

# PROTECTING STUDENTS FROM THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF PORNOGRAPHY IN SCHOOLS

## QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF PORNOGRAPHY

- A 2014 study found that increased pornography use is linked to decreased brain matter, which results in decreased motivation and decision-making skills, impaired impulse control, and desensitization to sexual reward.
- Research shows that a child or teen's exposure to violent pornography or excessive exposure to pornography can impair a changing child's brain, social interactions, and emotional skills well into their mid-20's.
- The brain scans of pornography addicts show more pronounced stimulation centers when watching X-rated material compared to those not addicted – this mirrors similar studies on drug addicts' and alcoholics' brain scans.
- Addictive substances and behaviors, like pornography, activate the part of the brain called the reward center, triggering the release of chemicals, including dopamine, that give the user a temporary buzz. High levels of dopamine cause a temporary feeling of extreme pleasure or euphoria. For teens, the risk of addiction is especially high because a teen's reward center in the brain responds two to four times more powerfully than an adult's brain and releases higher levels of dopamine.
- Women report lower body image as a result of viewing pornography.
- A 2015 study found that men's frequency of pornography use is linked to body image insecurity and increased anxiety in romantic relationships.
- The Department of Justice and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children both recognize that pornography is an element that adds to the serious problem of sex trafficking. Many traffickers are found with filming equipment and cameras to create and sell pornography.
- More than 80% of women in pornography are sex trafficked into a hostile environment of sexual exploitation, forced labor, and physical abuse.
- By age 10, 32% of children have been exposed to pornography.
- The average age of first exposure to internet pornography is twelve years old.
- 53% of boys and 28% of girls ages 12-15 use sexually explicit pornography via the internet.
- Most cases of sex trafficking start on the internet and social media sites. It takes 24 hours to traffic a child from the time the trafficker meets the child online.

## SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES NEED TO BE SAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR STUDENTS.

However, sexually exploitive material is finding its way into these educational spaces. Here are three areas students are accessing pornography at school:

1. **School computers:** may have inadequate computer Wi-Fi filters to prevent pornography.
2. **School owned devices:** may have inadequate filters to block pornography on school-owned devices like iPads or laptops.
3. **Online school resources:** may provide access to pornography, normalize sexually violent and risky acts, and promote prostitution.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

- **TALK.** Every time we talk to students about the harmful effects of pornography they are safer
- **TEACH.** Definitions give power. Use simple explanations to give students words to describe what they have seen. This opens the door for them to report what they have seen or abused.
- **MAKE A PLAN.** If students see pornography at school teach them to report it to an adult at the school. Teach them to advocate for themselves and others.
- **BUILD TRUST.** Give students credit for the good they do and reinforce that they can talk to and trust school staff.
- **STAY INFORMED.** Periodically spend time to get updated on this difficult topic. Read the latest research, find new resources, and new ways to help students.



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