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CENTER ON  
SEXUAL  
EXPLOITATION**

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January 2, 2020

Mr. Gabe Newell  
Valve Corporation  
10900 NE 4th St Suite 500  
Bellevue, WA 98004

Dear Mr. Newell:

We are writing to ask you to reconsider Steam's current policy of hosting sexually exploitive games, given the millions of minors and socially conscious adult gamers who use your platform.

This February the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) will publicly announce its "2020 Dirty Dozen List," which catalogs top promoters of sexual exploitation in America. Due to its rampant facilitation of sexually exploitive games that normalize and train users in sexual violence, Steam is being placed on this list.

Your platform has hundreds of games that promote gratuitous sexual content, violence, and harassment. Right along with the "action", "strategy", and "racing" games in the popular tags page, "nudity" and "sexual content" come up in the top 25. Many of these games specifically portray rape and sexual harassment, as well as sexual objectification and dehumanization of women on the basis of their sex. Further, the lack of sufficient filtering or parental controls is woefully inadequate considering Steam's large userbase of minors.

As you know, Steam specifically rolled back on many restrictions and protections it previously had on the site, creating a policy in 2018 after community backlash over the removal and censoring of many games that featured extreme sex acts such as

rape and graphic nudity. Instead you implemented an “anything goes” policy with few exceptions, and soon the exploitive games came flooding back onto the platform. In the wake of this decision, the sexually exploitive games on Steam have skyrocketed, going from over 700 games tagged for the keyword nudity in 2017 to now 3,788 in 2019.

When video games include sexually graphic and degrading themes the user is not only a voyeur but an active participant in staging the scene. As our society suffers from the consequences of campus sexual assault, military sexual assault, and rising child-on-child sexual abuse, we see that normalizing the sexual use (and often abuse) of others in video games is irresponsible on the corporate and social level.

### ***Recognition of Family View Mode***

Since the 2018 rollback policy, Steam has made some improvements to their “family view” mode, but almost none for content filtering and the type of games they choose to allow on their platform. Family View is Steam’s own version of parental controls, which now allows account holders to set a PIN to block certain games and features on Steam. **However, even when account users register as a minor, it only takes one click to get past the age blocking walls to see and subsequently buy these games.**

### ***Continued Problems***

Further, Steam’s continued “anything goes” policy means games such as “House Party”, where players coerce women into having sex and have the option to ejaculate freely on partygoers, and “Mirror”, which features “multiple instances of BDSM, sexual assault and physical torture” according to one reviewer, to remain on the site and available to anyone without Family View. Even when account users register as a minor, it only takes one click to get past the age blocking walls to see and subsequently buy these games.

Another disturbing trend we see on Steam is the ability to easily bypass what little filtering the site does provide. On almost every single adult game, hundreds of reviewers leave helpful tips on how to find extra downloadable content and “nudity patches”, giving many players access to even more gratuitous sexual content. At the very least, Steam could stop allowing these types of comments to exist and be passed around directly on their site.

Although it is good to see some improvement in Steam's parental controls, Steam and its parent corporation Valve have a social responsibility to foster a safe gaming environment,

free from sexual exploitation. Continuing to promote and profit off games that depict sexual harassment, violence, and rape is unacceptable.

***Request:***

We encourage Steam to make the following improvements:

- 1) Create parental controls that are lockable, so that children are unable to see and access content their family determines inappropriate.
- 2) Create an 18+ category on its website in which all games with any amount of nudity or sexual content are stored. All accounts should have this 18+ category disabled by default, and require an extensive opt-in to view it, so that young gamers are no longer automatically exposed to this content.
- 3) Reverse the “allow anything” policy, and reject selling games that normalize or glamorize sexual violence and exploitation in the future, no matter the age of the user.

Please respond and take these steps forward. As a private company these steps do not rise to censorship, and we believe the majority of your users would welcome your efforts to make Steam a safe environment for all of your users. You can contact us at [public@ncose.com](mailto:public@ncose.com) or 202-393-7245.

Respectfully,



Patrick Trueman, Esq.  
President & CEO