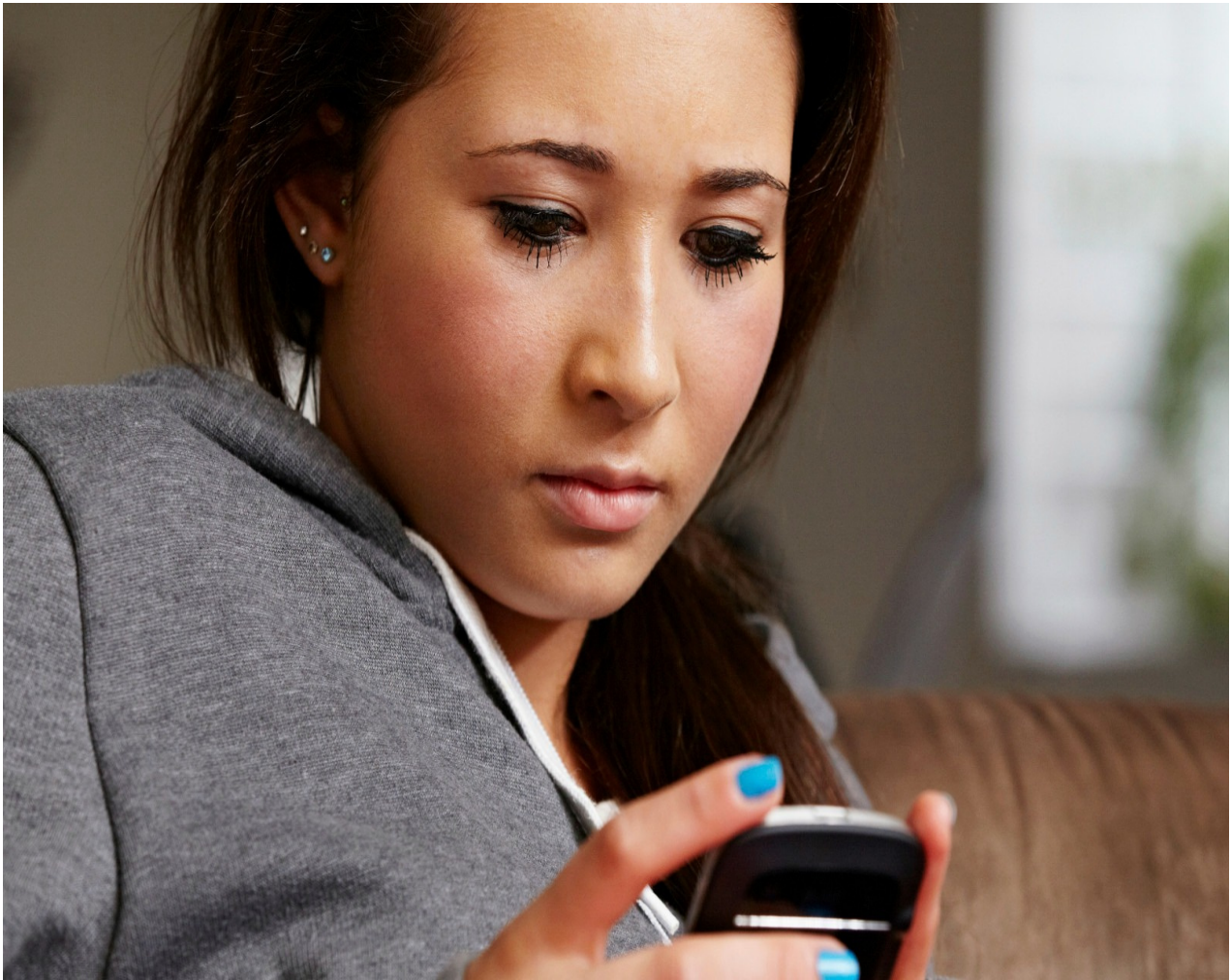


The Virgin Islands Consortium

BVI's Minister Of Education And Culture Condemns Cyber Bullying

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TORTOLA -- There's been a surge in cyber bullying here in various forms, including the sharing of videos showing two consenting persons enjoying intimate moments, with such videos being posted on social media platforms.

Such incidents can lead to multiple forms of depression, with data showing some have even taken their own lives because of shame.

While BVI hasn't seen such unfortunate events take hold, Minister of Education and Culture, Myron V. Walwyn, has written a statement addressing the issue as a preemptive move to curtail the growing worry. He also condemned perpetrators while encouraging

victims to move forward with their lives and become advocates for other victims.

The statement is found immediately below in verbatim:

In recent weeks, it has been brought to my attention that a number of young residents throughout the Virgin Islands have been targets of cyber bullying by way of private photos and videos being shared widely online and via text.

While the perpetrators of these actions cowardly hide behind a computer screen or WhatsApp number, as Minister responsible for Youth Affairs, I wanted to take some time to address this situation because a number of young persons have been affected. As a community, we should know that we are not the first and we will not be the last community dealing with such an issue. Throughout the world and even in our region, many persons, particularly young women, have been targeted. What might have been a private moment between two consenting persons has become the topic for public scrutiny, discussion and humiliation for many victims.

We have also seen in recent weeks. disturbing evidence of minors engaging in adult extent of the law deal with such perpetrators, I people, that it is illegal in the Virgin Islands to and videos of minors.



BVI's Minister of Education and Culture

Myron V. Walwyn

I personally will support the decision of law enforcement to also lay charges against individuals sharing and having within their possession explicit images and videos of any minor. If for some reason you receive such images or videos, I strongly encourage you to immediately report the incident and surrender such evidence to the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force. The laws that we have in the Virgin Islands can only go so far in protecting the privacy of individuals and protecting others from preying on vulnerable residents. That is where we, as a community, must rely on our core values and morals to

guide our decisions. We are a people that value the lives and experiences of our fellow residents, and we are a community that treats each other with respect and dignity. However, young ladies and young men, you live in an age of instant gratification, but that instant gratification also comes with a digital footprint that can almost never be erased. All of us should be mindful of the images we take and share in this digital age. Young people of the Virgin Islands, we need you to be ready to take of the leadership of this country in a variety of industries. Engaging in negative behaviour, such as bullying, demonstrates unwanted conduct and will be punished. There is nothing brave or just about taking advantage of someone's trust in you – it is the most cowardly behaviour of any man or woman. To persons that have been the victims of such cyber-bullying, I encourage you to learn from the experience and move on with your lives. Become a champion for victims of cyber-bullying, even educating our young men and women about your experience and how they can avoid becoming such victims. As a community, I encourage all of us to support the victims of such attacks as we seek to find and bring to task perpetrators. Parents, I hearten you to be mindful of what your teens and young adults are sharing online. Some of our children today are very advanced with the use of technology, but as parents we still have the responsibility to protect them, even from themselves. As a parent, I am well aware of the challenges of parenting 21st century teens and young adults, but we owe it to them and we owe it to this community to continuously monitor their behaviour and keep a keen eye on their activities. I have asked our school administrators and educators to pay special attention to this matter and, from primary school to tertiary education, find appropriate opportunities to engage students and have frank discussions about appropriate online behaviour, cyber bullying and responsible use of the technology we have today. In the Virgin Islands we need the talents and skills of all of our young people to advance this country. Each of us has an obligation to this Territory to safeguard the well being of all of our young people so that they have the opportunity to continue the work we all are doing right now to build this country.