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Theresa Axford
Superintendent of Schools

11/12/2024

Dear Parents or Guardians,

As we settle into 2nd quarter of this school year, our schools and staff continue our collaborative work with you to keep our students and educators safe. One particular trend that is of great concern across the state is the sharp rise in false reports being submitted through FortifyFL.

False Reporting on social media or FORTIFY FL

Making a threat on social media can result in life-altering consequences. If you communicate a threat to kill, do great bodily harm, conduct a mass shooting or an act of terrorism in a way or form that another person can **view it**, you are committing a **second-degree felony** under section 863.10, Florida Statutes. These include threats through:

- a. Direct messages or posting status updates on any social media platform
- b. Snapchat stories or messages
- c. Videos on platforms such as YouTube or TikTok
- d. Gaming servers or chats such as Discord, Steam or Twitch
- e. Anonymous chat rooms or posting sites such as Whisper and ASKFM

What happens if your child makes a threat on social media?

It doesn't matter if you do not have any intent or ability to carry out the threat. Merely communicating a threat is enough to warrant a felony charge.

Some Consequences your child could face are:

1. Mandatory school expulsion for a year
2. Placement in an alternative school
3. Inability to graduate with friends
4. Inability to attend school activities or functions like dances, prom, sports games or performances on any campus
5. Paying restitution costs for the police investigation
6. Criminal charges up to and including arrests

What if your child or you see a concerning or threatening post on social media?

Report it using School Text Tips or FortifyFL. Don't repost it on social media. See something, say something. Tell a trusted adult!

What should be reported on FortifyFL?

Submit tips about **potential crimes or threats** which are sent directly to law enforcement and designated school personnel. More tip details improve the chances that a situation can be resolved quickly and as safely as possible. This means including WHO did WHAT, WHERE it happened and WHEN in your tip report is very helpful information. Anyone submitting a tip about a threat, including information about a known false report, can *identify themselves or choose to remain anonymous when submitting. ***If you identify yourself in the submission, that information will not be made public.**

False reports on FortifyFL are no joke! Any false report could lead to an investigation.

If it is found that any person, parent or child **knowingly** submitted a false tip, through FortifyFL or any other tip reporting tool, involving school or school personnel's property, school transportation, or a school-sponsored activity, information on the device used to make the claim will be provided to law enforcement, and the person may be subject to criminal penalties.

Remember...

All threats will be taken seriously and will result in severe consequences up to and including arrest, restitution, and expulsion. You are urged to discuss this issue with your children. False threats, even if intended as a joke, can result in life-altering consequences.

When speaking to your child about posting on social media or falsely reporting a threat, remember to tell them... It's no joke!

Thank you for your part as we continue our work together in promoting comprehensive school safety and harm prevention in every school every day.

Sincerely,

Theresa Axford, Superintendent of Schools