

Sextortion of 8-year-old on music app

By Pat Reavy
Sep 28th, 2017

CENTERVILLE — A disturbing case out of Centerville involving an 8-year-old girl, who police say was groomed by a predator to send nude videos of herself on an app, has police issuing yet another warning to parents about the dangers of social media.

The 8-year-old girl was contacted by a person on the app called musical.ly, according to Centerville police and a search warrant affidavit unsealed this week in 2nd District Court. The musical.ly website describes itself as "a social media platform for creating and sharing short videos" and a "platform that connects individuals to a vibrant and highly engaged community of content creators."

Between Aug. 3 and Aug. 5, a person claiming to also be a young girl contacted the 8-year-old. The suspect, speaking as if she was part of a group, told the 8-year-old "they were crying and begging (the 8-year-old) to talk to them. ... (The suspect) asked (the girl) to do a challenge, and began asking for pictures," the affidavit states.

At first, the person asked the young girl for a picture of her face, then asked for one of her clothed body. And later, the person asked for a picture of "her stomach a little," according to the warrant.

The person kept asking for more pictures, revealing a little more each time until the person eventually requested nude photos. The unknown person "sent 14 consecutive messages asking (the girl) to send a picture," the warrant states.

"Pull your pants down like I asked u to do," and "take it off now," were among the messages sent, the warrant states. "Its just between me and nobody will see. plzs trust me. plzs I'm crying again."

"There was definitely a grooming process. This just didn't happen real quick," said Centerville Assistant Police Chief Von Steenblik.

The 8-year-old, fearing she might be talking to a boy, asked if she could Facetime with the other person. That's when the other person threatened sextortion.

"(The girl) refused to send more pictures until (the other person) gave (the girl) her phone number. (The other person) then said, 'Do pics or I'll post this (conversation). OK I'm posting this (conversation) on musicy bye then,'" the warrant states.

The other person then told the girl "to take her clothes off and send pictures until they said stop," according to the affidavit.

When the girl threatened to call police, the other person replied, "OK, I'm posting this conversation."

As of Thursday, no arrests had been made, and police were still trying to track down the other person's IP address. Steenblik said it was unknown whether the 8-year-old girl was targeted or was found at random.

"We're not really sure how the individual that we're looking at got our victim's username," Steenblik said.

The incident, he said, is yet another example of why parents need to know what their children are doing online, and also of the importance of talking to their children.

"Any app where you can directly communicate is going to be a problem. We're seeing more and more younger kids with phones and access," Steenblik said. "We're seeing them younger and younger. And 8-year-olds aren't really skilled about what to do or what not to do. That's why parents have got to know what their kids are doing online and on apps."