

# Kentucky should...



keep kids safer while they learn and socialize in digital spaces

Sexual extortion, or “sextortion,” has long existed offline, often involving demands for continued intimacy from perpetrators known to the victim, such as romantic partners or acquaintances.

**In recent years, there has been a significant shift toward online sextortion, with cases rapidly escalating.**

Perpetrators use social media platforms, gaming sites, and messaging apps to target youth, posing as peers or romantic interests to coerce victims into sharing explicit content. Perpetrators also can use AI-generated images to exploit victims.

Threats of exposure or harm are then used to demand money or additional explicit content.

***Nationally, children are experiencing sexual extortion at unprecedented rates:***

- Between October 2021 and March 2023, over **13,000 cases** of online financial sextortion targeting minors were recorded.
- **38% of teenagers and 23% of nine to 12-year-olds** believe it is common to share nude images with adults they meet online.
- Due to shame and embarrassment, **one in three victims** did not disclose their sextortion.



- **54% of minors** perceive online grooming as common among children their age.

## **Blueprint for Kentucky’s Children Policy Solution:**

Boost child safety and reduce online risk by increasing awareness of and ensuring appropriate responses to sexual extortion.

**By closing legal loopholes and promoting prevention strategies, such as age-appropriate monitoring of devices, we can help protect children. Kentucky should:**

- Establish sexual extortion as a felony under Kentucky law, ensuring that offenders are appropriately held accountable.
- Include sexual extortion within the definition of a “sex crime,” enhancing prosecution tools and ensuring these crimes are treated with the seriousness they deserve.
- Develop and distribute educational materials that inform parents, guardians, youth, and schools about the dangers of sexual extortion, focusing on recognizing warning signs, understanding the risks, and knowing how to seek help.