

# News Release

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## **U.S. Attorney hosts Town Hall Meeting to warn teens of dangers of “sexting”**

Steven M. Dettelbach, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, announced today that on March 12, 2010 he will sponsor a Town Hall Meeting to discuss the legal, social and psychological impact of sending or receiving a sexually suggestive photo via text messaging, a practice known as “sexting.” Recent studies have shown that approximately 1 in 5 teens have engaged in this behavior. According to Mr. Dettelbach, many teens do not understand the significant and long-term negative implications such risky behavior can have on them, legally, socially and psychologically. Sadly, such behavior has led to at least two teens, one from Ohio, taking their own lives after suffering harassment by classmates who received their nude pictures, which had been repeatedly forwarded by other classmates. “The best service law enforcement offers is preventing crime,” said Mr. Dettelbach. He continued, “Once one of these kids hits the ‘send’ button, they expose themselves and their families to a web full of hurt”

The U.S. Attorneys Office will partner with WVIZ/PBS Ideastream to help make this important program accessible to students around the state. Rick Jackson will moderate a panel of experts, who will discuss this recent trend and the real-life effects it has on today’s teens - today, tomorrow, and for years to come. The session will be broadcast live from the WVIZ/PBS studio. “WVIZ/PBS Ideastream is proud to partner with the office of the United States Attorney in

producing and broadcasting this timely and dynamic program,” said Linda Williams, Senior Director of Educational Services for WVIZ/PBS ideastream. “As an important communication link to the schools in Northeast Ohio and across the state, WVIZ/PBS hopes that this program’s message provides teens with the necessary information to make the right decisions when texting,” she continued.

Thanks to the generous support of Phizzle, the session will be interactive, allowing viewers and attendees to participate via text messaging. Phizzle, a San Francisco-based company, provides web-based mobile platforms that allow marketers to launch and manage real-time mobile marketing campaigns. Phizzle is donating its services for this program, which will allow students viewing the program to ask questions of the panel via text messaging and to participate in surveys designed to assess the scope of the problem. “Phizzle is pleased to be a part of this vital community outreach program,” said Ben Davis, CEO of Phizzle. “While we believe in the power of mobile, we certainly do not condone sexting. Phizzle congratulates the U.S. Attorney’s Office and WVIZ/PBS Ideastream for its efforts on reaching out to educate teens on the effects of sexually suggestive texting.”

This program is being produced as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit [www.projectsafechildhood.gov](http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov).

The program will be broadcast, live on March 12, 2010 from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. Several schools will send students to view the program in-person and over 50 schools have indicated that they will be tuning in. The program will be broadcast to schools via a distance learning connection from WVIZ/PBS Ideastream, as well as streamed live online at [www.wviz.org/distance](http://www.wviz.org/distance).

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