

Responding to AI-Enhanced Image or Video Abuse: A Guide for Educators

As educators, you are on the front lines of recognizing and responding to these incidents with compassion, clarity and action. This guide will equip you to understand AI-enhanced image or video abuse, respond effectively and foster an environment where everyone feels safe and empowered. Your role is not just to react but to help restore hope and dignity for those targeted.

What to Know: Understanding the Impact

What is it?

AI enhanced media abuse involves using artificial intelligence to create or manipulate images/videos (also known as deepfakes) to coerce, shame, or exploit someone. Perpetrators may alter regular photos from social media into explicit content or generate original images and videos. Deepfakes can spread rapidly online and be readily shared. They can be created easily and quickly on phones and do not require complicated programming or visual fx knowledge.

How can it impact victims?

Anyone can be a target of this abuse—students, educators and staff included. Victims, especially minors, may feel isolated, shamed or afraid to seek help. They may fear punishment, blame or disbelief from the adults in their lives. Oftentimes, victims may not know the image or video exists until it's been shared amongst peers.

Key Signs to Watch for:

Students: Withdrawal, anxiety, fear of attending school, excessive absences, reluctance to engage online

Faculty/Staff: Sudden changes in behavior, distress about online presence, reports of harassment

Administrators: Reports of targeted threats or reputational attacks via manipulated media

Why should educators be concerned?

Students, educators and staff spend most of their waking hours at school. As educators, you shape a culture where everyone feels seen, heard and safe. AI abuse thrives on silence and shame, but your response can break that cycle. By listening with compassion and acting swiftly, you will empower your school community to navigate these circumstances with resilience and prevent further trauma to victims. Your response can provide hope to a victim who may be experiencing feelings of hopelessness and desperation. Your words and actions can help prevent future tragedy.

What to Do: Action Steps for Educators

1. Respond with Empathy and Validation

- **Believe Them.** Even if the image is fake, the trauma is real.

- **Affirm Their Courage:** Disclosure takes bravery and a level of trust. Use language such as: “I’m so glad you told me. This is not your fault. In talking about this, you’re taking back control of the situation. We’re going to figure this out together.”
- **Listen Without Judgment:** Avoid demanding details or asking too many questions, especially those that imply blame (i.e. “Why did you post that photo?”)
- **Acknowledge the Trauma:** Recognize the violation of trust and privacy. Use language such as: “This is a real betrayal, and it’s okay to feel upset. You didn’t do anything to deserve this and we’re here to support you.”

2. Take Immediate Action

- **Document, Don’t Share:** Document the disclosure. *Evidence should be stored securely and not forwarded.*
- **Follow Reporting Protocol:** Set your school’s reporting protocol in motion, ensuring privacy and compliance with policies like Title IX and state laws concerning harassment. Encourage the victim to contact local law enforcement and/or the [FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center](#). Report to the [National Center for Missing & Exploited Children’s CyberTipline](#) if the victim is a minor or the content involves child sexual abuse material.
- **Involve Trusted Adults:** For students, loop in parents/guardians sensitively, ensuring the victim feels included in decisions. For faculty/staff, offer confidential support.
- **Assist with Requesting Content Removal:** It is essential that all involved understand that, while removal is important, it is paramount that digital footprints are not destroyed, as they provide evidence that may prove crucial in ensuring perpetrators face justice. *Avoid engaging with perpetrators directly.*

3. Support Recovery

- **Connect to Resources:** Connect victim with internal or external counseling services.
- **Protect Dignity:** Remain aware. Remove students or staff from triggering situations (i.e. if the image or video is circulating around school) and monitor peer behavior. Deepfake abuse is often followed by rumors, harassment or social rejection.
- **Foster a Safe Classroom:** Create a culture of digital respect by discussing consent and body autonomy in age-appropriate ways. Convey to students and staff that their image is theirs, even online, and no one has the right to manipulate it.

4. Prevent Future Incidents

- **Educate on Digital Literacy:** Integrate AI awareness into media literacy lessons. A resource on how to identify deepfake images can be found [here](#). A resource on practicing safe online habits can be found [here](#).
- **Be a Bridge, Not a Barrier:** Scare tactics and ignoring the issue do not work. We can prioritize the safety of our students and staff through education and encouraging an open dialogue. Normalize help seeking by reminding students that they will not be in trouble for telling a trusted adult when something is wrong, on or offline.
- **Advocate for Policies:** Push for school protocols on recognizing and responding to AI abuse, including training for staff, workshops for parents and clear reporting flowcharts.

What to Remember: Your Role is Important

The goal is to protect dignity, reduce harm and create a climate where students and staff know:

It's safe to tell.
They'll be believed.
They won't be blamed.

AI abuse is real and it's happening now worldwide. AI can replicate a face and body, but it can't erase a person's worth. You do not need to be a tech expert to respond effectively. You need to be a trusted adult who listens, supports and takes the right next step.