



Michelle LaJoye-Young
SHERIFF

Parents and Students of Kent County:

Over the past couple of years, law enforcement agencies across the country have seen an uptick in a relatively new type of social media crime affecting students across the country. This crime is known as Sextortion. Sextortion usually originates through a social media platform (Instagram, Snapchat, or TikTok). It involves the perpetrator posing as a teen who attempts to convince the victim to send nude photos of themselves.

The perpetrator will initiate contact with the victim, establish a relationship, and suggest they exchange nude images. The perpetrator typically acts first, sending a nude picture of a stranger and requesting the victim do the same. The perpetrator, typically an adult, will use extortion techniques to continue to pressure the victim to a return image of themselves.

Once the victim sends the picture, the perpetrator continues with their extortion scheme and threatens to send the image to the victim's friends, family, and social media contacts of the victim unless they pay to prevent its release. The funds are requested to be sent by various online payment sources that are difficult to track or investigate. Victims have often reported they have paid the requested amount, but the perpetrator often will continue to demand more money.

The Kent County Sheriff's Office is committed to thoroughly investigating these crimes as they are reported to us, but we need your assistance. Parents, I am asking for your help in fighting these internet crimes by having a conversation with your child about internet safety and appropriate social media use. Students, look out for your friends if you think this may be happening to them.

- Anything done online may be available to others. Things posted now will never go away.
- Not every person you communicate with online is who they say they are.
- Block or ignore anything that comes from someone you don't know personally.
- Sending nude images of anyone under the age of 18, including yourself, is not only dangerous but could also be a crime.
- Never engage in sexually explicit activity online, and if requested to do so, you should report the request immediately to a parent, guardian, or law enforcement.

There are many ways to submit tips and concerns easily:

- OK2SAY: Download the app, go to www.ok2say.com, or text the tip to 652729.
- Silent Observer: Download the app, go to silentobserver.org, or call 616-774-2345

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your School Resource Officer or call our agency at 616-632-6100.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sheriff M. LaJoye-Young". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sheriff Michelle LaJoye-Young