

Parent Information on Safe Internet Usage

This document is to serve as a starting point for parents concerned about their child's Internet usage or to just learn more about what considerations they should be making with regards to safe Internet browsing.

I. Internet History

Remember that every time you visit a webpage in Internet Explorer or Firefox, it keeps a record. These records, or "History," are accessible for parents to see. If you want to access the history, simply load Internet Explorer or Firefox, and then press the "Ctrl" key and the "H" key at the same time. The browsing history will show up on the left side of the screen. In this way, you can see what websites the previous user had visited. Keep in mind that the history can be deleted. So, if you know that your son/daughter used the Internet recently but the history is empty, then most likely they have deleted it to hide what websites they had visited.

II. Social Networking

The usage of social networking sites is extremely common among middle school students. Social networking sites allow students to maintain their own little piece of the web by posting pictures, blogging about themselves, and sending messages to their friends. However, it is important to remember a few safety guidelines:

- Unless a profile is set to "private", pictures and content on a page may be visible to the general public.
- You should NEVER put sensitive personal information on these sites. This includes phone numbers and mailing addresses.

Social networking sites are not inherently bad things. They are a common and creative way for today's students to express themselves and keep in contact. However, it is important to talk to your child about whether or not they have a site, and if so, ask to look at it. You don't have to "friend" your child on their site, but at least ask to see it from time to time so you can keep track of how they are using it.

Here are the two most popular social networking sites:

MySpace – <http://www.myspace.com>

Facebook – <http://www.facebook.com>

III. Internet Monitoring Software

If you are willing to invest the time and the money and want more control over the Internet usage of your computer, you may want to consider Internet Monitoring software. The pros of using such software are that you can monitor usage, block websites, and require

passwords to access certain sites or computer programs. The drawback is that the software costs money and requires an investment of time to set up and learn how to use it. Here is a website that reviews popular monitoring software and compares their prices and options:

<http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/>

IV. Extra tips on safe computing

- Move the computer to a central, visible location. A family room or living room is a good option.
- If the student has their own laptop, set time limits on its use and collect the laptop at night if you are concerned about your child being on the Internet late at night.
- Remember that many websites, including social networking sites, are available on newer cell phones. Consider talking to your cell phone provider to block web access from the phone if this is a concern.

Technology and Youth: Protecting your Child from Electronic Aggression

Tip Sheet

Technology and youth seem destined for each other. They are both young, fast paced, and ever changing. In the last 20 years there has been an explosion in new technology. This new technology has been eagerly embraced by young people and has led to expanding knowledge, social networks, and vocabulary that includes instant messaging (“IMing”), blogging, and text messaging.

Electronic Aggression is any type of harassment or bullying that occurs through e-mail, a chat room, instant messaging, a website (including blogs), or text messaging.

New technology has many potential benefits for youth. With the help of new technology, young people can interact with others across the United States and throughout the world on a regular basis. Social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace also allow youth to develop new relationships with others, some of whom they have never even met in person. New technology also provides opportunities to make rewarding social connections for those youth who have difficulty developing friendships in traditional social settings or because of limited contact with same-aged peers. In addition, regular Internet access allows teens and pre-teens to quickly increase their knowledge on a wide variety of topics.

However, the recent explosion in technology does not come without possible risks. Youth can use electronic media to embarrass, harass, or threaten their peers. Increasing numbers of adolescents are becoming victims of this new form of violence—electronic aggression. Research suggests that 9% to 35% of young people report being victims of this type of violence. Like traditional forms of youth violence, electronic aggression is associated with emotional distress and conduct problems at school.

Examples of Electronic Aggression

- Disclosing someone else’s personal information in a public area (e.g., website) in order to cause embarrassment.
- Posting rumors or lies about someone in a public area (e.g., discussion board).
- Distributing embarrassing pictures of someone by posting them in a public area (e.g., website) or sending them via e-mail.
- Assuming another person’s electronic identity to post or send messages about others with the intent of causing the other person harm.
- Sending mean, embarrassing, or threatening text messages, instant messages, or e-mails.



www.cdc.gov



Tips for Parents and Caregivers

Talk to your child.

Parents and caregivers often ask children where they are going and who they are going with when they leave the house. You should ask these same questions when your child goes on the Internet. Because children are reluctant to disclose victimization for fear of having their Internet and cellular phone privileges revoked, develop solutions to prevent or address victimization that do not punish the child.

Develop rules.

Together with your child, develop rules about acceptable and safe behaviors for all electronic media. Make plans for what they should do if they become a victim of electronic aggression or know someone who is being victimized. The rules should focus on ways to maximize the benefits of technology and decrease its risks.

Explore the Internet.

Visit the websites your child frequents, and assess the pros and cons. Remember, most websites and on-line activities are beneficial. They help young people learn new information, interact with others, and connect with people who have similar interests.



Talk with other parents and caregivers.

Talk to other parents and caregivers about how they have discussed technology use with their children. Ask about the rules they have developed and how they stay informed about their child's technology use.

Connect with the school.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to work with their child's school and school district to develop a class for parents and caregivers that educates them about school policies on electronic aggression, recent incidents in the community involving electronic aggression, and resources available to parents and caregivers who have concerns. Work with the school and other partners to develop a collaborative approach to preventing electronic aggression.

Educate yourself.

Stay informed about the new devices and websites your child is using. Technology changes rapidly, and many developers offer information to keep people aware of advances. Continually talk with your child about "where they are going" and explore the technology yourself.

Technology is not going away, and forbidding young people to access electronic media may not be a good long-term solution. Together, parents and children can come up with ways to maximize the benefits of technology and decrease its risks.

For more information, please contact:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion • Division of Adolescent and School Health
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control • Division of Violence Prevention
• Adolescent Health Goal Team

1-800-CDC-INFO • www.cdc.gov • cdcinfo@cdc.gov

i-SAFE America Eluding Internet Predators Tip Sheet

According to a survey by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, only 1 in 4 youth who received a sexual solicitation online reported the incident to an adult.

i-SAFE America has created this list of Internet safety tips (Please copy and distribute) to help your family recognize online danger and take the appropriate steps to protect yourselves.

• *Keep Usernames and profiles generic and anonymous*

Discuss your child's online screen name(s), profile(s), and activities. Many provide too much personal information. Ensure all screen names and profiles are non-specific and purposely vague.

• *Avoid posting personal photos*

Pictures can be altered to embarrass or humiliate. They also provide personal information that can help an Internet predator to pretend to know you, your children, and/or their friends.

• *Always keep private information private*

With just three pieces of personal information, specialized Internet search engines can be used to locate someone anywhere. Internet conversations should never include any personal information.

• *Keep the computer in an open area*

A responsible adult should always accompany minors while they access the Internet to provide support and direction should they be confronted with an aggressive solicitation or inappropriate materials.

• *Respect children's privacy*

Respect your child's privacy but make certain they know personally everyone on their e-mail "buddy" list. Work to generate parent-child trust that supports open and honest Internet use.

• *Be part of your child's online experience*

It can be a fun journey to explore the wonders of the Internet as a family. As computer-savvy as kids and teens are today they will certainly teach you a thing or two!

• *Get involved with i-SAFE America*

These are only some of the measures you can take to ensure your child has a safe and enjoyable Internet experience. This tip sheet is only a small part of the i-Parent Campaign. Go to the Outreach & Parents section at www.isafe.org for more information on how you can bring the message of Internet safety to your community.

Remember the 4 Rs

RECOGNIZE techniques used by online predators to groom and deceive their victims.

REFUSE all requests for personal information, to keep the relationship secret, or to meet anywhere.

RESPOND assertively by exit the program, logging off, or turning off the computer.

REPORT suspicious or dangerous contact that makes you or your child feel uncomfortable.

Boys are as likely as girls to be targeted for threats or efforts to humiliate them on the Internet. Gender does not affect a child's online risk profile.

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• Don't open/read messages from cyber bullies

Your child can't be intimidated by messages from cyber bullies they never open. Teach your child to curb his or her curiosity to read and respond to a message if they suspect or know a cyber bully has sent.

• Encourage your child to tell an adult

For some children, their reaction to being bullied is not only fright, but also confusion about how to react appropriately. Coach your child to tell a trusted adult if they are ever being bullied.

• Report cyber bullying

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) can often block a cyber bully, and schools have specific procedures and rules to handle bullying. Save the bully's message and screen name, then contact and report it.

• No chatting while angry

Sending angry, hostile or taunting messages attracts cyber bullies. Make certain your child is not using e-mail messages or chat rooms to vent their own anger in a way that hurts others.

• If you are threatened with harm, tell the police

Even if you don't know how to identify the individual who has made the threat, law enforcement often has access to the information and may be able to track down and arrest them before they do more harm.

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Remember the 4 Rs

RECOGNIZE "flaming" and cyber bullying techniques and the bully's screen name or address.

REFUSE to open or read any message from a cyber bully.

RESPOND assertively by leaving the chat room without responding or the letter unopened.

REPORT cyber bullying to the ISP, the school, or law enforcement as needed to stop it immediately.