

Newsletter

THIS ISSUE

- “Sexting” and Statistics on “Sexting”



Dear Friends,

Technology, as it progresses at a rapid speed, is hard to keep up with. Especially when it comes to adults keeping up with the trends that youth have seemed to grasp so easily. Not only is there a need to learn all of the new technology, adults also need to learn to monitor how their children are using it. Technology allows individuals to connect with one another in some very amazing ways. However, when technology is misused, disrespected, or abused it can lead to situations that are difficult, unethical, and can lead to serious consequences.

Young people are well connected through technology, many with their own cell phones and email accounts. This technology has become monumental in a young person's social life; mainly the young person's behavior is much less inhibited with the use of computer, cell phones, and texting. Now parents and educators have become increasingly concerned about the role of texting in the sexual lives of young people. The addition of sexual behavior to texting is referred to as “sexting.”

“Sexting” is the sending, receiving, or forwarding of sexually explicit messages, photos, or images through cell phone, computer, or other digital technology. It is important for parents and educators to have knowledge of and communicate to young people the dangers and consequences of “sexting.”

Pope John XXIII said in his encyclical, *Mater et Matistra*, “Wherefore, whatever the progress in technology and economic life, there can be neither justice nor peace in the world, so long as men fail to realize how great is their dignity; for they have been created by God and are His children.” We are all of God's children, first and foremost; created in His image. Therefore we are obligated to honor our rights and responsibilities, follow moral law, and remain true to our human dignity. We must do this in every aspect of our lives.

This issue of the newsletter will share some disturbing results of a survey done by Cox Communications Teen Online Wireless Safety Survey, in Partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and John Walsh (May 2009).

Blessings,
Patti Loehrer
Safe Environment Coordinator
Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Cox Communications, commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct a survey using 655 U.S. teens ages 13-18.

Profile of a Sexter

Demographics

- Evenly split boys/girls (53% girls vs. 47% boys)
- Sext Senders are more likely to be girls (65% girls vs. 35% boys)
- More likely to be older (61% ages 16-18, 39% ages 13-15)

High Technology Use

- Spend more time online per week (31.7 hours, compared to 26.8 hours for teens overall)
- Owns or uses: cell phone (81%), social networking profile (86%)
- In past month has: checked out someone else's online profile (82%), updated own online profile (70%), posted or viewed photos or videos (86%)
- On public blog or social networking site, has posted: photos of self (80%) or friends (70%)

Online Safety

- About as likely to think personal information online is unsafe (56% vs. 59% for teens overall)
- No more concerned about information online having a negative affect on future (73% vs. 76% for teens overall)

Sexting

- More likely to think people their age are old enough to decide for themselves whether sexting is all right (76% vs. 54% for teens overall).
- More likely to think adults overreact when teens send sexually suggestive text message and emails to each other (67% vs. 48% for teens overall).

It is critical to understand that once a message, image, video or photo is on a cell phone or other digital device, it can be put on the internet for the whole world to access.
It cannot be taken back!

- About 1 in 5 teens have engaged in some kind of sexting, either sending, receiving or forwarding sexually suggestive emails or text messages with a nude or nearly-nude photo.
- 43% of those who have either sent or received sexts have done both and nearly all those who have sent sexts have received them.
- Overwhelmingly, those who send and receive sexts say they are sent to boyfriends/girlfriends.
- The top reasons for sext senders to send these messages are because someone asked them to and to have fun. For sext receivers, it is to have fun and to impress someone.
- Nine in ten sext senders say nothing bad has happened because of a sext, but 3 in 10 friends of sext senders say the photos were **forwarded** to someone.
- Only 1 in 7 sexters have been caught having sent or receiving these messages, most commonly by a parent.
- About three-quarters of teens think that sexting with photos of someone under 18 is wrong, with 48% also believing that it should be illegal.
- About 8 in 10 teen sexters are under 18 years old.
- While three-quarters of teens under 18 think they are too young to be sending sexts, half think they are at least old enough to decide for themselves whether it is ok for them to do it.
- While all teens think it's dangerous to be sending sexts of themselves, just over half know there are legal consequences.

A copy of this Newsletter can be found on the Archdiocese of Milwaukee website www.archmil.org/safeguarding under the heading, Resources.

Parental Controls—Parents may think they are engaged in their children's online behavior, but the teens do not see it that way.

- About 2 in 5 teens tell their parents very little or nothing about what they do online and only just over a quarter tell their parents a lot or everything.
- Over three-quarters of teens' parents have talked to them about Internet safety on their computer or laptop, but far fewer place any limits or controls on their children's Internet use.
- About 1 in 4 teens who have parental control do something to get around them, such as use a friend's computer or cell phone, or use their own cell phone.
- About 1 in 5 teens go online on a cell phone, and among those 1 in 5 say their parents are not aware they do so.
- Among those whose parents are aware they go online through a cell phone, only 1 in 5 have parents that limit or control that online time and just over half have parents who have talked to them about Internet safety on their cell phone.

Gender Differences

- Generally girls appear more active in varied activities online than boys, including email, social networking sites, and shopping. However, they are less active in having or playing video games online.
- Girls are more likely than boys to have posted a variety of personal information online, including photos and videos and they are also more likely to be aware of something bad that has happened to someone online because of this kind of information.
- Girls are more likely than boys to have sent a sext, but are less likely to think that people their age are old enough to decide whether it's all right to send them and less likely to think adults overreact about sexts.



Patti Loehrer

Safe Environment Coordinator
 414-769-3449—loehrerp@archmil.org

Amy Peterson

Victim Assistance Coordinator
 414-758-2232—peterzona@archmil.org