

TIPS2IDENTIFY: EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE FOR EDUCATORS

Each year, one in five children receives an unwanted sexual solicitation online.¹ Online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) is a horrific crime that targets some of the most vulnerable people in our communities — our children and teens. It includes a broad range of criminal acts that involve exploiting minors for sexual gratification or some other personal or financial gain. Watch for these common indicators of online CSEA so you can support victims and report this crime if it happens to a child in your care. Together, we can help keep students safe throughout the school year.



Tips2Spot Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Children and teens experiencing online CSEA may signal many typical signs of something going wrong, such as unexplained changes in mood or behavior, drops in academic performance or signs of self-harm. Some specific signs to look out for in cases of online CSEA include if a child or teen:

- Becomes possessive of their phone or other electronic devices and agitated, concerned or fearful if someone else looks at them; starts using a second phone or another student's phone.
- Talks vaguely about a new friend but doesn't offer any further information.
- Spends more time on social media or the internet and no longer hangs out with their in-person friend group as frequently.
- Misses increasing amounts of school to talk with their friends, cancels plans or does not want to attend previously enjoyed after-school activities.
- Receives gifts or unexplained money but will not share how they got it or who gave it to them.

These are common indicators, but exploitation and abuse can cause kids and teens to respond differently. Be aware of any behavior that seems out of the ordinary.



How2Report

Take immediate action if you know or suspect a student or child in your care is a victim of online CSEA. Follow school and state protocols for mandatory reporting. You should also submit a report in one of the following ways:

- Call the Know2Protect Tipline at **833-591-KNOW** (5669). All information received via the Tipline will be reviewed by appropriate personnel and referred to Homeland Security Investigations field offices for potential investigation.
- Contact your local, state or tribal law enforcement officials directly. Call **911** in an emergency.
- Submit a **CyberTipline** report with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

¹[justice.gov/usao-edtx/project-safe-childhood](https://www.justice.gov/usao-edtx/project-safe-childhood)

HOW2RESPOND FOR EDUCATORS

If you know a child or teen who has experienced online CSEA, you can provide crucial support. One of the most important things you can do is let them know that what happened is not their fault — even if they feel like it is. This chart, developed in coordination with survivors of online CSEA and those who investigate it, can help you respond appropriately.



Always

- Listen without judgment and be empathetic.
- Validate that you believe them and want to help.
- Empower them to stop the abuse and report it. Let them know that reporting the incident is the best way to stop the abuse.
- Take immediate action if you see signs or symptoms of self-harm or suicidal thoughts.
- Assure them that they are not in trouble with law enforcement and it's not their fault.
- Walk them through reporting the incident and saving all messages, photos and videos.
- Offer to support them when they tell their parent or trusted adult or when they meet with law enforcement.
- Identify people they can talk to such as a parent, counselor or friend.
- Follow school and state protocols for mandatory reporting.
- Know that help is available regardless of the language they speak or their immigration status.
- Assure them that they are not in trouble with law enforcement.



Never

- Engage with the online predator. Leave that to law enforcement while you focus on the victim's needs.
- Ask for a detailed disclosure or specifics about the exploitation or abuse. Leave that to law enforcement officials or other professionals.
- Share with more people than necessary.
- Respond with anger or become overly emotional.
- Shame, blame or judge the child for what happened.
- Use scare tactics to make the child regret coming forward.
- Delete messages, images or videos.

Take immediate action if you know or suspect a student or child in your care is a victim of online CSEA. Visit dhs.gov/know2protect/how-to-report.

Resources

Survivor Support Page: Know2Protect shares resources and tips on how to help victims of online CSEA. Visit dhs.gov/know2protect/survivor-support to learn more.

Take It Down: The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children offers a free service to help remove online nude, partially nude or sexually explicit photos and videos taken before age 18. Visit takeitdown.ncmec.org to learn more.