



# Outing

## *Responding to Outing*

Outing occurs when someone shares personal, private, or sensitive information about you online without your consent. This may include:

- Secrets or private communications
- Sexual orientation, gender identity, or personal history
- Medical, mental health, or family information
- Private photos or videos
- Intimate or sexual images (“revenge porn” or image-based abuse)
- Screenshots of private messages

Outing can cause serious emotional harm, reputational damage, harassment, stalking, or physical safety risks.

If you believe you are in immediate danger, call 911.

## Outing – Do This First

### Assess Immediate Safety

- Treat the situation as urgent if the outing includes:
- Sexual or intimate images
- Threats or encouragement of harassment
- Disclosure of your address, workplace, or school
- Targeting that could lead to violence

If any of the above are present, call 911.

### Do Not Engage or Retaliate

- Do not argue, explain, or publicly respond
- Do not threaten legal action online
- Do not attempt to shame or expose the person back

Public engagement often amplifies harm and spreads the content further.

### Preserve Evidence Immediately

Before requesting removal or blocking:





- Screenshot or save:
  - Posts
  - Messages
  - Images or videos
  - Usernames and profiles
  - URLs
- Record:
  - Dates and times
  - Platforms involved
  - Who shared or reshared the content
- Do not edit, crop, or repost the content.

## Contain the Harm

Do NOT immediately report the perpetrator's account on social media. If the harassment warrants local law enforcement involvement due to threats of physical violence, sexually explicit materials of minors, or other offensive messages, law enforcement may subpoena Social Media platforms for information on the perpetrator.

If social media companies ban an account prior to this subpoena, critical evidence could be lost. Always immediately report any messages to law enforcement that contain the following content prior to reporting the account:

- Threats of violence
- Child pornography or sending sexually explicit messages or photos
- Taking a photo or video of someone in a place where he or she would expect privacy
- Stalking and hate crimes

## Report the Content to the Platform

Once evidence is preserved and law enforcement has given the instruction to do so:

- Use platform reporting tools for:
  - Harassment
  - Privacy violations
  - Image-based abuse
  - Request takedown
- Save confirmation emails or report numbers

Most platforms prohibit non-consensual sharing of private information.

## Protect Yourself and Your Network

- Increase privacy settings





- Ask trusted friends not to comment or engage
- Warn close contacts if impersonation or scams may follow
- Consider temporarily limiting visibility if advised

## Special Situations

### If Intimate Images Were Shared

This may be a crime, even if the images were originally shared consensually.

- Preserve evidence
- Report to local, state and national law enforcement
- Report to the platform upon law enforcement approvals
- Do not negotiate with the person who shared them
- If images were taken before age 18, report immediately to:
  - National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)
  - <https://report.cybertip.org>
  - 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)

### If the Person Is Someone You Know

If outing is done by:

- A former partner
- A friend or family member
- A coworker or classmate

Do not confront them alone.

Recommended steps:

- Preserve evidence quietly
- Seek legal or law-enforcement guidance
- Create a safety plan if escalation is possible

## Report the Incident

Do not wait to report.

- National Reporting
  - FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3)  
<https://www.ic3.gov>
- Ohio Resources





- Ohio Attorney General – Identity Theft & Cybercrime Help  
<https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov>  
Hotline: 800-282-0515
- Geauga County
  - Geauga County Sheriff's Office  
<https://www.geaugasheriff.org>
  - Call your local police department to file a report
  - Use 911 for active or escalating threats

Ohio law addresses:

- Non-consensual dissemination of private images
- Menacing, harassment, and stalking using electronic means

## Emotional & Crisis Support

Outing can cause shame, fear, anxiety, and isolation, especially when identity or intimate details are involved.

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- Call or text 988 (24/7, confidential)

You are not weak or at fault for needing support.

## Recovery – After Content Is Addressed

- Monitor for reposts or impersonation
- Document any retaliation or continued harassment
- Revisit privacy settings periodically
- Lean on trusted support systems

## How to Reduce the Impact of Outing

- You are not obligated to explain or defend your private life
- Silence and documentation protect you more than public response
- Ask for help early, damage increases the longer content circulates
- Trust your instincts, fear and distress are valid signals

