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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?
(Second 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 article, *Topics To Talk About With Children And Teens When It Comes To The Internet*, click **HERE** for the full May article.

What are signs that my teen may be at risk online?
and
What can I do to protect them online?

As parents and concerned adults, you want to protect your children wherever they may go, and that includes where they go "online." This article provides you with information on warning signs that your teen is at risk, how to report any suspicious activity, and ways to protect all your children, regardless of age, when they are venturing out into the online world.

Disclaimer: Although this article focuses on teens, the content in the article can apply to all ages. We chose the word "teens" because this age group is more commonly the victims in this type of crime.

Warning signs that my teen might be at risk online

1. Your teen spends large amounts of time online, especially at night.

There are no hard and set rules as to how much time kids, or even adults, should be spending online, but if it starts to interfere with other aspects of his/her life, then you've almost certainly gotten to that point.

Teens online are at greatest risk during the evening hours. While offenders are online around the clock, most work during the day and spend their evenings online trying to locate and lure kids or seeking pornography.

2. You find pornography on your teen's computer.

Pornography is often used in the sexual victimization of children and teens. Sex offenders often supply their potential victims with pornography as a means of opening sexual discussions, for arousal, and/or seduction. Child pornography may be used to show the victim that sex between children and adults is "normal". Parents should be conscious of the fact that teens may hide pornographic files on external hard drives. This may be especially true if the computer is used by other family members.

3. Your teen receives phone calls from people you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize.

Most offenders will eventually want to talk on the telephone. They often engage in "phone sex" and often seek to set up a meeting for real sex.

While a teen may be hesitant to give out his/her phone number, the offender will give theirs. Then with Caller ID, the offender can readily obtain the phone number. Some offenders use toll-free numbers, so that potential victims can call without his/her parents finding out. Both of these methods can result in the offender figuring out the teen's phone number.

4. Your teen receives mail, gifts, and/or packages from someone you don't know.

As part of the seduction process, it is common for offenders to send letters, photographs, and all manner of gifts to potential victims. Offenders have even sent plane tickets in order for a victim to travel across the country for a meeting.

5. Your teen turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room.

6. Your teen becomes withdrawn from the family.

Offenders will work very hard at driving a wedge between a teen and their family or at exploiting that relationship. They will accentuate any minor problems at home. Victims may also become withdrawn after sexual victimization.

7. Your teen is using an online account belonging to someone else.

Even if you don't subscribe to an online service or Internet service, your teen may meet an offender while online at a friend's house or the library. Most computers come preloaded with

online and/or Internet software. Offenders will sometimes provide potential victims with a computer account for communications with them.

What can I do if I suspect my teen is communicating with a sexual predator online?

- Consider talking openly with your teen about your suspicions. During the discussion, remain calm, non-judgmental, and non-confrontational.
- Review what is on your computer. If you don't know how, ask a friend, coworker, relative, or other knowledgeable person. Pornography or any kind of sexual communication can be a warning sign.
- Use the Caller ID service to determine who is calling your teen. Most telephone companies that offer Caller ID also offer a service that allows you to block your number from appearing on another Caller ID. Telephone companies also offer an additional service feature that rejects incoming calls that you block.
- Devices can be purchased that show telephone numbers that have been dialed from your home phone.
- Monitor your teen's access to all types of live electronic communications (i.e., chat rooms, instant messages, video games, etc.), and monitor your teen's email. Offenders almost always meet potential victims via chat rooms. After meeting online, they will continue to communicate electronically often via email.

Immediately contact your local or state law enforcement agency, the FBI, and the **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children**
if any of these situations occur:

1. Your child or anyone in the household has received child pornography;
2. Your child has been sexually solicited by someone who knows that your child is under 18 years of age;
3. Your child has received sexually explicit images from someone who knows your child is under the age of 18.

If one of these scenarios occurs, keep the computer turned off in order to preserve any evidence for future law enforcement use. Unless directed to do so by the law enforcement agency, you should not attempt to copy any of the images and/or text found on the computer.

Ways to help protect kids and teens online

- **Most important**, talk to him/her about the dangers of interacting with strangers online. The FBI also recommends that parents maintain access to young kids' online accounts and randomly check their email.
- Talk with your teen and decide together where he/she can and can't go online. Your conversation should include ALL places he/she goes online . . . home computer, friend's computer, smartphone, tablet, apps, and/or video games.
- Keep the computer in a common room in the house.
- Take an interest in the sites your teen is visiting and the people with whom he/she is chatting. By reviewing the browser history, you can see all the sites visited. This **LINK** gives instructions on how to view the browser history for most major web browsers

(Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Safari, and smartphones).

- Warn him/her never to give out personal information (home or cell phone number, address, etc.), agree to meet anyone he/she meets in a chat room, or share any photographs with strangers.
- Urge your teen to introduce you to any new "friends" he/she meets online and to tell you if he/she ever feels uncomfortable about conversations that take place.
- Block inappropriate content. Your computer manufacturer and web browser will have more information on how to block inappropriate content. You can use this **Google Search** for web browsers. There are also parent controls on gaming systems and smartphones, so make sure to explore those options as well.
- Do consider configuring your search engine for "safe" or filtered search or use **Child Safe Search** (powered by Google).

A word on using filters or monitoring tools . . . Filters can usually prevent young children from accidentally stumbling on troubling or inappropriate material, but are less effective at keeping older kids and teens from deliberately visiting blocked sites. There are several ways to get around filters, including using another computer, mobile phone or tablet that's not filtered. Monitoring tools can inform parents of where their kids are going but some kids - especially teens - feel that it's an invasion of their privacy. Many professionals would argue that it's not necessary or helpful.

The use of these tools is a personal decision that every family needs to put thought into. If you do use a tool, it's a very good idea to tell your children and teens that it's there and for parents to think about how to wean off the filtering and monitoring as the children and teens get older and/or more responsible.

Ultimately, the only filter that can fully protect your child or teen is the one between their ears. It's important to teach critical thinking skills to help him/her make good decisions on and off the Internet - now and as they mature. With these skills, he/she can develop their own controls rather than relying on those imposed by parents or schools.

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 Smartphones and Other Smart Devices.*

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:
Safe Search for Kids

Safe Search for Kids is the child friendly search engine where safe search is always 'on'. It is a Google powered search engine, but there is additional information for parents about all things technology.

NetSafeKids
NetSafeKids is an important step on the road to becoming an Internet-savvy parent who can make informed decisions and plan effective strategies that promote safe and enjoyable Internet experiences for children.

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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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