

A Parent's Guide To Understanding the Harmful Effects of Pornography

Understanding Utah Code

Utah Code 76-5b-103 states child sexual abuse material means any visual depiction, including any live performance, photograph, film, video, or picture, whether made or produced by electronic, mechanical, or other means, of sexually explicit conduct, where:

- a. the production of the visual depiction involves the use of a minor engaging in, observing, or being used for sexually explicit conduct;
- b. the visual depiction is of a minor engaging in, observing, or being used for sexually explicit conduct; or
- c. the visual depiction has been created, adapted, or modified to appear that an identifiable minor is engaging in, observing, or being used for sexually explicit conduct.

It is illegal for minors, 18 years or younger, to send or retain nude or explicit images or videos of themselves or other minors. The distribution of child pornography in Utah is charged as a second-degree felony.

Minors who are sent images should take the following steps:

1. Do **NOT** send the picture to anyone. No matter their intentions, as soon as minors forward an inappropriate picture of a peer, they can legally be charged with possession and dissemination of child pornography. (See [Utah Code 76-5c-205](#)).
 - a. In order to report to proper authorities, the image/video would need to be saved to give to law enforcement.
 - b. Images cannot be saved on personal devices if they are not going to be reported.
2. Tell a trusted adult immediately. (School personnel are exempt when investigating a violation of [Utah Code 76-5c-208](#)).

3. Contact law enforcement for situations involving adults sending nude photos to a minor.

It is important to note that a minor who receives an image will not be charged for reporting that image, so long as they **do not distribute it in any way** and alert the appropriate adult.

USBE Action

The Utah State Board of Education recognizes the impact and concerns with students accessing and being sent pornographic images and video. Since 2018, the state has included instruction in the harmful effects of pornography as a safety standard in Health Education in middle school and high school.

Quick Facts

- Research shows that pornography use is linked to decreased brain matter, which results in decreased motivation and decision-making skills, impaired impulse control, interactions, body image, and emotional skills well into a person's mid-20's.
- Addictive substances and behaviors, like pornography, activate the part of the brain called the reward center. For minors, 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.
- 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. According to cases reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, pornography was the 3rd-most common form of sex trafficking.

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