**Building “Sextpertise”: Overview**

A Multi-Stakeholder Discussion to Help Frame and Develop a New Public-Private Program to Help Prevent and Address Creation and Dissemination of Minors’ Self-Generated Intimate Images, Revenge Porn/Sextortion and Related-Sexual Exploitation.[[1]](#footnote-1)

*Minors are voluntarily taking sexual and sexually-provocative images of themselves to share with their partners, friends and acquaintances. This has, in recent years, been called “sexting.”[[2]](#footnote-2) They do it to attract the attention of potential romantic partners, to satisfy existing partners, to delay sexual relations with existing partners, to show off their bodies, to act out and for entertainment. Most are shared with one person, with the understanding that they are private and not to be shared. But sloppy digital security, revenge and jealousy motives and the desire to be the center of attention result in in “privates going public.”*

*The images are often, initially, disseminated to destroy the reputation of the young person in the image. Eventually, as they are more broadly disseminated, they lose their connection to a particular young person and (as described by a young teen) “just become a picture of another naked girl.”[[3]](#footnote-3)*

*Before the images are made broadly available, they sometimes make their way into the hands of someone intent on exploiting the person in the sext. The images are used for blackmail (“sextortion”). Public or selective disclosure (typically to parents, school administrators or police) is threatened to extort sexual services or additional sexual images from the victim. Teen peers and hardened sexual predators, alike, resort to sextortion methods. Some high profile suicides have been linked, in part, to sextortion.*

*Laws designed to prevent the production, distribution and possession of traditional child pornography images and videos were not intended to be used against preteens and teens taking pictures of themselves to be shared with one or more trusted peers. But they apply, nonetheless, and several young people in the US have been charged under existing child pornography laws for taking and sharing their own voluntarily self-generated intimate images. Several states have modified their child pornography laws to exempt voluntarily self-generated intimate images similarly to the exemptions for peer sexual conduct under statutory rapes laws. But the federal laws remain unchanged, leaving all US minors open to prosecution, and sex-offender-list placement.*

*The industry, schools, parents and law enforcement are grappling with the problem. The difficulty in distinguishing between SGIIs that are voluntarily created and those created under duress is a problem for law enforcement charged with enforcing child sexual exploitation laws. Digital networks and apps are required to report images of child sexual exploitation to the Cybertipline to avoid liability, which include SGIIs. NCMEC itself is struggling to identify true images of child sexual exploitation that lead to child molesters, instead of a bored teen’s nude selfies.*

*Parents are shocked and, rightfully, worried about their children’s safety, reputation and emotional-wellness. And school administrators are not prepared to handle child pornography contraband or address the issues impacting their students.*

*Quantifying the issue is difficult. How many SGII are out there? How many of those will be used to destroy reputations or weapons to blackmail teens into sending more images or engaging in real or virtual sex? How many are stored on mobile or gaming devices, in the cloud or on flash drives? How many were coerced or taken under duress? We can’t know.*

*But, no matter which survey/study we look to, it is clear that sexting is happening too often with potentially devastating results. That’s why all stakeholders need to pitch in to address this growing problem from their perspective.*

1. Initially, the program will focus on SGII of minors. Once operational, it is intended that the program will also develop help/resources for SGII of adults. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Sexting” involves images, both still and video. Sexual communications sent in textual form are called “cybering.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Taken from a half-hour Good Morning America Town Hall format show on sexting hosted by Diane Sawyer with Parry Aftab.[include link] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)