



# ATTORNEY GENERAL WARNS TEENS, PARENTS ABOUT SEXTING DANGERS

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

DURING A RECENT VISIT TO THE NATIONAL Teen Dating Abuse Helpline (NTDAH), the Office of the Attorney General warned Texas teens and parents about the dangers of sexting. Sexting is the practice of teens sending sexually explicit messages or images electronically, primarily between mobile phones.

Embarrassing or explicit messages can spread like wildfire through a school or across the country – or even get posted on public Web sites. Before they know it, teens find that what started as a bit of fun starts to have severe consequences – humiliation, suspension from school or athletic participation and loss of jobs or college scholarships.

When they encounter peer pressure to participate in sexting, teens should

contact NTDAH online at [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org) or call NTDAH at (866) 331-9474. NTDAH provides the only 24-hour help line in the country where trained teen advocates counsel fellow teens about digital harassment. The advocates do not tell teens what to do, but guide them on how to handle sexting peer pressure, regret, embarrassment or other sexting issues they are encountering.

NTDAH counselors also provide guidance to concerned parents who call the Helpline. Parents must have frank conversations with their children about the potential for embarrassment and the legal ramifications of sexting. If teens do not want a photo or text message to fall into the wrong hands – including strangers, potential employers,

teachers or college admission officers – they should not send it.

By talking with their teenage children and staying aware of developments in their child's life, parents can show that they care and are approachable when problems arise. Setting boundaries and simultaneously entrusting kids to conduct themselves responsibly may feel like a balancing act, but it can really help protect teens from an instance of bad judgment that can haunt them for life.

Teens, parents and law enforcement authorities must keep an open line of communication to combat sexting. For additional advice, teens should turn to the trained advocates at NTDAH. Every teen's decision to avoid sexting helps build a much brighter future for our great state.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER



### SEXTING DANGERS

Before pressing "Send," teens should consider five tips:

- Do not assume anything sent or posted is going to remain private.
- Anything sent or posted in cyberspace will never truly go away.
- Do not give in to the pressure to do something that causes discomfort, even in cyberspace.
- Consider the recipient's reaction.
- Nothing is truly anonymous.

**National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline**  
(866) 331-9474 • [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

For more information about this and other topics, visit the Office of the Attorney General's Web site at [www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov).



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