

Legal Resources and Information

- **National Crime Victim Bar Association:** A professional association of attorneys and expert witnesses dedicated to helping victims seek justice through the civil system. victimbar.org
- **American Bar Association, “Free Legal Help”:** Links to legal aid service organizations, pro bono programs, and a virtual free legal advice clinic. americanbar.org/groups/legal_services/flh-home/flh-free-legal-help
- **LawHelp.org:** Can help you find free legal aid programs in your communities, answers to questions about your legal rights, and forms to help you address legal problems. lawhelp.org
- **National Network to End Domestic Violence’s Safety Net Project:** Focuses on the intersection of technology and domestic and sexual violence and the safety, privacy, accessibility, and civil rights of victims. nnev.org/content/technology-safety
 - **Technology Safety and Privacy: Toolkit for Survivors** techsafety.org/resources-survivors
 - The **Tech Safety App** shares information about technology abuse and tips for privacy and safety. techsafetyapp.org

If you decide to represent yourself:

- **Pro Se Civil Complaint and Injunctive Relief Form:** A form provided by the U.S. federal district courts to help you file a claim on your own without an attorney. uscourts.gov/forms/pro-se-forms/complaint-and-request-injunction
- **Current Federal Court Rules of Practice and Procedure:** Links to federal court rules, including the Rules of Civil Procedure and the Rules of Evidence. uscourts.gov/rules-policies/current-rules-practice-procedure
- **United States Code:** The U.S. House of Representatives has made the U.S. Code—a collection of federal laws—available online for free. Specific laws, such as 15 U.S.C. § 6851, can be found on this website. uscode.house.gov

Resources for Help and Safety

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** Free and confidential support and information 24/7 at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) and 1-800-787-3224 (TTY). You can also communicate with a Hotline advocate via chat or text. thehotline.org
- **Cyber Civil Rights Initiative’s Safety Center:**
 - Help with image-based sexual abuse and finding an attorney. Visit their website or call the CCRI Image Abuse Helpline at 844-878-CCRI (2274).
 - Information about state laws, including [state criminal laws](#) against the nonconsensual distribution of intimate images.
 - cybercivilrights.org/nonconsensual-distribution-of-intimate-image
- **National Sexual Assault Hotline:** Call 1-800-656-4673 or chat online. rainn.org/about-national-sexual-assault-telephone-hotline

This pamphlet provides legal information, it does not offer legal advice. This information is for the convenience of the public. Links to online resources do not mean endorsement, recommendation, or favor by the U.S. Department of Justice or any United States Attorney’s Office. The information, expressed opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations in these online resources are those of the organizations and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Justice. This pamphlet was created jointly for informational purposes only by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Access to Justice and the Office on Violence Against Women.



Have you had intimate images of you shared without your consent?

Know your rights. You can now bring a federal civil lawsuit for the sharing of intimate images without your consent.

The sharing of intimate images or videos of someone without their consent violates their privacy and can cause harm. It can also be against the law.

Consent means a conscious, voluntary agreement – free from force, fraud, misrepresentation, or coercion – to have intimate images or videos of you shared. Even if you agreed to have your image taken or you took an intimate image of yourself and sent it to someone, it does not mean that you agreed to the images or videos being shared with others.

You can now bring a new type of federal civil lawsuit.

Congress added a new provision in the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2022. This lets you bring a civil action in federal court against someone who shared intimate images, explicit pictures, recorded videos, or other depictions of you without your consent (15 U.S.C. § 6851). It also includes sharing those intimate images through technology, such as the internet or social media.

How can I bring a civil lawsuit in federal court?

You can get a lawyer to file this civil lawsuit. You can also represent yourself. You may consider asking the court to allow you to file your lawsuit anonymously, using a pseudonym such as “Jane Doe” or “John Doe,” to protect your privacy. This is a private, civil lawsuit, and the government cannot assist or represent you in the case. The court can order the person who distributed the intimate images to pay the court costs and your attorney’s fees if you win the lawsuit.

How can the court help?

A court can order a defendant (the person who caused you harm) to:

- ✓ Stop sharing intimate images of you (by issuing a restraining order or injunction).
- ✓ Compensate you for financial losses from the sharing of intimate images of you without your consent, or order payment to you in the amount of \$150,000.
- ✓ Cover your attorney’s fees and court costs.

This new law also allows the court to maintain your confidentiality when the defendant is ordered to stop sharing your intimate images; for example, the judge’s order might use the name Jane Doe or John Doe instead of your name.

What do you have to prove in court?

Evidence must be presented to a judge, and sometimes a jury, that:

- ✓ the defendant shared an intimate image of you without your consent, and
- ✓ the defendant knew that you did not consent, or recklessly disregarded whether or not you consented.

You can prove lack of consent with your own testimony or any other evidence you have. Note that even if you made or shared your own intimate image with someone, that does not mean that you consented to the image being shared elsewhere.

What is not covered by this type of lawsuit?

- ⊗ Commercial pornographic content is not covered, unless it was produced by force, fraud, misrepresentation, or coercion.
- ⊗ The law recognizes limited exceptions for the sharing of intimate images without your consent, when made in good faith, such as in an investigation or report to law enforcement, as part of a legal proceeding, for medical reasons, and other good faith reasons listed in the statute at 15 U.S.C. § 6851(b)(4).