

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We care about the safety of your children and want to come alongside you in order to help keep them protected. Part of how we do that is through our COMPASS Teen Sexual Health and Healthy Relationship classes, where we empower students to make healthy choices through education. We also want to partner with you, their greatest advocates, cheerleaders, coaches, and safety nets, and so much more, to help add a stronger filter for healthy choices.

 It’s very likely that your teen’s life looks different from your own experience growing up. With the rapid expansion and development of easily accessible technology inundating our student’s, some dangers are less apparent than they used to be. Predators, pornography, cyber bullying, human trafficking, and abuse all exist online and within easy reach of vulnerable populations, like teens.

* **40%** of teens have either posted or sent sexually suggestive images.
* 1 in every **4** teens, 14 to 17 years old, has been involved in some form of nude sexting.
* **90%** of 8 to 16 years old have viewed digital pornography, with the typical first exposure at **8-11** years old.
* It’s reported that **50%** of trafficking survivors were forced to create pornography when they were trafficked.
* **1 in 3** of 7-17 year olds would freely give out their home address.
* **89%** of sexual solicitations are made through the web in chatrooms.
* **70%** of teens will accept a “friend” request even if they don’t know the sender.

We have heard many cases from right in our own backyard of students being groomed through seemingly innocuous apps by predators, or of students facing misdemeanor and felony charges due to participating in illegal activity such as sexting. Here are some tools that you can utilize to help protect your teen:

* Create family rules for the internet. Some common ones are no phone at night, mirroring apps/permission required for app downloads, etc.
* Utilize parental control settings on cell phones, computers, laptops, tablets, video game consoles, tv, etc.
* Download parental control apps, such as Bark, Net Nanny, Etc.
* Replace routers or better equip them with specialized filtering routers and/or programs, such as Circle by Disney, Torch, etc.

Thanks to an awesome team of dedicated Police departments, Anti-Trafficking organizations, education, and Prosecuting Attorneys, The Western district of Missouri prosecutes more cases of Human Trafficking every year than any other district in the U.S.

Trafficking is not just happening in our larger cities, but right here in the four states area as well. Our goal is to help parents/guardians and students have the best defenses in place to help protect their families.

For further information or a list of our citations, please email Chelsea Delgado at: ChelseaD@choicesmedical.org or call LifeChoices at 417-623-4470.