



July 2014

Stewards of Children® Participants...Never Stop Learning!

You are receiving this email because you have attended a Stewards of Children training with Chaucie's Place. We want to continue to provide you helpful information, tips, stories in the news, trainings, and other valuable resources to expand your awareness and strengthen your role as a steward of children. Without ongoing education and dialogue in our community, it is impossible to move forward and end this epidemic.

How Can I Best Protect My Children When They Use Technology?

(Third in a series of four articles)

Children are "natives" when it comes to using technology: computers, the Internet, social media, smartphones, video games, and the list goes on. However, as parents and adults who care about children, we must learn about new technology, set boundaries, and openly communicate with our children about their "online" life.

If you missed the first two articles in this series, click [HERE](#) for the full articles.

How to Protect Your Children When They Use a Smartphone

Cellphones and smartphones have become a part of every day life. We can do many things with smartphones - share photos, browse the Internet, download and enjoy movies or music, buy things, video chat, and yes, even talk. Inevitably, as your children grow, they will want a smartphone, and inevitably at some point, you will get them one.

Your relationship with your children is one of the most important ways you can help protect them. So start the conversation (not lecture) with your kids about proper smartphone use. To help get you started, consider drawing up a family cellphone contract and talk about why each point is important. We have provided a link in the resource section at the end of the article with example contracts for kids, teens, parents, and families.

Here are some other topics to share with your kids for keeping mobile phone use safe and constructive.

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Share with care. Use the same good sense about what you share or post from your phone as from a computer. Text, photos, and/or video are tough to take back once shared, can be copied and pasted elsewhere, and are up there pretty much forever. Think about the people in them (including you!). Reputations are at stake.

Phones are personal. Letting other people use your phone when you're not around is like letting them have the password to your social network profile. They can impersonate you, which gives them the power to mess with your reputation and relationships. Lock your phone when you're not using it, and use strong and unique passwords for all your apps.

Keep it kind. Because people socialize on cellphones as much as online, cyberbullying can be mobile too. Treat people on phones and the Internet the way you would in person, and the risk of being bullied goes down.

Know what your apps know. Pay attention to any permissions apps request as you install them. If an app asks to access your location, contact list, calendar or messages or to post to your social networking services, consider if the app really needs that information to function. When in doubt, consider withholding permission or not using that app. And parents, consider approving all apps purchases, so you can investigate and discuss these permissions with your teen.

Down time is good. Constant texting and talking can affect sleep, concentration, school, and other things that deserve your thought and focus. You need your sleep, and real friends understand there are times you just need to turn off the phone.

Share location mindfully. A growing number of apps allow friends to pinpoint each other's physical location. If you use such a service, do so only with friends you know *in person*, and get to know the service's privacy features.

No texting while driving! Research shows that texting while driving can significantly increase the risk of a crash. Silence your phone in the car, pull over if you need to use it, and of course, follow your state's hands-free laws for mobile phones in cars. And parents, make sure to model these good practices in front of your family.

Sexting: This term usually refers to the sharing of nude photos via cellphone, but it can happen on other devices and the Internet too. Most kids are smart and don't take, send, post or even store nude photos of themselves or peers on their phones. People who do so can be charged with production, distribution, or possession of child pornography, a serious crime. They can also be subjected to jokes, bullying, blackmail, expulsion from school, loss of a job, etc. and the images can circulate forever.

Sexting can have serious psychological consequences that need to be discussed with your teens. When someone uses pressure or coercion to get nude or sexually explicit photos from another person, that's a form of sexual harassment. Teens need to see that pressure for what it is - disrespectful and abusive, that they owe themselves the self-respect to stop this victimization, and that there are laws against it.

And even consensual sexting can go very wrong. After a relationship has ended, people may feel angry or hurt and then share very personal photos of someone without his or her

consent. This is a violation of trust that can cause severe embarrassment, harm to a reputation, or other emotional hurt.

What if my child has been involved in sexting?

If your child has received nude photos or sexually explicit texts from anyone over 18, this is illegal. You will need to make a report with law enforcement and/or at the [CyberTipline](#). However, if you child has sent or received "sexts" from anyone under 18, laws vary from state to state, and the laws were written before sexting was "invented."

Parents:

- Talk with your kids about sexting in a relaxed setting. Ask them what they know about it (they may not have heard the term, so "naked photo-sharing" works too). Express how you feel in a conversational, non-confrontational way. A two-way dialog can go a long way toward helping your kids understand how to minimize legal, social and reputation risks.
- Even when they're being threatened, young people are often reluctant to tell even trusted adults, for any number of reasons. There is nothing more effective than letting your child know - often and in different ways - that you are there for them no matter what. If bad stuff happens to them and they level with you, let them know you will respectfully help them work through it, involving them every step of the way. With loving communication like that, there is very little you won't be able to work through as a team. Wise victim advocates will tell you this is their job too - to help victims have control over their situation in a system that's designed to take control away from the victim.
- If your children have sent any nude pictures of themselves, make sure they stop immediately, explaining the legal and psychological risks we mention above. Have them delete the photos. Your family doesn't want to run the risk of having what could be deemed "child pornography" on any of its devices.
- Consider talking with other teens and parents involved, and possibly your child's school, based on what you've learned, but keep your child informed and involved. Every case is unique and contextual, but if your child's involved, so is his or her social life. Consider very carefully whether or not to involve the school. Some schools have mandatory reporting requirements, which could mean that any case they hear about has to go to law enforcement, which could turn an already hard lesson into long-term pain.
- Contact a crisis hotline, online or via phone. This is a good option if you prefer to remain anonymous while exploring how to proceed, and crisis lines can offer refer you to a victim advocate or other legal advisor near you. If in Hamilton County, call Prevail's crisis line at 317-776-3472. If outside Hamilton County, you can call 2-1-1.

We hope this information can help you start the conversation with your children about technology. Please use the links below if you would like more information. The next article in this series will be *How To Protect Your Children When Using Apps or Games*.

Information provided by:

[Connect Safely](#)

ConnectSafely.org is for parents, teens, educators, advocates - everyone engaged in and

interested in the impact of the social Web and mobile technology.

[CyberTipline®](#)

The CyberTipline® receives leads and tips regarding suspected crimes of sexual exploitation committed against children. If you have information regarding possible child sexual exploitation, report it to the CyberTipline.

Additional Resources available at:

[Media! Tech! Parenting!](#)

Media! Tech! Parenting! discusses timely topics on teaching & parenting digital children. This link provides a list of contracts for kids, teens, parents, and families.

[Prevail, Inc.](#)

Prevail, Inc. educates and engages the community to prevent crime and abuse while helping restore the lives of those who have been affected.

[2-1-1 Call Center Search](#)

2-1-1 provides free and confidential information and referral. You may use the link provided or simply call 2-1-1 to talk to someone immediately.

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About Chaucie's Place

Chaucie's Place works passionately to ensure the welfare of children by offering evidence-based; high-quality prevention programs to end the cycle of abuse and to empower children and adults to ensure that children of central Indiana have the opportunity to live to their highest potential.

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