



# SOCIAL MEDIA CRISIS GUIDE

Developed by BWC and Community Partners

Find us online for  
more resources:



or visit [belmontwellness.org](https://belmontwellness.org)



While most online experiences are generally safe, high-risk behavior, i.e., sharing of personal information, may expose youth to serious safety and security concerns, such as grooming and solicitation.

## GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

### What Constitutes A Social Media Crisis?

1. **Befriending** a stranger online, without parental approval/oversight.
2. **Receiving requests for money or images** from a stranger (either with or without extortionary demands).
3. **Exchanging images or video** especially suggestive or nude/partial nudes, with anyone. (Sharing sexual images or video puts youth at risk, even if it is with a person they like and know).
4. **Receiving money** or gifts from a stranger or acquaintance online.
5. **Providing** online contacts with personal details such as: address, bank details, passwords, email accounts, school location, or names of/information about family members.
6. **Meeting** a stranger (encountered online) in person without parental approval/ oversight.

**Concerning bullying: If online bullying or harassment is occurring, please visit [cyberbullying.org](https://www.cyberbullying.org) or [connectsafely.org](https://www.connectsafely.org) for more resources.**

## WHAT TO DO IN A SOCIAL MEDIA CRISIS

### 1 Understand and Document

Talk with your child. Learn more about who they have been communicating with, how often, and what they know (or think they know) about them.



belmontwellnesscoalition or visit [belmontwellness.org](https://www.belmontwellness.org)

## Ask:

- Have you met (this person) in person?
- Have you planned to?
- Have you exchanged images with them? What images?
- Have they ever sent you gifts or money?
- Have you shared any of the following with this person?:
  - phone numbers
  - home address
  - school (name or location)
  - email address
  - town
  - bank information (including Venmo, PayPal, CashApp)
  - names of parents or siblings

## Document:

1. What app(s) your child is using to communicate with this person.
2. Account names of the person with whom your child has been communicating.

## 2

## Discuss and Educate!

Talk about the safety risks of engaging with strangers online and sharing personal information and/or images. Listen to their thoughts on these issues as well, so that they feel heard and validated.

- Try to remain calm. Do not express your anger/fear to your child. Rather talk to individuals (ideally a professional in child development) who will keep your situation private. While remaining calm is difficult, if you do so, they may be willing to share more information, rather than shut down or become defensive.
- Let them know that missteps are OK, but it's important to learn from mistakes and get on a safer online path.
- Let them know that *people are often not who they say they are* and it is not uncommon for online predators to masquerade as teens, even using fake pictures.
- Let them know that the steps listed under #3, 4, and 5 may need to be taken.



## 3 Investigate and Protect

Review all accounts as well as the accounts of the person(s) with whom they have been communicating to understand the nature of the communications and what was exchanged.

- **Change passwords** on all social media platforms and any money exchange apps (or consider closing these accounts altogether).
  - **Review** any exchanges you can (note, this can be difficult with apps like Snapchat).
  - **Make copies** of any images shared or texts exchanged, this can be important evidence.
  - **Update privacy settings** and use two-factor authentication.
  - **If bank information has been exchanged, notify the bank and close the account.**
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## 4 Notify

Notify the following. [Check with the Belmont Police Department if notification of the FBI and NCMEC is recommended. Be prepared to provide information about what has been exchanged and how.]

- **Belmont Police:** Contact the Belmont Police's Community Safety Officer at 617-993-2554. *(The police will contact your school).*
- **Belmont Public Schools:** If you feel it is warranted, contact your child's principal or assistant principal.

[Click here](#) for Chenery Upper Middle School contact information.

[Click here](#) for Belmont Middle School contact information.

[Click here](#) for Belmont High contact information.

- **Report the offender to the platform:** Work with your child to report the contact to the appropriate platform, and then block the contact. You'll need to use the app's security settings to do this.

## Information to Share with the School

If you choose to inform the school, share the following:

1. A summary of what's occurred.
2. What the school can do to help (*e.g., keep an eye on the youth, ask teachers to email if they are getting behind on work or leaving class for long periods*).
3. Who this information should be shared with (*e.g., guidance counselor, school psychologist, teachers*).
4. What you want *identified* staff to know about this situation (*be aware of your child's privacy*).
5. If your child has a close, trusting relationship with a teacher/staff member, it's okay to reach out to them; however, keep the principal/assistant principal informed.

### Note:

1. While many tech companies say they take these matters seriously, few will respond to reports or provide anyone for you to talk with. *You will need to make the report through the App itself.*
2. The options for reporting and controls for children under 13 are often stronger than what can be achieved for teens.

## In the event of a more serious crisis, contact:

- **The FBI:** If your child has been sexually exploited online (i.e., if they have shared or been sent nude, partially nude, or pornographic images and/or are being “sextorted”) notify the [FBI's Cyber Tip Line](#) or call 1-800-843-5678.
- **NCMEC:** Also report child sexual exploitation to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at [CyberTipline.org](#) or 1-800-THE-LOST.



## 5

## Remove Access and Block

**Note:** For tweens this may be easier; it can be challenging if an older teen is really committed to their online accounts, therefore, it is important to stress that their safety is the priority.

- **Block the person** from all accounts or completely remove access by deleting accounts (note: offenders may have multiple online personas and if one is deleted, they may reach out through another). Also note, this is an imperfect solution since your youth can unblock; it is therefore important to not only remove access and notify authorities, but also to discuss with your youth why this is necessary.
- If possible, **negotiate a break from social media** use for a period of time or a more monitored use.
- If email has been exchanged, close that email account and open a new one.
- **Remove computers** or other online access from your child's room or other private spaces.
- If you have **controls at home** ( e.g. Apple Family, Circle, Bark or other online monitoring tool), monitor contacts and exchanges.

*See resources on page 8 for steps on how to block users on different social media platforms.*

## 6

## Seek Counseling for Your Child And Family

- Have your youth see a professional to help them work through any trauma/shame from their online exchange and/or to address any underlying issues, e.g., self-esteem, anxiety, or depression.
- Counseling may be helpful to talk through challenges and (re)develop clear agreements and expectations for online behavior.
- Visit Belmont Wellness Coalition's website for [mental health service information](#) and [resources for finding therapists](#).



# RESOURCES

## **Removing Posts and other Support**

To get nude images removed from the internet:

<https://takeitdown.ncmec.org/>

[Tipsheet for victims of sextortion](#)

**Note:** *Don't pay for services to investigate or remove internet content, these can often be scams, the FBI recommends using only free resources*

## **Parental Control Tools:**

[Apple Parental Controls](#)

[Aura](#)

[Bark](#)

[Circle](#)

[Other options](#)

## **Cyberbullying and Harassment Resources:**

[cyberbullying.org](http://cyberbullying.org)

[connectsafely.org](http://connectsafely.org)

## **Parenting, Media, and Everything in Between**

*Common Sense Media*



## Guides for protecting, blocking & reporting on popular social media sites:



[Instagram Guide for Parents](#)



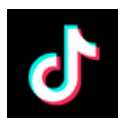
[Snapchat Guide for Parents](#)  
[Reporting a User on](#)  
[Snapchat](#)



[Discord Guide for Parents](#)  
[Reporting a User or Post on](#)  
[Discord](#)



[Threads \(by Instagram\)](#)  
[Guide for Parents](#)



[TikTok Guide for Parents](#)  
[Report a user on TikTok](#)



[A Parent's Guide to](#)  
[Twitter \(now known as 'X'\)](#)  
[Unfollowing a user on](#)  
[Twitter](#)



[Reporting Tweets and](#)  
[Direct Messages on](#)  
[Twitter](#)



[A Parent's Guide to](#)  
[BeReal](#)

