

# **Revenge Porn: Actions, Not Words**

Matias Hillion  
Maeve Wallace  
Ada Chiara Tortora  
Sarah Tabarra  
Owen Geltz  
of Suffolk University

A Grant Proposal To Create A Foundation to Support Revenge Porn Victims  
August 16th, 2021

Total Budget Request: \$2,155,000

We are applying for a grant of a minimum of \$2,155,000 to start a foundation called Cyber Safety that will help criminalize revenge porn and help the victims. This amount will also provide for the salary of all workers for one year. With this money, we would hire a myriad of workers from different professions. Parts of the money would go towards hiring lobbyists who would help us push bills into Congress, therapists who would communicate with victims of revenge porn to improve their mental well-being around this topic, lobbyists who would advocate for our movement to make this known throughout the general public, and funds to help victims afford a lawyer if they cannot afford one. Parts of the money would also go towards our Board of Trustees and administrative staff.

The main mission is helping the victims of revenge porn with all the necessary tools to make sure that they resume a normal life without further pain. We would also use our funds to pay anti-revenge porn activists to become full time volunteers. In this way they could spend more time spreading awareness on the importance of making the distribution of revenge porn illegal. Consciousness is the perfect way to convince more people of the importance of supporting the legislation making this crime illegal on a federal level.

This association is fundamental for providing the necessary help to victims of revenge porn. Wide spread of social media in the last decade created a breeding ground for instances of revenge porn, but this spread also can help convey the issue and our foundation to hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people. Our goal is to provide resources to victims of revenge porn and help them out with any possible challenges they face. So far, we have been in contact with representatives from different organizations who specialize in the revenge porn field/general cyber criminal field to gather knowledge and ideas from them. This project is ongoing, so we would like to have a due date by summer 2022. In that time period, we will have hired all the necessary people to create our organization and start helping victims. Those who would benefit from this organization would not just be only the victims of revenge porn, but also family members and/or close friends to better understand what exactly their loved one is going through, and how to help, and how to get involved in this battle to fight against it. Our key goal is to provide information to as many people as we possibly can to provide awareness on this topic. We will make sure to set small deadlines that are feasible to meet within a timely manner, avoiding the trouble of setting one big major deadline that can be stressful.

Some steps have already been put into place to help fight revenge porn. The Federal Trade Commission, or the FTC, has a website dedicated for victims as to what to do if you have become a victim of revenge porn. It states that you should review the Online Removal Guide posted by the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI), find if there is a law about revenge porn in the state you reside, talk with an attorney, educate yourself on takedown services, and/or call the CCRI's hotline ("What To Do if You're the Target of Revenge Porn"). For Massachusetts, unfortunately the state does not have a revenge porn law in place, but for its northern neighbor New Hampshire, the law states that the person sharing nude photos of another person without

consent is classified as a Class A misdemeanor, the most serious class of misdemeanors (NH Rev Stat § 644:9 (2015)). The punishment carries “a possible jail sentence of less than one year and a fine of \$2,000 or less” (New Hampshire Department of Safety). 47 other states have similar laws to this, with the punishments varying in severity.

A study done by Samantha Bates, published in *SAGE Journals*, reveals that victims of revenge porn can suffer the same effects as victims of sexual assault. The study goes to state that Citron and Franks did a report on a sample of 1,244 victims of revenge porn and it found that “more than 50% of survivors’ full names and links to social media profiles accompanied the naked photos, and that 20% of survivors’ email addresses and phone numbers were posted with their photos” (Bates). It is a widely known fact that images online can be difficult, if not impossible to erase, especially if someone were to download the information, which would leave it in the hands of someone forever. These actions can have dire consequences for the victim’s overall health and stability in life. The study finds that each victim sampled showed similar mental health outcomes as rape survivors do, with post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression being the most prevalent (Bates). Not only do the victims report mental health decline, but their feelings of value of themselves are also impacted, with the study stating that “survivors report that the loss of control over their bodies and their own sexual agency” which contribute to the feelings of distress and anxiety they face (Bates). Of the people sampled, the interview-based study also asks the people sampled about their coping mechanisms. The participants reported a great deal of negative coping mechanisms, such as self-medicating with drugs and/or alcohol, and denial about their situation, soon after they become a victim. Many reported trying to completely forget that they were a victim, like this could never happen to them. As time passed, the participants moved closer to more positive coping mechanisms such as

therapy/counseling (Bates). This study goes on to suggest that revenge porn, in a court of law, should be classified as a sexual offense, on the same level as offenses such as rape and sexual assault. The treatments used to help victims of revenge porn should be similar to the treatments used to help victims of other, severe sexual crimes. Lawmakers should be taking this into account when thinking about drafting legislation to help fight the horrible battle that is this topic.

Revenge porn is no longer an issue we can ignore. According to the research carried out by the campaign "end revenge porn," 51% of the victims have contemplated suicide, and one out ten people in the united states saw their photos and/or videos online. Furthermore, revenge porn mainly affects women. A study by the University of Exeter reveals that three out of 4 victims are women, and 9 out of 10 female victims suffer intimate image abuse.

The definition of revenge porn is: "revealing or sexually explicit images or videos of a person posted on the internet, typically by a former sexual partner, without the consent of the subject and in order to cause them distress or embarrassment."

Distress or embarrassment are just two of the consequences people face after revenge porn. In the United States, just 48 states, D.C., and the U.S. territory Guam has legislation for this crime, but the offender will face a maximum of two years, often dropped to one, in prison and a maximum of 10,000 dollars. Meanwhile, the victims often lost their jobs, faced psychological problems, and 80 out of 93 suffered significant emotional distress.

The mental health implications for victims of revenge porn are daunting. Victims are often blamed for sending their pictures in the first place. [According to a 2014 study](#), 49% of victims reported that they experienced cyberharassment and cyberstalking by online users who viewed their photographs. If victims are not blamed by others, they blame themselves.

Every day hundreds of intimate photos are released without consent online, an enormous number of websites are born with the only purpose to post this content. One of the most famous is Anonimages, non-consensual pornography (NCP) imageboard, also called a revenge porn site, allowing users to post adverts asking for information about someone specific. Other users then provide personal details such as photographs, videos, and even workplaces on the platform, which the subjects do not consent to be shared. Most images published are titled with the woman's real name, and more often than not, complete with age and location.

Even though the people who created the first version of the website, Anon-Ib, were arrested, another version was created and then another, and another and meanwhile thousands of pics are swapped like trading cards jeopardizing the lives of thousands of victims forced to pay the consequences of a crime they suffered.

Tara Dozier is just one of the many women who lost their jobs due to revenge porn. Nine months ago, Dozier's ex-boyfriend posted intimate photos of her to a website known as a "revenge porn" hub. It has images of thousands of people, primarily young women and occasionally gay men, posted by exes, hackers, and people with no connection whatsoever to the victim. Dozier's ex posted her contact information, home address, and employer. Since then, tens of thousands of people have seen and shared those files. She has received death threats. Pedophiles have been invited to attack her children. She lost her job. She can't get the photos taken down. That is just one among millions of victims of revenge porn.

Another victim, Lauren, experienced a similar situation. She started flirting with an anonymous man when she was just 14. years later, she found a Twitter account with every photo she sent to the man. The public Twitter account had posted over a dozen naked images of Lauren since 2012. They included the very first picture she sent Robert back in 2007 when the two were

at the height of their romance and the very last picture she had sent only a few weeks prior. Worse, they had also been on Snapchat. And — to her absolute horror — several amateur porn websites. Strangers were referencing incest underneath her pictures, commenting on her body, and detailing what they wanted to do to her.

The worst part of this situation is how the police officer treated her. The female police officer who responded told her only said: "Well, at least you have learned your lesson now." It could be just an isolated case, but it is not. The way revenge porn is devalued is not just disgusting but dangerous. More and more people every day suffer from the actions of others, and more and more people feel completely alone. Therefore, it is not just proper but necessary to have laws and programs to help the victims.

## Project Description

We will use the money from the Change For the Better Grant (CFB) to begin a foundation, called Cyber Safety, to help revenge porn victims by providing mental health and legal resources, and also lobbying Congress to pass legislation to criminalize revenge porn at the federal level. This grant will provide funding for the first year of salaries for our workers. Cyber Safety will have a five-member Board of Trustees that will make major decisions regarding the foundation's goals and fundraising. We will hire two administrators to run the day-to-day operations, manage money and resources, complete scheduling, and be a first point of contact for those learning about the foundation. We will hire one full-time software developer to create, update and maintain an app and website for us. Next, we will hire five full-time activist volunteers and five part-time activist volunteers because they will run campaigns and influence people to ask their Congressional representatives for laws to criminalize revenge porn at the federal level. We will then hire two licensed therapists for our staff to help victims of revenge porn get mental health treatment without insurance or paying out of pocket. We will hire five civil and five criminal lawyers so that the victims can get legal help without having to spend any money out of pocket or spend a great deal of time to get a good lawyer, regardless of which kind of lawsuit they choose to file. Finally, once a bill has been written, we will hire five top lobbyists to push Congress to pass the bill, so there is a standard system of laws for victims of revenge porn, and perpetrators will be held fully liable regardless of state.

While there are currently other foundations and groups, such as Without My Consent and the Cyber Civil Rights Institute, that assist victims of revenge porn, Cyber Safety will be unique in several ways. First, it will provide victims with direct access to lawyers and mental health professionals. No other group does this and we believe it is extremely beneficial to provide these

expensive resources at no cost to the victim, so that low-income and other underserved populations can get quality mental healthcare and legal representation. According to the Center for Innovative Public Health Research, victims of revenge porn are most likely to be young women, between the ages of 15-29, who identify as LGBTQ+ (Lenhart et al., 5), so our organization will benefit those groups the most, although anyone could become a victim, and we will continually strive to help all who come to us, particularly those who cannot usually afford these resources.

We will also have a second branch of the organization that helps push for a federal law criminalizing revenge porn in all states, which other groups do not have. By helping to form a grassroots movement, we will be able to cause change in all levels of the government, including the federal government. Once the House of Representatives has a bill written, our lobbyists will help convince Representatives to pass the law, and then they will help convince Senators to pass it as well. This will help all future victims of revenge porn to have clear guidance on how they can hold the person who released their images liable in court and what they can expect as a sentence from the judge. It will hopefully also deter some people who would be perpetrators since it will be a federal crime.

After the law has been passed, the mission of Cyber Safety will change somewhat. Rather than focusing on getting a bill through Congress, we will focus on growth and providing more victims in more towns and cities nationwide receive direct access to therapy and legal representation. The activists can transition into giving more people information about Cyber Safety's mission and where the next branch will be founded. Each new offshoot will have one administrator and at least two licensed therapists and at least five criminal and five civil

attorneys on staff. We will be able to continue to provide victims with the representation and assistance they need on a much greater scale.

Our main objective with this funding is to create a robust source of assistance on finding a solution to any situation involving revenge porn for anyone who may have been a victim of it. We plan not only to ensure that the victim will have their images removed from any platform they may have been placed in, but to also make sure that the person behind the action will be apprehended. We also aim to ensure the well being of victims that reach out to us by providing therapists to discuss their problems and treat their mental health. We believe that just removing the porn and pursuing legal action is not enough, as the trauma that could be left from something that could potentially ruin someone's life will not be resolved, so we provide therapy to help those who fall under that weight.

We plan to make our platform completely accessible via an app, website, phone line, and email address, so that victims will have easy access to being able to reliably use this resource, regardless of their situation. Our legal department and therapy lines will be open whenever the victim may need them and for however long the victim may need them.

Cyber Safety will provide victims of nonconsensual pornography with an unprecedented level of access to necessary support. Our outcome measures will be defined primarily through qualitative means, but the most significant goal will be helping to facilitate the passage of a federal law criminalizing revenge porn. We will periodically administer short, open-ended surveys to a small number of victims who have sought out the resources at Cyber Safety to gather feedback on how much our resources have helped them and what we could do to improve their experience and assist them better. These surveys will help us be sure that we are helping victims in the way that best suits them and that we adapt as their needs change over time.

Our foundation will provide several important and expensive resources for victims of revenge porn, such as legal representation to discuss options and file lawsuits and therapy to treat any mental health issues that may have arisen or been exacerbated by the crime. At the same time, we will help the current and future victims by lobbying for a federal law that criminalizes revenge porn and gives a clear definition and sentencing expectations. After the law is passed, which is our first major outcome, we will continue to work to help the victims via phone, email, and in-person services. We will also expand our services to other states, continually administering surveys every three to six months, to ensure that our services are what the victims in each state want and need. This is also how we will make any major decisions in the future to change and adapt. This pioneering project will help to make a difference in the lives of victims by providing access to a comprehensive list of services.

# CYBER SAFETY TIMELINE



# Budget Breakdown

## Trustee Board

**\$50,000**

5 Board of Trustee Members that make \$10,000 each annually and 2 full time administrative staff that make \$40,000 each annually

## Compensated Volunteer Staff

**\$325,000**

5 Full Time Volunteers that make \$40,000 each annually and 5 part time volunteers that make \$25,000 each annually

## Therapist

**\$150,000**

2 full time Therapists on staff that make \$75,000 each annually

## Legal Team

**\$1,000,000**

5 Civil and 5 Criminal Lawyers on staff that make \$100,000 annually each.

## Policy Team

**\$550,000**

5 Lobbyist on staff that make \$110,000 annually each.

## Works Cited

- Bates, Samantha. "Revenge Porn and Mental Health: A Qualitative Analysis of the Mental Health Effects of Revenge Porn on Female Survivors - Samantha BATES, 2017." *SAGE Journals*, 20 June 2016,  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1557085116654565>.
- Lenhart, Amanda, Ybarra, Michele, and Price-Feeney, Myeshia. "Nonconsensual Image Sharing: One in 25 Americans has Been A Victim of 'Revenge 'Porn'". *Data & Society Research Institute at the Center for Innovative Public Health Research*. 2016.  
[https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/Nonconsensual\\_Image\\_Sharing\\_2016.pdf](https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/Nonconsensual_Image_Sharing_2016.pdf). Accessed 09 August 2021.
- "Prosecution Unit Frequently Asked Questions." *New Hampshire Department of Safety*,  
[www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/hearings/prosecution/faqs.html](http://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/hearings/prosecution/faqs.html). Accessed 11 August 2021.
- "Title LXII Criminal Code." *Section 644:9 Violation of Privacy*,  
[www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/lxii/644/644-9.htm](http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/lxii/644/644-9.htm). Accessed 11 August 2021.
- "What to Do If You're the Target of Revenge Porn." *Consumer Information*, Federal Trade Commission, 27 July 2021,  
[www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/what-do-if-youre-target-revenge-porn](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/what-do-if-youre-target-revenge-porn).
- "Genre trending in revenge porn" *University of Exeter*, Revenge Porn Research, 2019,  
<https://swgfl.org.uk/magazine/revenge-porn-research-2019/>.
- "Cyber civil rights" *CCRI*, Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, 2012,  
<https://www.cybercivilrights.org/universities-and-students/>.

“How revenge porn victims are forced to deal with the incompetence of the police” *Insider*,

February 3 2020, <https://www.insider.com/revenge-porn-victims-and-the-law-2019-12>.