

OPP working to combat teen victimization

Young people who create and send sexual images through social media can often find themselves overwhelmed by the circumstances, OPP warn.

Teens can experience fear, despair and victimization after engaging in self-peer exploitation or 'sexting' and cyber bullying, police said.

OPP have announced that a website has been developed to help young people manage the helplessness they feel when they realize the negative consequences that can occur when they create and send sexual images through social media.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection (CCCP) has created a web-based, bilingual resource at www.NeedHelpNow.ca

This website is a place where teens can turn to find out how to regain control over what can quickly become a frightening and overwhelming experience. The website provides young people with practical advice and helpful information to manage the harassment they might feel over what they may have done online.

OPP is supporting this initiative to enhance safety and help reduce fear and despair among young people. NeedHelpNow.ca provides strategies to empower youth to take action to protect themselves.

NeedHelpNow posters are being distributed by OPP detachments for schools to display, to help raise awareness. OPP is also distributing a business card with information in communities across the province to promote this program.

'As a public safety organization, we have great concern for the safety of any teen victimized by the distribution of photographs on the internet and we will provide support in any way we can,' OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis commented. 'The OPP will use every avenue available to promote NeedHelpNow.ca as a potential resource for teens.'

'Teens need to realize the short and long term risks of sending out inappropriate or illegal photographs,' added Inspector Scott Naylor, of the OPP Child Sexual Exploitation Unit. 'Those who distribute such photos also need to be aware of the possible criminal ramifications of doing so. The OPP strongly supports any initiative to enhance awareness of this issue, and possibly prevent tragic outcomes in the future.'