

What your child or teen should know

Share these basic tips with your kids:

- **Never give out identifying information where a stranger can find it** -- in your blog, your profile page, your email signature, and so on. Identifying information includes your real name, your home address, the name of your school, your social security number, your telephone number, and financial or credit card information. Keep your user names and profiles as generic and anonymous as possible.
- **Never post or share pictures of yourself to people you don't know personally.** Pictures can be altered to embarrass or humiliate. They also provide personal information that can help an Internet predator act familiar by pretending to know you or your friends.
- **Never, never, NEVER arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone you met online.** Predators will try to trick you into believing that they have similar interests, as a way to make you want a more intimate relationship. Fall for this and you could be endangering your life.
- **Never download pictures or files from unknown sources.** There is a good chance such files contain spyware, viruses, or keylogging software.
- **Never respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, belligerent, or harassing.** And don't post such messages yourself! That's cyberbullying. The Internet provides a sense of anonymity, so it's easy to say something cruel about your peers, thinking it won't come back to bite you. It will. Actions have consequences, even online.

Signs your child or teen may be at risk

You should follow up immediately to find out more about your child's online behavior if she or he ...

- spends large amounts of time online, especially at night
- receives strange phone calls (e.g., the caller hangs up when you pick up the phone, or an adult asks to speak with your child)
- makes calls to numbers you don't recognize
- receives mail, gifts or packages from someone you don't know
- turns the monitor off or quickly changes windows on the monitor when you come into the room
- becomes withdrawn from the family
- uses an online account belonging to someone else

Resources for Parents

www.NetSafeKids.org
www.pollyklaas.org
www.cyberangels.org

<http://whoswatchingcharlottesville.org>.

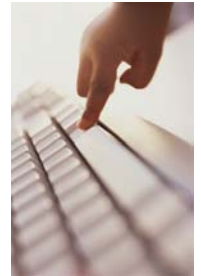
Internet Filtering Software

<http://kids.GetNetWise.org>

Internet Safety Training

www.NetSmartz.org
www.staysafeonline.org
www.staysafe.org
www.safeteens.org
www.safeteens.com
www.safekids.com
www.netparents.org

Parent Guide to Internet Safety



for Children and Teens



Diocese of
Green Bay

Safe Environment Department



This generation is the first to grow up "plugged in." The Web brings the world closer for kids making school research projects easier and providing homework help; enabling them to shop and play online; and facilitating friendships and relationships through email, Instant Messaging, chatrooms, and social networking sites like MySpace.

Yet the Internet can also be a dangerous place for minors if they don't receive the proper guidance. Parents should therefore try to guide children and teens on safe Internet use and generate ongoing, honest, and open dialogue about cyber safety.

Parent guidelines for Internet safety

- **Learn about the Internet.** The more you know about how the Web works, the better prepared you are to teach your children how predators operate and what you can do together to avoid them.
- **Spend time with your children online.** Surf the net together and ask them to show you their favorite destinations. Be familiar with your child's online activities, and talk to them about the sites they visit and the programs they use.
- **Place the family computer in an open area.** Keeping the computer in a common room in the house is safer than keeping it in your child's bedroom. It's a lot tougher for sex offenders and bullies to interact with your child when the computer screen is where you can see it.
- **Use tools like parental controls, content blocking, and monitoring software.** While you should certainly be mindful of your child's privacy, it may be time to investigate parental control tools that are provided by some Internet Service Providers or are available for purchase as separate software packages.

- **Create a user account for each family member.** Most operating systems (including Windows XP and Mac OS X) allow you to create different user accounts for each member of the family. You, as the household's computer "administrator," can give your child a user account with restricted "privileges."
- **Make certain your child or teen knows everyone in his or her email address book or Instant Messenger (IM) "Buddy" list.** Online culture has blurred the meaning and definition of "friends." It's important that children and teens understand the difference.
- **Remember your home computer isn't the only one your child uses.** Find out what computer safeguards are utilized by your child's school, at the public library, and at the homes of your child's friends.
- **Beware of phone calls or mail deliveries from unfamiliar persons.** Predators often call or send gifts to their potential victims in the process of wooing them.
- **Teach "trust your gut."** Make sure your child or teen knows that if they feel uncomfortable or threatened by someone or something online, they should tell you or another trusted adult. *Encourage your child to speak up!*
- **Draw up an Internet Use Contract with your child or teen.** Agree to some clear, simple, easy-to-read house rules and post them on or near the computer monitor.
- **Talk to your child or teen.** Talk openly and frequently about potential online dangers large and small: from sexual exploitation, stalking, and identity theft to bullying and spam. Explain how they can protect themselves.

- **Remember, anything you see or hear online may or may not be true.** Rumors, claims, even personal identities and pictures can be completely fabricated -- and often are.
- **Talk to a trusted adult.** If anything seems uncomfortable, harassing, or suspicious, tell someone!

Tips on Cell Phone Use

- Be careful about the pictures you take and send with your phone. Pictures taken with a cell phone can be posted to the web.
- Be aware text messaging reveals your phone number to whomever you send a message.
- Know that predators can also send messages and call to arrange meetings.
- If you receive a bullying or threatening text message, report it immediately to a parent or trusted adult.
- Your phone has caller ID. Do not answer a call from a number that you are not familiar with or not expecting.
- Parents should review their service plan and learn which features can be blocked to protect children.

