



NATIONAL CENTER ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

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RE: Protecting Our Schools from Sexually Explicit Material

Dear Parent-Teacher Association/Organization:

Schools and libraries are supposed to be safe environments for children, and the community, to come together to pursue education and character development. However, sexually exploitive material is seeping into these learning spaces, potentially damaging children's intellectual development and warping their sexual templates to normalize sexual violence and lack of consent. We at the National Center on Sexual Exploitation would like to invite your group to take an active role to ensure your schools are safe from this material.

Schools and libraries are fostering unsafe, unhealthy environments with regard to this material in three primary ways: 1) inadequate, or non-existent, **computer and Wi-Fi filters** to prevent exposure to pornography on school property and on the school-owned devices that are that are distributed to children; 2) **lack of robust media literacy training for teachers and students** and no clear plan on what to do when harmful material is accessed; and 3) **online school research databases** that expose children to pornography, normalize sexually violent and risky acts,

and promote prostitution, EBSCO being one of the most prominent of these databases.

These research databases are the primary reason we are reaching out to you.

EBSCO Information Services offers online library resources to public and private schools (K-12), public libraries, and more. These are online resources provided by schools that children often use to do research for a school paper, or to complete other online homework. In its advertising for schools, it promises “fast access to curriculum-appropriate content.” However, several of EBSCO’s products provide easy access to hardcore pornography sites and extremely graphic sexual content.

EBSCO has been in communication with NCOSE for several months in an effort to solve these problems, and has implemented some solutions like removing certain publications and fixing some publisher settings. On June 23rd, EBSCO wrote to NCOSE saying they were ‘confident’ the sexually graphic content was completely removed from their school products, but on June 26th NCOSE researchers found over 50 sexually graphic articles across 4 states in 50 minutes of searching. The vast majority of these graphic results came directly from EBSCO’s middle school and elementary school databases.

We commend EBSCO for making significant steps towards fixing these problems. But there is still more work to be done. Children are still likely to be exposed to the sexually explicit material when doing school assignments in these systems which come across as authoritative given the school setting.

Two major problems we still see:

- EBSCO still has sexually graphic content on databases specifically meant for K-12 users (called Mass Ultra, Middle Search Plus and Primary Search). These are articles that glamorize pornography, prostitution, and risky sexual behaviors. In the middle school databases, we found articles discussing how to convince a girl to engage in anal sex and others glamorizing sexual role play games exploring sexual torture, teacher/schoolgirl, public and incestual sex fantasies. These put especially young readers at great risk of being victims of sexual exploitation.
- EBSCO says it will not make any efforts to clean up their other educational products. Yet, EBSCO is recommending these other products to schools in their promotional materials, leading school administrators to believe they are safe for

students. Every school's EBSCO system we have checked (over 30) subscribe to a number of these other EBSCO products which are full of sexually explicit material. One article we found linked to recruiting websites where the readers were encouraged to sign up for prostitution and pornography; many articles recommended and gave the link to hardcore pornography websites.

We ask that your Parent Teacher Association/Organization influences your school to **turn off EBSCO databases until these problems have been resolved**, and that you send a letter to EBSCO informing them of this decision. Draft language that could be sent to EBSCO and more information is included in this packet, and online at SafeSchoolsSafeLibraries.com.

Please let us know if we can be of any assistance to you and your community in addressing these issues in schools. I can be reached at 202-393-7245 or dawn@ncose.com

Thank you, for creating a safe and effective educational space for children.

Respectfully,

Dawn Hawkins
Vice President
National Center on Sexual Exploitation