A Parent's Checklist for Documenting Online Sextortion on Snapchat

A practical guide to identifying and documenting potential predators

Helping Survivors

Online sextortion is an increasingly common threat targeting children and teenagers on social media platforms such as Snapchat. Families and state government officials alike have argued in recent lawsuits against Snapchat that its design to create "disappearing" videos and messages has only enabled predators. Predators often use fake profiles, manipulation, and pressure to obtain explicit images and then threaten victims for more content, money, or silence. For parents, recognizing warning signs early and properly documenting evidence can help protect your child and support law enforcement investigations.

This checklist is designed to help parents identify potential predatory behavior and safely document interactions without escalating the situation.

1. Recognizing Common Predator Behaviors

Predators often follow similar patterns when targeting young people online. Look for these warning signs:

Profile Red Flags

☐ The account uses stolen photos or looks like a model/influencer profile.
☐ The profile was recently created or has very little content/history.
☐ The username contains random numbers or slight misspellings.
☐ The account claims to be a teenager but communicates in an unusually mature way.

Behavioral Warning Signs

☐ The person quickly moves conversations to private platforms or asks for Snapchat specifically.
☐ They request that your child keep the conversation secret from parents.
☐ They rapidly escalate conversations toward flirting or sexual topics.
☐ They ask for photos or videos that are inappropriate or explicit.
☐ They threaten embarrassment, exposure, or consequences if the child refuses.

Manipulation Tactics

☐ They pretend to be a romantic partner or "crush."
☐ They claim mutual friends or fake shared interests.
☐ They send a fake explicit photo first to pressure the child to respond.
☐ They use urgency ("send it now," "don't screenshot," "this will disappear").

2. Documenting Evidence Safely

If you suspect your child has been targeted by a predator, one of the first steps you should take is to document evidence. Documenting evidence carefully can be critical for reporting the crime.

Evidence Documentation Checklist:

- ☐ Take screenshots of the entire conversation, including usernames and timestamps.
- ☐ Capture the predator's Snapchat username and Snapcode if visible.
- ☐ Screenshot the profile page, including profile picture and bio.
- ☐ Record any threats, coercion, or demands for money or images.
- ☐ Save any images, videos, or links the predator sends.
- ☐ Write down the date and time when interactions occurred.
- ☐ Document any requests to move to other platforms (Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.).

3. Preserving Digital Evidence

To strengthen documentation for investigators:

- ☐ Save screenshots in their original format if possible.
- ☐ Back up evidence to a secure location (cloud storage or external drive).
- ☐ Keep a simple timeline of events describing what happened and when.
- ☐ Note any financial requests, payment links, or cryptocurrency wallets.
- ☐ Preserve the device used if the situation escalates into a formal investigation.

4. Reporting the Incident

Once evidence is collected, report the activity immediately.

Where to Report:

- ☐ Report the account through Snapchat's in-app reporting system.
- ☐ File a report with your local police or cybercrime unit.
- ☐ Submit a report to a national child exploitation tipline.
- ☐ Inform your child's school if the situation involves classmates.

5. Supporting Your Child

Children targeted by sextortion often feel fear, embarrassment, or guilt.

- ☐ Reassure your child that they are not at fault.
- ☐ Avoid punishment for coming forward.
- ☐ Focus on safety and support rather than blame.
- ☐ Seek professional counseling if the child is distressed.

Final Reminder

Online predators rely on secrecy and fear. By staying informed, documenting evidence carefully, and responding quickly, parents can play a crucial role in protecting their children and helping authorities stop exploitation networks.

Awareness, documentation, and reporting are the most powerful tools families have to fight online sextortion.