



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENSDA.ORG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2020

CONTACT: PRESS OFFICE (718) 286-6315
QDACommunications@queensda.org

**QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY MELINDA KATZ ISSUES WARNINGS
TO PARENTS ABOUT ONLINE CHILD PREDATORS**

The spread of the coronavirus has brought new challenges and responsibilities to all the parents and guardians in Queens County. With schools closed many teens and preteens are finding more time to explore the internet on computers and phones. Teens are naturally curious about everything including their sexuality and in this very difficult time may find themselves, through no fault of their own, in compromising positions online. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has seen a rise in the number of reports involving child sexual abuse material on the internet. My office has also seen an increase in the number of complaints regarding improper behavior towards teenagers and preteens on the internet. Several of these complaints have involved strangers seeking inappropriate pictures of the teens.

Now more than ever, it is important to be aware of what your child is doing on their smartphones, tablets and computers. Predators are aware that children are home during the day and may use this time to attempt to contact them and lure them into inappropriate situations. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) offers free digital resources through Netsmartz.org regarding online safety for children and parents. NetSmartz.org is NCMEC's online safety education program. It provides age-appropriate videos and activities to help teach children be safer online by becoming more aware of potential risks and being empowered to make safer choices on and offline.

If your child becomes a victim of an online predator, you should save whatever evidence you have, including pictures, and take screenshots of messages and contact information of the predator. You should report it to your local precinct or call (646) 610-7272. Our Computer Crime Unit is well equipped to handle these complaints.

#

Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.