Trapped Online - Financial Child Extortion in Hampton Roads

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Introduction



What is Financial Sextortion?

1. A predator poses as a peer online.
This has recently been done on Snapchat

2. Tricks or pressures a minor into sending explicit images.
Boys between 14-17 have been the typical victim recently

3. Threatens to share the image unless the follow demands (in the form of money)

4. Leads to anxiety, isolation and in some cases suicide

Explaining the Problem

14+ reported sextortion cases in hampton Roads



“We’re seeing an alarming increase here in Hampton Roads”

Special Agent - Brian Dugan



FBI: Sextortion cases rise in Hampton Roads, parts of U.S.

20% increase from the previous year (cases are also underreported)

Happening Here

Reals Cases

Boy met someone posing as a girl on snapchat - sent explicit image - predator demanded $500 or personal friends and family would be sent the image - child paid $140

Case 1

Girl received her face photoshopped onto a nude image - she was threatened unless she complied

Case 2

Predators are usually overseas and heard to prosecute

“Once you get drawn in the net... it only gets worse” - Former detective Richard James

Why is this a social problem?

- Victims cannot solve this alone
  They're minors in a crisis

- Perpetrators are often international
  Individual/ local reporting does not stop the perpetrator

- Shame and fear prevent most victims from telling anyone

- Problems like these require collective response from law enforcement, schools, and governments

- This is not about bad choices
  It's a predatory system targeting children

The Stakes

15 documented Hampton Roads cases involving teen blackmail - some demanded thousands

Victims experience depression, isolation and fear of going in public and school

Nationally, at least 12 suicides linked to financial sextortion in one year

FBI Norfolk has visited local high schools to warn students directly

The council has to do more than warn students

It needs to ACT

Key Stakeholders

The Stakeholders

FBI Norfolk

- Federal law enforcement with dedicated field in Norfolk
- Currently Conducting local sextortion investigations and outreach
- Has authority to investigate, arrest and prosecute across state lines
- Only reactive

SOVA-ICAC Task Force

- Southern Virginia Internet Crimes against Children Task Force
- One of the original 10 ICAC task forces in the United States (1998)
- Over 150 member agencies covering all of Hampton Roads
- Conducts investigations digital forensics and community education
- Has run undercover operations in Hampton Roads

Hampton Roads Schools

- Thousands of children in Hampton Roads middle and high schools
- VA state law requires school boards to address bullying and online safety
- School counselors are trained for student crisis
- Currently no sextortion specific education
- Schools are where awareness can start before kids become victims

Proposed Solution

A mandatory digital safety module for all Hampton Roads middle and high school students

It is given once per year during health or advisory class

It is co developed with SOVA-ICAC investigations and school counselors

It should cover how sextortion works, warning sign, what to do if it occurs and how to report

FUNDED by Hampton Roads city budget and federal ICAC grant funding



The Solution: Know the TRAP

Why it will Work

- Connects to existing school programming/curriculum
- ICAC grant funding already exists and Hampton Roads can help boost that funding
- It'll reach student before victimization
  - Not after
- Uses trusted professionals (counselors not police to reduce shame
- FBI Norfolk has shown willingness to engage with schools directly

Thank you