

DIMENSIONS OF SELF/PEER EXPLOITATION

There are three dimensions of *self/peer exploitation* that schools need to consider:

- the **NATURE** of the image(s)/video(s) (in terms of sexual explicitness);
- the **INTENT** behind its creation and distribution; and
- the **EXTENT** to which the image(s)/video(s) has spread.

Each of these dimensions can influence the impact on the youth involved, the intervention(s) by the school and whether police involvement is required.

GOOD PRACTICE

Do not actively seek out viewing the image(s)/video(s). Unless there are extenuating circumstances, parents/guardians should also be discouraged from doing so.



PRELIMINARY STEPS ON FIRST NOTIFICATION

STEP 1 TALK TO THE REPORTING PERSON AND/OR THE AFFECTED YOUTH

Help youth to feel safe, secure and supported during the process. The initial interaction should empower the student to participate in solving the problem.

GOOD PRACTICE

The focus should not just be about an information-gathering session. It is important to evaluate whether the *affected youth* is at risk and how best to support her/him.

STEP 2 ASSESS THE INCIDENT

Schools should assess the incident by asking questions in a non-judgmental, supportive way. Questions may include:

NATURE:

- Do you know if any private body parts were exposed in the picture(s)/video(s) that was taken?
- Does the picture(s)/video(s) show anyone engaged in any type of sexual activity other than kissing?

INTENT:

- Can you tell me what led up to the picture(s)/video(s) being taken?
- What happened to the picture(s)/video(s) after it was taken? Was it sent to anyone? Who was it sent to?

EXTENT:

- Was the picture(s)/video(s) posted on the Internet (e.g., Facebook®, Instagram®)? If so, where? By whom?
- Do you know who has received the picture(s)/video(s)? Do you know if any person has the picture(s)/video(s) on their phones/tablets, etc. and/or posted it online (e.g., Facebook®, Instagram®)?

STEP 3 VERIFY THE INFORMATION

- Verify information with other peers/witnesses to the incident.
- Speak to *other involved youth* individually and reinforce the importance of restoring the *affected youth's* privacy by not discussing the incident with peers.
- Ask the *affected youth* if there are other people who know about the incident with whom s/he would feel comfortable having you talk to about the incident.

Prior to Step 4

If school personnel, based upon the prior discussions, feel that the activity may be potentially criminal, it is strongly suggested that consultation occur with administration and/or legal counsel and/or a report be made to police.

STEP 4 SPEAK WITH THE ACTING-OUT YOUTH

- Obtain the *acting-out youth's* version of the incident. Be mindful of protecting those students who have shared information.
- What the youth states will provide a better understanding of her/his intention behind the activity.

Based on the information gathered in preliminary steps 1–4, school personnel are then in a position to determine whether the incident was based on an impulsive decision or involved malicious intent.

GOOD PRACTICE

During the conversation with the *affected youth*:

- reinforce that s/he will persevere
- encourage positive self-talk
- encourage separating an error in judgement from defining who s/he is
- reinforce the importance of keeping good friends close by to help her/him

Note: Schools should separate the issue of *self/peer exploitation* from that of youth sharing sexual content with adults or sharing content that depicts a crime (e.g., a sexual assault). **If an adult is involved, the case should be immediately referred to local law enforcement (and where possible, to a specialized child exploitation unit).**

NEXT STEPS WHEN ADDRESSING IMPULSIVE INCIDENTS

1. Notify parents of the *affected youth*.
2. Inform parents of the steps the school will be taking. Let parents know that *A Resource Guide for Families: Addressing Self/Peer Exploitation* is available to help them support their child through this situation.
3. Where possible, identify the youth in personal possession of the content (consider having the principal temporarily seize the *acting-out youth's* and other *involved youth's* mobile devices to limit further sharing – **check school policies/consult as appropriate before taking this step**).
4. Arrange separate in-person meetings with parents of the *acting-out youth* and *other involved youth*. At the meeting, advise the following:
 - Their child has been involved in a *self/peer exploitation* incident, and it has been confirmed their child is in possession of, or has made publicly available, the image(s)/video(s) in question.
 - Any digital representation(s) of an image(s)/video(s) that is exploitative in nature needs to be deleted, **unless otherwise advised by police**.
 - If applicable, review the steps that should be taken to have their child remove the content from their public profile (e.g., Facebook®, Instagram®). Visit NeedHelpNow.ca for more information. If parents refuse to co-operate with deleting the content, police will likely need to get involved.
 - Involve the youth in all or part of the meeting. This may help hold the youth accountable for the mistake and her/his role in solving the problem.
5. Take stock of the situation.
6. Explore restorative justice options tailored to each unique incident.
7. Seek ongoing support for the *affected youth*, *acting-out youth* and *other involved youth*.
8. Implement a support plan.

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS WHEN ADDRESSING MALICIOUS INCIDENTS

1. Report to police or discuss incident with the school-based police officer. If the school determines that the behaviour of the *acting-out and/or other involved youth* was malicious in nature, it must decide whether or not to escalate the matter to police. Either way, **it will be prudent to explore options for containing the content and limiting the harm to the affected youth**.
2. Determine the role of the school and police going forward. If the police proceed with an investigation, the school must still continue to ensure the well-being of all of its students and address behaviours that are within its capacity to address. It will be essential to ensure the police and the school effectively communicate throughout the process to ensure each party understands the obligations of the other, and each can do what it needs to without negatively impacting upon the other.
3. Determine when, how and by whom the parents of the *acting-out youth* will be notified and who should be involved in that discussion.
4. If police decide not to proceed with a criminal investigation, review steps 1–7 for Next Steps When Addressing Impulsive Incidents. Speak with the parents of all youth involved in the incident and continue to monitor the situation. Report to police again if the situation warrants.

Maintain confidentiality: Ensure conversations are held on a need-to-know basis and parents are cautioned about maintaining privacy to limit the exposure and impact on the *affected youth* and others involved.