

KDVR Fox 31 News:

# ***Sexting scandal at Cañon City High involves hundreds of students***

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CANON CITY, Colo. — A sexting scandal involving hundreds of students is at the center of a criminal investigation at Cañon City High School.

Parents attended a special meeting Thursday night where they learned an anonymous tip led administrators to hundreds of explicit photos of many students, some as young as eighth-graders.

The photos were collected and shared with other students on cellphones. Administrators asked parents to talk to their children and report any possible victims or illegal activity. Officials believe there are more photos that have not been found.

“A tip led to a couple more names, an interview led to a couple more. At one point it was, ‘Well everybody is doing this’. Of course, we didn’t believe them up front and the more we looked, the more we said, ‘You know, hey, we have to turn this over to the PD. This is deeper than us,’” Cañon City High School principal Bret Meuli said.

The school canceled Saturday’s football game against Discovery Canyon High School because several members of the team are involved.

Administrators found that students were sharing explicit photos of other students and storing them on hidden photo vault apps. Those apps are often disguised as other common applications such as calculators.

“It’s hundreds, and I mean it was flooring to us how many photos that we were finding on the phones that we confiscated,” Meuli said.

Police are investigating the allegations with the Fremont County District Attorney’s Office. Police launched the investigation after receiving a message from a “Safe2Tell” tipster. The school became aware of the photos on Monday.

“We realize this decision will unfairly penalize many of our fine young men who clearly did not participate in these actions,” the school district said in a Facebook post.

Even if the sexts were consensual, students could technically face felony child pornography charges and sex offender status under Colorado law. Formal charges will be determined by the Fremont County District Attorney's Office.

"The mere possession of these materials does constitute an ongoing crime," said Fremont County District Attorney Tom LeDoux, who said his office will use discretion.

"We certainly have no intention of requiring under the law, a juvenile to register as a sex offender unless it is absolutely necessary," he said.

"These are a bunch of kids who made stupid mistakes. Throwing around the child pornography? It's life changing for some of these kids," parent Gina Devonshire said.

"We're not dealing with a bunch of adults who made a bunch of bad decisions, we're dealing with kids that made bad decisions," parent Michelle Barnes said.

During a meeting Thursday night, administrators and law enforcement officials told parents how to talk to their children and how to report possible victims or photos.

"It's just a nationwide problem, it just happened that it's really exposed here," Barnes said.

Added Devonshire: "The sad part is you could probably go to any high school and grab cellphones from all of the students and there is going to be pictures of sexting."