

Sep 26, 2023

Contact Kylie Mason

Phone (850) 245-0150



OFFICE OF  
**ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
**ASHLEY MOODY**  
— Stronger, Safer Florida —

## Attorney General Ashley Moody News Release

### Attorney General Moody Warns About How AI Can Be Used to Target and Extort Teens



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—September is National Suicide Prevention Month and Attorney General Ashley Moody is warning about online sextortion ending with victims taking their own lives. Within the past 18 months, at least three teens, one in [California](#), one in [Michigan](#) and one in [South Carolina](#), all committed suicide after being extorted online. [According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation](#), there is an uptick in sextortion reports and the addition of artificial intelligence tools can simplify the process for online predators.

Artificial intelligence also makes the deception more believable. Criminals are able to purchase hacked social media accounts to send stolen or AI-generated, sexually explicit images to victims and establish online relationships with teens. This is done in an attempt to receive similar photos from the victim to use as a means of blackmail—forcing the victim to send money, perform explicit acts or even agree to an in-person meeting.

**Attorney General Ashley Moody** said, “The rapid rise of artificial intelligence makes it easier for predators to impersonate and target teens. We are beginning to see this new technology deployed in sextortion schemes to trick minors into sending explicit photos and videos of

themselves. Parents, please talk to your children about online safety and remind them that adult predators may use advanced technology to appear as a peer or love interest in an effort to gain trust and ultimately take advantage of them.”

The FBI reported that [at least 7,000 reports of sextortion of minors](#) occurred last year in the United States, with the majority of those targeted being teenage boys. More than a dozen victims died by suicide. [Most victims targeted are around ages 14 and 17](#), but there are reports of children as young as 10 years old receiving sextortion messages.

One report found that criminals use ‘disappearing message’ features in conversations to persuade targets that multimedia messages will disappear after a short while. Often, criminals will use social media platforms that use these features and do not preserve messages. However, the messages never truly disappear, and a criminal saves everything through screenshots or using a second application or device to record the messages and images. Attorney General Moody is urging parents and guardians to engage in open conversations with teenagers about the dangers of sharing explicit content online.

The [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children lists](#) what to do if fallen victim in a sextortion case:

- Report sextortion to law enforcement immediately;
- Know that cooperating with a blackmailer rarely stops the blackmailer;
- Flag the social media account via the platform’s safety feature;
- Block the suspect on the social media platform, but do not delete messages because they can be helpful to law enforcement in stopping the blackmailer;
- Use resources like the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in helping get explicit images off the internet—visit [MissingKids.org/IsYourExplicitContentOutThere](#); and
- Remember, the blackmailer is to blame, not you. Even if you made a choice you regret, what they are doing is a crime.

If suffering with mental health issues, please call the [Suicide Crisis Lifeline](#) by dialing 988.

Attorney General Moody released an Online Safety Toolkit to ensure that parents are equipped to help keep children safe from sextortion and human trafficking. To view the toolkit, click [here](#).

###