

Child Porn—An Exploitation of Trust

The VIRTUS® Programs

A man will spend 17 years in prison after pleading guilty to sexual exploitation of children and production of sexually explicit images of a minor.

Among the 224 CD/DVD disks recently found in the man's home were videos of two sisters he babysat six years ago. The mother of the girls knew the man from work and considered him a friend. She recalled that she and her daughters had previous interactions with him without noticing any suspicious behaviors. The mother was completely unaware the man had filmed her daughters until the police contacted her earlier this year.

Police conducted Internet history searches on the perpetrator's computer and found titles that included "Child Molestation: The six steps to grooming," and "How to molest a child." The man will be registered as a sex offender and receive mental health treatment. Stephanie Zepelin, "Boise Mom warns others after daughters appear in child porn," www.ktvb.com (Sept. 26, 2012).

Child pornography is one of the fastest growing online businesses—a sobering fact for parents and caregivers. The Internet Watch Foundation verified over 1500 child abuse domains on the Internet in 2008, with 69 percent of the victims being age 10 or younger.

Digital technology and the Internet means pictures and video images have a seemingly endless existence. Photographs taken years ago can appear on the Internet today and years into the future.

As children begin to have access to the Internet, it is important for parents and caregivers to discuss the dangers of sending explicit photos using cell phones and other web devices.

Furthermore, parents and caregivers should pay careful attention when someone is asking to photograph children. Unknown individuals or organizations that want to take pictures of children and reproduce them should require written consent from the child's parents or caregivers that gives specific, limited permission for a particular use. Parents or other safe adults should always attend photo shoots.

Child pornography is, in truth, a picture of a child abuse crime scene. Parents, caregivers, and those who have contact with children need to watch for signs that a child is being abused. If you suspect abuse, virtualpediatrichospital.org recommends that you act immediately with these suggestions:

- If a child is trying to communicate that he or she is being abused, be a good listener. Sit still and stay calm.
- When the child is finished talking, encourage the child to say anything else that he or she may want to add.
- Do not ask specific questions as this may confuse the child.
- Tell the child that you believe what the child is telling you and that telling you about the abuse was the right thing to do.
- Tell the child that he or she did not do anything wrong and that you will protect the child.
- Write down everything that the child told you.
- Take the child to the doctor to be examined, if necessary.

- Keep the child away from the accused and try your best to keep other children away from the accused.
- Report the abuse to police, a healthcare provider, or a local child protective services agency. Get professional help for the child as soon as possible.

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