

An online predator blackmailing Monroe County students

Offender befriends teens, demands photographs

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Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

The Hilton School District is the latest area district to warn its community about an online predator blackmailing students in the area through social media.

Hilton posted a letter to parents on its website Tuesday.

The district said that several students in Monroe and Yates counties have been targeted by a person or group that has created several social media accounts. The offender has friended students online to get “personal and private images and information about these students.”

“The predator then uses this information to ‘blackmail’ the students to provide additional pictures and information with the threat of sharing what has already been provided on social media sites and other public entities,” the letter said.

Monroe County is the fourth local county with student victims since December.

New York State Police launched its initial investigation into an online “sextortion” scam targeting Penn Yan and Dundee students in Yates County last month. Wayne Central School District released a statement a week later saying that the district received reports of several students who had been “victimized by an online predator.”

Canandaigua said its students have also been targeted by online predators and fallen victim to a scam.

Hilton’s statement asks parents to speak with their children about their social media activities and suggests that concerned parents call their child’s counselor. If you’re a Hilton parent who believes your child has been targeted or victimized, contact Director of Safety and Security David Inzana at (585) 392-1000, ext. 7046 or dinzana@hilton.k12.ny.us.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, so-called “sextortion” is the fastest-growing online threat against children.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation says parents should take these steps to help shield their children against “sextortion” activity:

- Make children aware anything done online may be available to others.
- Make sure apps and privacy settings are set to the strictest level possible.
- Keep personal computers in a central location in your home.
- Review and approve apps downloaded to smart phones and monitor activity on those devices.
- Ensure an adult is present and engaged when children communicate via webcam.
- Regularly go through your child’s “friends” and “followers” lists and delete anyone your child has not met in person.
- Discuss internet safety with your children before they engage in any online activity and maintain those discussions as children become teenagers.

The agency says anyone who asks a child to engage in sexually explicit activity online should be reported to a parent, guardian or law enforcement immediately.



Hilton High School posted a letter to parents on Tuesday. TINA MACINTYRE-YEE /ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

