jesse was repeatedly harassed and teased by other students.

Several months later, Jesse committed suicide.

A new phenomenon among teen-agers is "sexting." One in five teens has admitted to taking nude, partially nude or suggestive photographs of themselves and sending those photographs via their cell phones to other people.

You may think your child would never do something like this. But can you remember what it was like to be a teen-ager in love? Many exciting changes occur during these formative years, and many times teen-agers act without thinking about the consequences.

"Sexting" usually occurs in boyfriend/girlfriend situations. Some kids "sex" simply because they are bored or goofing off. But once a picture is sent, it can't be taken back. And if that picture is posted on the Internet, anyone in the world – including adult sexual predators – can see it and pass it along.

It can get even worse. In addition to damaging your child's reputation, he or she can be charged with a crime. Any photograph of a child in a nude or provocative pose is technically considered child pornography – even if the child took it. And if your teen-ager sends that photograph to someone else, he or she is disseminating child pornography.

**Teens in some states have been charged with felony crimes!** If your child is found guilty, the felony record could follow him or her for life. In addition, he or she will have to register as a sex offender. Don't let this registration requirement follow your child to college and to future places of employment.

**Talk with your children about the dangers of "sexting."  
Don't let them jeopardize their reputations and their futures.**



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