

FBI issues "financial sextortion" alert

(KLZA)-- The FBI, in partnership with Homeland Security Investigations and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, is issuing a national public safety alert regarding an explosion in incidents of children and teens being coerced into sending explicit images online and extorted for money—a crime known as financial sextortion.

Over the past year, law enforcement has received over 7,000 reports related to the online financial sextortion of minors, resulting in at least 3,000 victims, primarily boys, and more than a dozen suicides.

A large percentage of these sextortion schemes originate outside of the United States, and primarily in West African countries such as Nigeria and Ivory Coast. As many children enter winter break this holiday season, the FBI and their partners implore parents and caregivers to engage with their kids about financial sextortion schemes so we can prevent them in the first place.

Armed with the information in this alert message, parents, caregivers, and children themselves should feel empowered to detect fake identities, take steps to reject any attempt to obtain private material, and if targeted, have a plan to seek help from a trusted adult.

Financial sextortion schemes occur in online environments where young people feel most comfortable—using common social media sites, gaming sites, or video chat applications that feel familiar and safe. On these platforms, online predators often use fake female accounts and target minor males, between 14 to 17 years old but the FBI has interviewed victims as young as 10 years old.

Through deception, predators convince the young person to produce an explicit video or photo. Once predators acquire the images, they threaten to release the compromising material unless the victim sends money or gift cards. Often the predators demand payment through a variety of peer-to-peer payment applications. In many cases, however, predators release the images even if payments are made. The shame, fear, and confusion that victims feel when they are caught in this cycle often prevents them from asking for help or reporting the abuse.

If young people are being exploited, they are victims of a crime and should report it. Contact your [local FBI field office](#), call 1-800-CALL-FBI, or report it online at tips.fbi.gov.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) has outlined

steps parents and young people can take if they or their child are a victim of sextortion, including:

- **Remember, the predator is to blame, not your child or you.**

Get help before deciding whether to pay money or otherwise comply with the predator. Cooperating or paying rarely stops the blackmail and continued harassment.

- **REPORT the predator- account via the platform- safety feature.**
- **BLOCK the predator and DO NOT DELETE the profile or messages because that can be helpful to law enforcement in identifying and stopping them.**
- **Let NCMEC help get explicit images of you off the internet.**
- **Visit [org/IsYourExplicitContentOutThere](https://www.org/IsYourExplicitContentOutThere) to learn how to notify companies yourself or visit [cybertipline.org](https://www.cybertipline.org) to report to us for help with the process.**
- **Ask for help. This can be a very complex problem and may require help from adults or law enforcement.**
- **If you don't feel that you have adults in your corner, you can reach out to NCMEC for support at gethelp@ncmec.org or call NCMEC at 1-800-THE-LOST.**
- **Take a moment to learn how sextortion works and how to talk to your children about it. Information, resources, and conversation guides are available at fbi.gov/StopSextortion.**

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