



**LEGAL
EXPOSURE &
CSAM**

**FEDERAL GUIDELINES ON
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL**

2026

BUNK 47
MINISTRIES

***** IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER *****

This guide is for ministry education and spiritual support only. It is not legal advice, clinical therapy, marriage counseling, or a substitute for professional care. If your situation involves minors, CSAM, exploitation, abuse, illegal conduct, threats, violence, self-harm, or legal exposure, seek appropriate professional help immediately, including qualified legal counsel where needed.

WHY THIS GUIDE EXISTS

This guide does not exist to defend what men have done. It exists to inform them of what the law actually says — because a man who does not understand the legal landscape he is standing in cannot make a wise decision about what to do next. Knowledge is not the same as guilt. Learning what the law says is not the same as looking for loopholes. The most redemptive path forward almost always runs through clarity — not confusion.

The men who read this guide are not predators looking for loopholes. They are men who are frightened, isolated, and carrying weight they have never told anyone about. They are men whose addiction led them somewhere they never intended to go — and who now face consequences they do not understand. This guide meets them there — with truth, not condemnation.

The information in this guide focuses on federal CSAM cases.

Nothing here applies to state level cases. In all cases, you need to seek the counsel of an attorney.

THE MOST IMPORTANT DISTINCTION IN THIS ENTIRE GUIDE

MORAL ACCOUNTABILITY

What God sees. What your fellowship addresses. What confession, repentance, and grace are for. Viewing pornography — including legal adult content — is a moral issue your fellowship walks with you through. Addiction to pornography is a spiritual and psychological battle. This fellowship exists for that battle.

LEGAL ACCOUNTABILITY

What the law governs. What law enforcement investigates. What courts decide. This guide focuses specifically on where behavior crosses from moral failure into federal criminal exposure — and what a man needs to know when he finds himself on that side of the line.

IMPORTANT USAGE RIGHTS

Our resources are free to share — pass them along to anyone you believe they might help. However, these materials may not be altered, edited, or modified in any way. They may not be sold, used as lead magnets, bundled with other products or resources, or distributed as part of any paid or promotional offering. They are ministry resources, provided freely for the benefit of hurting men, and that is the only context in which they are meant to be used.

WHAT IS CSAM?

CSAM stands for *Child Sexual Abuse Material*. Federal law defines it as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a minor — anyone under 18 years of age. This includes photographs, videos, digital images, and computer-generated images. It does not matter whether the material was created recently or decades ago. It does not matter whether it was shared or simply possessed.

Possession alone — even a single image — creates federal criminal exposure.

THREE THINGS THE LAW DOES NOT CARE ABOUT:



How Long Ago It Happened

There is no statute of limitations on federal CSAM charges. Material viewed, downloaded, or possessed years ago — even material you believe was deleted — can still constitute live legal exposure today. The law does not have a mercy window based on time.

Whether You Knew the Person Was a Minor

Do not assume “I thought they were 18” protects you. Knowledge, age, file names, searches, image content, surrounding evidence, and the law in your jurisdiction can all matter. This is a fact-specific issue for an attorney.

Whether Anyone Else Knows

Possession is possession regardless of who else is aware. A man who has viewed or downloaded CSAM and never shared it with anyone still has legal exposure. The crime is in the possession — not the disclosure.

Federal Law

18 U.S.C. § 2256 defines CSAM. § 2252 governs possession, distribution, receipt.

Age of Minor

Anyone under 18 — regardless of appearance or claimed age.

Image Types

Photos, video, and digital files. Federal law also separately criminalizes certain obscene visual representations of minors, including some illustrated, animated, computer-generated, and AI-generated material. See the PROTECT Act section later in this guide.

Registration

Conviction requires sex offender registration in all 50 states.



POSSESSION, RECEIPT, AND DISTRIBUTION

These three words appear on federal charging documents and sound straightforward. They are not. Understanding exactly what each charge means — and how each is proven — is essential for any man navigating this legal landscape.

Charge	What it Means	Prosecution Burden	Sentence
Possession 18 U.S.C. § 2252(a)(4)	Having CSAM on a device you own or control — phone, computer, drive, cloud storage.	That you knowingly possessed the material and knew it depicted a minor.	0–10 yrs. No mandatory minimum on first offense for bare possession — but see the receipt note below.
Receipt 18 U.S.C. § 2252(a)(2)	Downloading or streaming CSAM. Prosecutors typically charge receipt rather than bare possession — and the penalties are significantly higher.	That you knowingly received the material. Downloading a file constitutes receipt.	5-yr mandatory minimum. Prosecutors use receipt charges to trigger the mandatory floor that bare possession does not carry.
Distribution 18 U.S.C. § 2252(a)(1)	Making CSAM available to others — including passively, through file-sharing software you may not have fully understood. See Brother Keith's account later on.	That you knowingly distributed. Most circuits require proof you knew the software was sharing — conviction is not automatic. A genuine lack of knowledge is a defense worth raising.	5-yr mandatory minimum — same floor as receipt.
Production 18 U.S.C. § 2251	Creating, filming, or generating CSAM. The most serious charge category by far.	That you produced or participated in producing the material.	15-yr mandatory minimum. 25 yrs with one prior conviction. 35 yrs to life with two priors.

THE DANGER OF FILE SHARING APPS

Brother Keith Mosher

Author, Recovery Advocate, Founder
Bunk 47 Ministries

When federal charges were filed against me, two of them were for distribution. I want to be honest about that – and honest about what those charges actually meant in practice – because what happened to me is happening to men every single day, and most of them have no idea the trap existed until they are already in it.

I was using a peer-to-peer file sharing program. I downloaded files. I was not sending anything to anyone. I was not uploading. I did not know the software had a default setting that made my download folder available to the entire network. While I was downloading, other users were pulling files from my device – automatically, silently, in the background – without any action on my part.

The federal government charged me with two counts of distribution. Not because I sent anything to anyone. But because the software made it technically available.

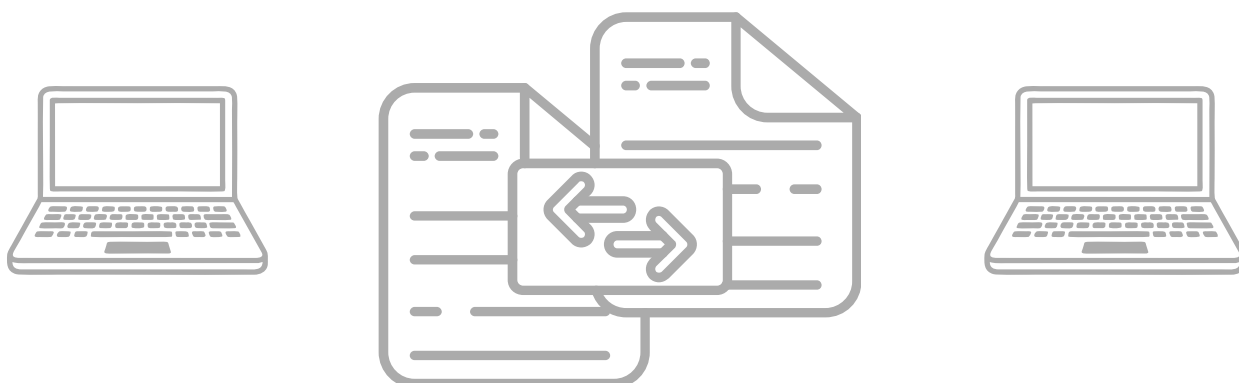
Ultimately those distribution charges were dropped. I proceeded with one count of possession. I am not telling this story to minimize what I did – I downloaded and possessed illegal material and I am accountable for that. I am telling this story because the charge on the paper does not always reflect actual intent, and a man facing distribution charges needs to know that ignorance does not shield you from charges.

If you used any of the following, you may have unknowingly distributed files:

- LimeWire, Kazaa, BearShare, Morpheus
- BitTorrent, uTorrent, qBittorrent
- eMule, Shareaza, FrostWire
- Any program describing itself as 'peer-to-peer'

In many of these programs, the default setting shares what you download. In many cases, whether you knew files were being shared can become an important legal issue. Courts may look at the software, settings, warnings, downloads by others, your use history, and other facts.

"The charge on the paper does not always reflect what actually happened. What I needed – what every man in this situation needs – was an attorney who understood the difference. That difference changed everything."





THE VPN MYTH

A VPN is not legal protection. A VPN may hide your home IP address from a website or platform, but it does not make your activity invisible or anonymous. Federal investigators may rely on many forms of evidence, including platform reports, account records, device forensics, payment records, cloud data, cookies, file-sharing activity, and information obtained through subpoenas or warrants. VPN providers can receive legal demands, and depending on what records they keep, they may have information to provide. IP addresses are only one piece of an investigation. Do not believe the lie that a VPN makes illegal activity safe, hidden, or unreachable.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND

The only path that actually leads somewhere is the one that turns away from all pornography entirely. Not filtered. Not legal. All of it. Because the road from legal adult content to illegal content is shorter than any man wants to believe — and the devil knows exactly where it leads.

For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.

- Luke 12:2

"I used a VPN. I wasn't trying to protect myself — I was trying to hide. I thought I was being smart. I thought I had found a way to keep doing what I was doing without anyone ever knowing.

The FBI saw right through it. That's what the enemy does. He doesn't tell you your secret is safe — he tells you you're clever. And a man who thinks he's clever will stay in the darkness a lot longer than a man who gets exposed.

The VPN wasn't hiding my sin. There is no hiding sin, eventually it is all revealed. I learned that the hard way. And the hard way almost cost me everything."

Brother Keith Mosher

WHAT ABOUT ILLUSTRATED OR ANIMATED PORN?

THE PROTECT ACT OF 2003

Many men believe that illustrated, animated, drawn, or AI-generated sexual content involving minors is a legal gray area – that because no real child was involved, it cannot constitute a crime. That belief is dangerous and has led to federal convictions.

Federal law does not treat all fictional or virtual material the same way it treats CSAM involving actual children, but that does not make it safe. Under the PROTECT Act of 2003, 18 U.S.C. § 1466A criminalizes certain obscene visual representations of the sexual abuse of children, including drawings, cartoons, sculptures, paintings, digital art, and other visual depictions. The law expressly states that the minor depicted does not have to actually exist.

This can include what is commonly called “lofi” content – illustrated or animated material depicting minors, or characters who appear to be minors, in sexual situations. The name may sound harmless. The legal exposure is not. Federal courts have upheld convictions involving obscene anime, cartoon, and manga-style depictions of minors. AI-generated material creates additional risk, especially when it appears realistic or depicts minors sexually. Do not assume that “no real child was involved” means there is no legal exposure. Speak with a qualified criminal defense attorney.

What the Law Covers

- Drawn or illustrated images depicting minors sexually
- Animated or cartoon content depicting minors sexually
- Computer-generated or CGI imagery
- AI-generated images depicting minors sexually
- Any medium where the subject appears to be a minor

What Does NOT Protect You

- The fact that no real child was involved
- The fact that it is drawn rather than photographed
- Characters labeled as 'adults' in the story
- The country of origin of the material

Federal courts across multiple circuits have upheld PROTECT Act convictions for illustrated content. The constitutional question is not whether the image is real – it is whether the content is obscene or without serious value.

Legally obscene does not simply mean “sexual” or “offensive.” Under the Supreme Court’s Miller test, material is generally considered obscene only when, taken as a whole, it appeals to prurient sexual interest, depicts sexual conduct in a patently offensive way as defined by law, and lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

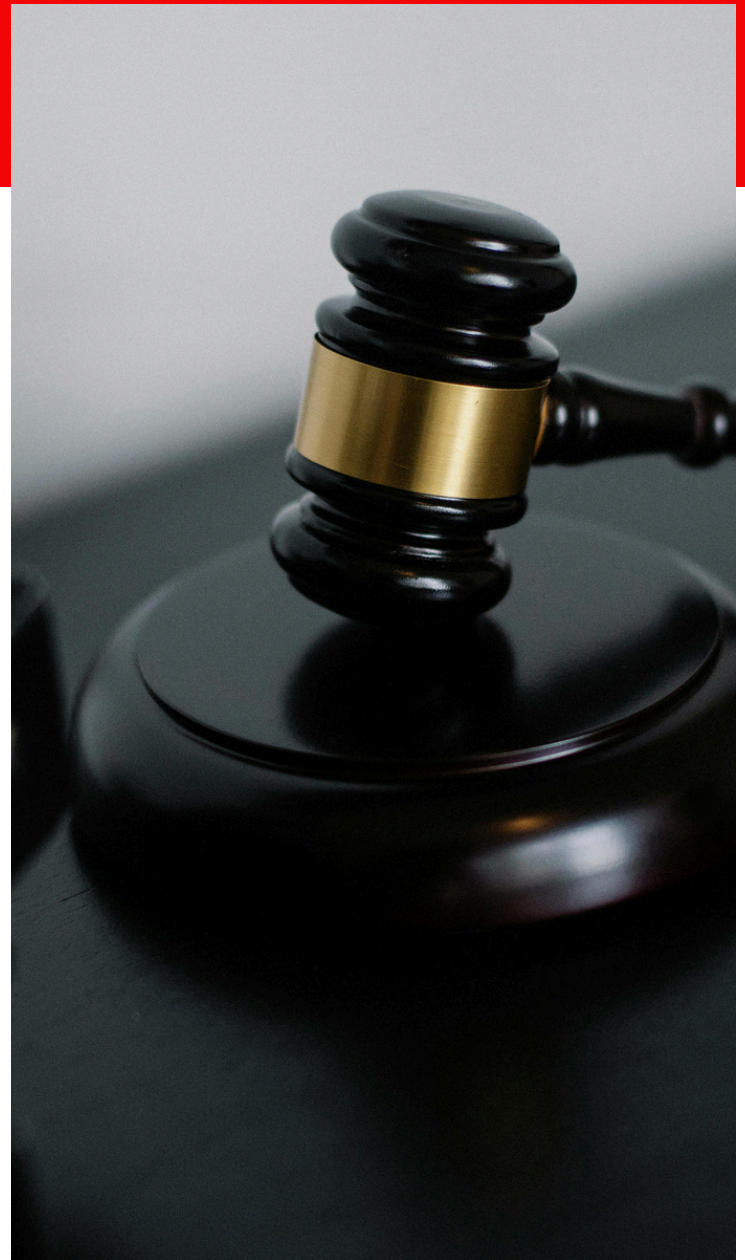
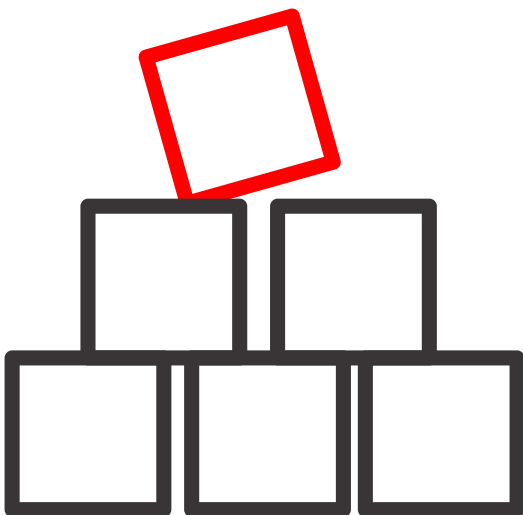


HOW SENTENCING WORKS

Federal sentencing works on a points system. Every case starts with a base number — called an offense level — and then factors specific to your case add points on top of it. The more serious the conduct, the more points stack up. When all the math is done, that final number maps to a range of months in federal prison. The range is not one number — it is a window, like 151 to 188 months, and the judge sentences somewhere inside it.

On top of the offense level, the system also looks at your history — whether you have prior convictions. That history is scored separately and assigned a category, from Category I for men with no record up to Category VI for men with extensive criminal histories. A man with no prior record sits in Category I, which is the lowest range available at any given offense level. The moment he has even one prior conviction, he moves to Category II, and his range goes up — sometimes by a year or more — without anything about the current case changing at all.

A first-offense possession case may begin at base offense level 18 before enhancements, while receipt or distribution generally begins higher. Acceptance of responsibility may reduce the final offense level, but enhancements often stack quickly.



Categories

- 1 0-1 pts No prior record
- 2 2-3 pts Minor prior
- 3 4-6 pts Some prior
- 4 7-9 pts Moderate prior
- 5 10-12 pts Significant prior
- 6 13+ pts Extensive prior

ENHANCEMENTS TABLE

What Triggers It	+ Levels	What This Means in Plain Language	Practical Impact
Any image involves a child under 12 § 2G2.2(b)(2)	+2	If even a single image in your case depicts a prepubescent child or any child under 12, this applies automatically. One image is enough.	For bare possession, material involving a prepubescent minor or a child under 12 may increase the statutory maximum.
P2P / file-sharing distribution § 2G2.2(b)(3)(F)	+2	If you used peer-to-peer software and files were shared – even without your knowledge of the sharing – this enhancement applies. This is the default distribution enhancement for file-sharing cases like Brother Keith's	The most common distribution enhancement. Nearly automatic in P2P cases.
Sadistic, violent, or infant/toddler content § 2G2.2(b)(4)	+4	Applies if any material depicts bondage, restraint, penetration of a prepubescent minor, or infliction of pain. Courts read 'sadistic' broadly. One video with this content adds 4 levels to your score.	4 levels = approximately 2–4 additional years depending on criminal history.
Used a computer or internet service § 2G2.2(b)(6)	+2	Applies in nearly every modern case – because nearly every modern case involves a computer. This enhancement has been widely criticized by judges as redundant, but it still applies.	Effectively automatic in any online case.
Number of images § 2G2.2(b)(7)	+2-5	10–149 images = +2 levels. 150–299 = +3. 300–599 = +4. 600 or more = +5 (maximum). Important: each video counts as 75 images regardless of length. One long video can alone trigger the +5 maximum.	600+ images (roughly 8+ videos) maxes this enhancement out at +5 levels.
Pattern of sexual abuse or exploitation § 2G2.2(b)(5)	+5	Applies if there is evidence of 2 or more separate incidents – even uncharged ones, even incidents outside the statute of limitations, even incidents prosecutors cannot prove beyond a reasonable doubt in court. This is often the single largest driver of a sentence.	A very serious enhancement. Can appear even without additional charges.

Acceptance of responsibility § 3E1.1

This is the only factor that reduces your score. It typically requires a guilty plea and genuine cooperation. -2 levels applies in most cases; -3 levels if the government files a motion confirming full cooperation.

SAMPLE ENHANCEMENTS

A TYPICAL P2P CASE HOW THE SCORE BUILDS

The following is a hypothetical example based on a common pattern of federal CSAM cases. It is not based on any specific individual. It is designed to show how quickly enhancements stack and why the final sentence often shocks men who assumed possession charges meant minimal time.

FACTOR	LEVEL	RUN TOTAL
Base offense level — receipt charge	22	22
+ Any image involves a child under 12	+2	24
+ P2P file-sharing (distribution)	+2	26
+ Sadistic or violent content in material	+4	30
+ Used a computer (internet)	+2	32
+ 600+ images (or equivalent video)	+5	37
— Acceptance of responsibility	-3	34

A TOTAL OF 34 POINTS = 151–188 months (~12.5–15.5 years)

This is not a worst-case scenario. This is a common scenario. A man who downloaded material using a torrent client, had more than 600 images or equivalent video, and whose collection included any prepubescent content and any violent content, is looking at a guidelines range in the neighborhood of 12–15 years before the judge has said a single word. This is why early legal counsel — before anything else — is the most important decision a man in this situation can make.

Please Note:

In federal CSAM cases, probation should never be assumed. Many charges carry mandatory prison time, and even in possession cases where probation may be legally possible, federal prison sentences are overwhelmingly common. A qualified federal criminal defense attorney must evaluate the specific charge, facts, prior record, and sentencing exposure.

QUESTIONS MEN ASK



Q: I downloaded something years ago and deleted it. Am I still at risk?

A: Possibly. Deleting files after you know or suspect you are under investigation can itself be a federal crime — obstruction of justice under 18 U.S.C. § 1519, carrying up to 20 years. Even when files are technically recoverable — which is often the case on traditional hard drives — the act of deletion creates new criminal exposure. Do not delete or destroy. Call an attorney first.

Q: I was using a torrent program and had no idea other people could access my files. Can I be charged with distribution?

A: You can be charged — but a defense exists. Most federal circuits now require prosecutors to prove you knew the software was sharing your files. *United States v. Husmann* (3d Cir. 2014) and *United States v. Dodd* (8th Cir. 2010) both reflect that knowledge can be inferred from circumstances — but a genuine lack of knowledge is a defense worth raising. Brother Keith's distribution charges were dropped (at the state level). Whether that happens in your case depends on the specific facts and the quality of your legal representation.

Q: I only viewed content online and never downloaded anything. Is that still illegal?

A: This is a genuine circuit split — different federal circuits have reached different conclusions. The Ninth Circuit held in *United States v. Kuchinski* (2006) that cached files require some affirmative act or knowledge. Other circuits are more aggressive. 'Still legally contested in some jurisdictions' is the honest answer — which means it is a real defense worth raising with counsel, not a guarantee of safety.

Q: What does 'knowingly possessed' mean — what does the prosecution have to prove?

A: Prosecutors must prove you were aware of the nature of the material — that you knew it depicted a minor. They do not have to prove you sought it out deliberately. If it was in a folder you accessed, on a device you controlled, and you had reason to know what it was, the threshold is often met. Ignorance of the law is not a defense, but genuine lack of knowledge about specific content can be argued — which is exactly why an attorney matters.

Q: What about AI-generated or illustrated images where no real child was involved?

A: Federal law under the PROTECT Act covers AI-generated, computer-generated, drawn, and animated images that depict minors sexually — provided the material is obscene or lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. Federal courts have upheld convictions under this standard repeatedly. Do not assume your material falls outside it. Again, seek legal counsel.

Q: Does seeking help at a recovery ministry create any legal risk for me?

A: Possibly — depending on your state and what you disclose. Fellowship leaders and pastors are mandated reporters in some states. What you tell them is not protected the way attorney-client communications are. Speak to an attorney before disclosing specific details of illegal conduct to anyone — including a pastor. This does not mean you should not seek spiritual help. It means you should seek legal counsel first.

MORE QUESTIONS



Q: If law enforcement shows up at my door, what do I do in the next 60 seconds?

A: Step outside if possible. Do not invite them in. Do not consent to a search. Say clearly and calmly: *'I would like to speak with an attorney before answering any questions.'* Then stop talking completely. Do not explain. Do not minimize. Do not try to cooperate informally. Anything you say can and *will be* used against you in a court of law. Call or request an attorney immediately.

Q: Does a VPN protect me from federal investigators?

A: No. VPN providers can be and are subpoenaed. IP addresses are only one of many identification methods available to federal investigators. Brother Keith used a VPN and the FBI saw through it. The only protection that works is turning away from all pornography entirely.

Q: What happens to my family if I am arrested?

A: Devices shared with family members may be seized and searched. Family members may be interviewed. Children in the home may be subject to welfare checks. This is one of the most painful dimensions of these cases and one of the strongest reasons to seek legal counsel immediately – a good attorney can help manage these circumstances in a way that minimizes harm to people you love.

CLOSING PRAYER



Father,

Meet this brother in the place he is afraid to name.

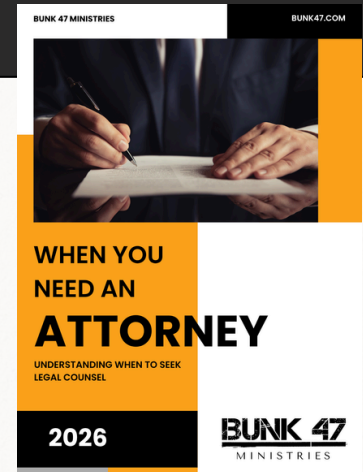
Quiet the panic in his chest. Slow down the racing thoughts. Give him wisdom that does not come from fear, and courage that does not come from pride. Help him stop hiding, stop minimizing, and stop trying to fix in secret what needs truth, counsel, and light.

Lord, lead him to the right help. Keep him from acting out of shame or desperation. Teach him to take the next right step with humility, honesty, and sober-minded wisdom. And even here, in the weight of consequences and fear, remind him that he is not beyond Your reach. Let this be the place where darkness ends, truth begins, and real repentance takes root.

In Jesus' name, amen.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you recognize yourself anywhere in this guide, do not panic and do not try to fix this alone. If you haven't already, download and read our guide *When You Need an Attorney*. It is short and jam-packed with important information and your next steps.



- **Do not** delete anything.
- **Do not** move files.
- **Do not** reset devices.
- **Do not** talk to law enforcement without counsel.
- **Do not** confess specific illegal conduct to fellowship leaders before legal counsel.
- Call a qualified federal criminal defense attorney.

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If this guide has helped you, or if you believe in the work God is doing through this ministry, we invite you to prayerfully consider giving through the QR code. Your donation helps us continue creating practical resources, offering encouragement, and walking alongside men who feel trapped in secrecy, shame, and darkness. Every gift helps us point hurting brothers back to the hope, grace, and freedom found in Jesus Christ.

