

Operational Services

Exhibit - Letter to Parents/Guardians About Preventing and Reducing Incidences of Sexting

On Cooperative letterhead

Date

Re: Preventing and Reducing Incidences of Sexting

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

Sexting is generally defined as sending, sharing, viewing, receiving, or possessing *indecent visual depictions* of oneself or another person using a cell phone. A student will be disciplined for sexting at school.

Discussing sexting and its legal and social consequences with your children may prevent and reduce incidences of it at school and elsewhere. A recent survey revealed that about 20 percent of teen boys and girls have sent sext messages. It can cause enormous emotional pain for the students involved, often with legal implications. The following talking points from the American Academy of Pediatrics may help start the discussion:

- Talk to your children, even if the issue hasn't directly impacted your community. Ask "have you heard of sexting?" "Tell me what you think it is." Learn what your child's understanding is and add an age-appropriate explanation. For more information about starting age-appropriate discussions, see *Talking to Kids and Teens About Social Media and Sexting – Tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics* at: www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/news-features-and-safety-tips/Pages/Talking-to-Kids-and-Teens-About-Social-Media-and-Sexting.aspx.
- Make sure children of all ages understand that the Cooperative's student behavior policy prohibits sexting, and that it is further punishable in Illinois through the Juvenile Court Act and the Criminal Code of 2012.
- Collect cell phones at gatherings of tweens and teens. Experts have noted that peer pressure can play a major role in sexting, with attendance at parties being a major contributing factor.
- Monitor the media for stories about sexting that illustrate the consequences for both senders and receivers of these images. Ask "Have you seen this story?" "What did you think about it?" "What would you do if you were this child?"
- Rehearse ways your child can respond if asked to participate in sexting.

For more information on sexting, how to talk to your children about it, and how to say no to sexting, please see the following links:

www.common sense media.org/blog/talking-about-sexting

www.education.com/magazine/article/child-sexting-parents/

www.athinline.org/facts/sexting

<https://planetnutshell.com/portfolio/say-no-to-sexting-grades-7-12/>

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-12-teen-girls-bombarded-sexting.html>

Sincerely,

Executive Director

Added to Policy Manual: 8/2022