

ACJS *today*

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Newsletter



Engaging with National Criminal Justice Month

By Jennifer Gibbs, David May, Johnny Rice II, and Cassandra L. Reyes

During the past year, in part due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, crime and the criminal justice system have experienced several changes. As people emerge from the pandemic lockdowns, crime—especially violent crime—is increasing. The causes and consequences of the change in crime are ripe for research exploration. The death of George Floyd and subsequent charging, trial, and lengthy prison sentence of former police officer Derek Chauvin sparked demonstrations promoting Black Lives Matter, raising awareness among the general public about the central role of race in criminal jus-

continues on page 02

TABLE OF CONTENTS

7 ARTICLE
The Irony of Paywalled Articles
Is They Can Be Made Open
Access for Free
by Scott Jacques, PhD and Eric
Piza, PhD

10 TEACHING TIPS
Building an Online Classroom
Community
by Danielle Bailey, PhD

11 BOOK REVIEW
Evaluating Police Uses of Force
by Kevin V. Riley

14 RESEARCH AND POLICY
Sexting, Sextortion, and Child
Pornography: How Do We
Help Our Children? by Bryan
Wright

**16 2022 ACJS ACADEMY AWARD
RECIPIENTS**

19 IN MEMORIAM

23 EXECUTIVE BOARD



Sexting, Sextortion, and Child Pornography:

How Do We Help Our Children?

By Bryan Wright

Think of your most embarrassing moment. Remember how you felt, the awkwardness and humiliation? Imagine how you would feel if naked photos of yourself were shared on the internet or with all your friends and coworkers. What if these images were of a child that you love?

You may not think that this could ever happen to someone that you know and love, but sexting and sextortion are growing problems among young people. Statistics and percentages continue to climb, with recent studies showing that one in four students reported “sending, receiving, or sharing nude photos or sexual images in the past 30 days” (McCoy, 2020). Another study shows that 48% of teens say they have received sexually suggestive messages (GuardChild, n.d.). When two consenting adults share sexually explicit material it is not a crime; however, when a child under the age of 18 sends sexually explicit content or nude photos to another child, they are guilty of distributing child pornography to a minor, which is a Class F felony. The person who receives the content or photos is guilty of possession of child pornography, which is a Class I felony (Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 2020). Once charged with possession of child pornography, a person is added to the sex offender registry, leaving them labeled as a sex offender for life.

A child being charged with a felony for sexting is rare, yet it does happen. Youth who have engaged in sexting are often processed through the juvenile justice system, given a misdemeanor ticket, ordered to do community service, and/or an array of other punitive sanctions may be applied. However, these approaches that have been used in the recent past to reduce teen sexting have not worked (Patchin, 2020).

Furthermore, once a child has shared sexual photos with others, those individuals can use the threat of exposing the images to manipulate vulnerable teens. Consequently, teen sexting cases

may further tax social agencies by facilitating teen sextortion cases. Indeed, according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (n.d.), “More than 12.7 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation were made to the CyberTipline between 1998 and June 2016. More than 8.2 million in 2016 alone.”

What is a healthy solution and how does the criminal justice system, or any other organization, approach these issues? I showed up to a social media task force out of Winnebago, WI attended by leaders from various county disciplines including law enforcement, the district attorney’s office, school officials, and human services. That group “identified sexting as something that was problematic,” said Eric Sparr, Deputy District Attorney of Winnebago County (Woods, 2021). With sexting being as problematic as it is, with no real solutions or best practices to handle it, everyone agreed there needs to be a program to address this issue.

Dynamic Family Solutions was founded to help offer healthier alternatives to better address and create new resolve for issues such as this. As a company we are dedicated to developing second-chance educational diversion programs that help families and youth struggling with life-altering issues. As I’ve been developing programs for more than 13 years, I stepped up to the challenge and said I’ll create a program. What came of it is now the Social Media and Sexting Diversion Program.

The program is designed to explore why teens engage in risky behaviors, such as sexting, and teach replacement behaviors and thought processes that build self-esteem and confidence. Instead of sending adolescents through the criminal process, they are now referred directly to the program where in lieu of receiving a ticket they are offered a second-chance educational alternative. We receive 85% of referrals from School Resources Officers who work directly with students in the school, 13% from Health and Human Service Departments, and 2% from teens who are facing criminal charges.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the program, I partnered



with professors in the Criminal Justice Department at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. A standardized pre- and post-test evaluation was developed to gauge each student's progress in the program and assess program effectiveness. What they've found is that teens reported a higher understanding in certain areas, such as perpetrator mentality, the idea of hypersexualization in today's culture and its influence on them, and how it can lead to higher levels of sexual abuse and assault. They also saw significant gains in teens' self-esteem (Beck et al., 2021). Upon seeing these results, Assistant Criminal Justice Professor Matt Richie commented, "My thought was that any program that will make kids feel better about themselves is worth its weight in gold."

Due to a growing demand for the program, Dynamic Family Solutions now offers full certification training to become a program facilitator, allowing organizations to provide the program in their own area. Dynamic Family Solutions' Social Media and Sexting Diversion program now has more than 150 trained facilitators running the program in 22 counties within Wisconsin, 3 other states, and internationally in Barcelona, Spain. Many states are facing the challenges of how to best address these issues among today's youth. Every state deals with child pornography and sexting by minors differently (see <https://cyberbullying.org/sexting-laws> for the penalties in each state). To be effective in helping resolve the issues of sexting, there needs to be a consistent approach based on best practices to address this problem.

If you would like to learn more about Dynamic Family Solutions, you can visit dynamicfamilysolutions.net. ■

References

- Beck, V. S., Richie, M., Wright, B., & Jones, D. (2021). Social media and sexting intervention: A new juvenile diversion program. *Justice Evaluation Journal*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24751979.2021.1963637>
- GuardChild. (n.d.). Teenage sexting statistics. GuardChild. Retrieved from <https://www.guardchild.com/teenage-sexting-statistics/>
- McCoy, K. (2020, March). Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Screen use and online behavior. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Retrieved from https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/YRBS_2019_Summary_Report_DPI_Web_Version.pdf
- NCMEC. (n.d.). Sextortion. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Retrieved from <https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/sexortion>
- Patchin, J. W. (2020, July 15). Current efforts to curtail teen sexting not working. Cyberbullying Research Center. Retrieved from <https://cyberbullying.org/teen-sexting-research-2016-2019>
- WCASA. (2020). Wisconsin child pornography laws. Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault. Retrieved from https://www.wcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/WI-Child-Pornography-Laws_Infheet2019.pdf
- Woods, M. (2021, November 19). Wisconsin man develops successful diversion program to address teen sexting issue. Spectrum News 1. Retrieved from https://spectrumnews1.com/wi/green-bay/news/2021/11/10/a-solution-for-sexting?cid=app_share



Bryan Wright
graduated from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, where he received a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. Bryan found himself taking an alternative path from becoming a cop and has spent more than 13 years working in the fields

of domestic and sexual violence. He started as an intern working with restorative practices and helping to implement restorative programming in schools. He has worked as a behavioral specialist with Lutheran Social Services, a children's advocate for Safe Haven Domestic Abuse, and a dual prevention educator for Christine Ann Domestic Abuse and Reach Counseling Sexual Abuse. Bryan's experience working with families and youth, running and creating curricula and groups, enabled him to establish Dynamic Family Solutions LLC, a company devoted to providing the best evidenced-based curriculum to alleviate issues families and youth are enduring. You can check out Dynamic's latest programs and curriculums at dynamicfamilysolutions.net.

2022 ACJS ACADEMY AWARD RECIPIENTS



Academy Leadership and Innovation Award

Bryan Wright,
Founder and Owner
Dynamic Family
Solutions, LLC



ACJS Outstanding Mentor Award

Leah E. Daigle,
Georgia State
University



ACJS Outstanding Mentor Award

Olena Antonaccio,
University of Miami



ACJS Outstanding Mentor Award

Jesenia M. Pizarro,
Arizona State
University



ACJS Outstanding Mentor Award

Bryan Lee Miller,
Clemson University



ACJS Outstanding Mentor Award

James Frank,
University of
Cincinnati



ACJS Outstanding Mentor Award

Jason Williams,
Montclair State
University



ACJS Outstanding Mentor Award

Salih Hakan Can,
Penn State Schuylkill