



January 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 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?**

(First 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. 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.

#### **Topics to talk about with children and teens when it comes to the Internet**

**The most important thing you can do to protect your children is to talk with them in an open, honest, and caring way.** By talking with your children about these difficult subjects, you are showing that you care about them and their well-being. Communicate your concerns and expectations about their online life in a calm demeanor. Listen to their thoughts and concerns and then come to agreement on how, when, where, and how often they go online. Engaging them in conversation and decision-making will help them develop critical thinking skills about their time online, and thus better preparing them when they are on their own. And continually talk with your youth about their time online. Just as you would ask them about their weekend plans, you need to ask them "Where are you going (online)? Who are you talking to (online)? What will you be doing/talking about (online)?" Below is a list of topics to start the conversation with your children and teens:

**Age Range:** Virtually all cases of Internet sex crimes involve youth 12 and up. Most victims are ages 13 - 15. Younger children have much less interest than teens in interacting with and going to meet unknown persons they have encountered online.

It's also important to know that in the vast majority of Internet sex crimes against young people, offenders do not deceive youth about the fact that they are adults who have sexual

intentions. Acknowledging that they were older, the offenders seduced youth by being understanding, sympathetic, flattering, and by appealing to a youth's curiosity in romance, sex, and adventure.

**Romantic Illusions:** Internet offenders manipulate young people by appealing to his/her desire to be appreciated, understood, take risks, and find out about sex. To warn youth about these crimes, we need to educate them about this dynamic and how these romantic illusions make some young people vulnerable to adult offenders who use flattery and seduction. Also, know that the teen may not see this "romance" as an illusion; it will feel completely real to him/her. It is important to remember this during your discussions with your teen.

**Offline contact:** 1 in 25 youth receive an online sexual solicitation where the solicitor tries to make offline contact via telephone, offline mail or in person. Online solicitations usually occur through instant messaging or chat rooms on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram Direct, Snapchat, video games, etc (more in-depth information on social media and video games will be covered in future articles). These are the online encounters most likely to lead to an offline sex crime.

As the parent or caregiver, it is important for you to understand that in most offline encounters, victims meet offenders voluntarily and expect sexual activity, because they feel love or affection for the person they have been corresponding with. This does not discount the criminality of the adult or mean that the youth involved is at fault. Statutory sex crime laws in every state recognize the exploitative imbalance of power and experience that makes relationships between young teens and adults inappropriate and criminal.

**Sharing Personal Information:** Parents often tell kids to not share personal information like their name, school name, photos, or phone numbers, however research shows that simply posting or sending personal information online does not put youth at risk. It is hard to be online without doing so. A warning that is so broad and runs counter to such common practices is not likely to make young people trust the source of such advice.

Instead, talk about how they need to be careful about **who** they give personal information to and **what kinds of things** they share. Research says that talking about sex online with strangers is a big risk factor for encountering problems. So is interacting indiscriminately with a lot of unknown people online. Youth should be very cautious about how they respond to people who contact them. Talk with your youth that offenders will use innocent flirtations and compliments in hopes to build a romantic relationship with them. Other things that probably increase risk are giving out sexually oriented information, looking for romantic relationships online, and/or inviting contact from lots of people.

**Social Networking:** Research suggests that personal web pages are not in themselves dangerous. Rather, the danger is when young people use these vehicles to portray themselves as interested in sex, romance, risk-taking, and open to interacting with people they don't know.

So share with your child/teen they need to be very careful what they do with social networking sites or personal web pages. It is useful to remind young people that many things they post for their friends may end up being viewed by others, and can prompt contact that could become a problem.

***Taking and Sending photos:*** Most youth do not realize that sexual pictures of themselves and other minors can constitute child pornography; its production and transmission are serious crimes. They may see such photos as romantic, fun, adventuresome. Four percent of youth said they got requests from online solicitors to take and send sexual pictures of themselves. Youth need to understand why this is a crime, and that people who ask for and transmit such pictures can get arrested as child pornographers and sex offenders.

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 *Warning Signs Your Youth May Be at Risk Online*.

***Information and statistics 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.

[Crimes Against Children Research Center](#)

The mission of the Crimes against Children Research Center (CCRC) is to combat crimes against children by providing high quality research and statistics to the public, policy makers, law enforcement personnel, and other child welfare practitioners.

***Additional Resources available at:***

[CyberTipline](#)

The CyberTipline<sup>®</sup> 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.

***Please forward to your friends, family and colleagues!***

**Stewards of Children Training:**

***June 18, 2014***

***5:30 - 8:00 pm***

***Fishers YMCA***

***9012 E 126th St***

***Fishers, IN 46038***

***\$15 per person***

**Register [HERE!](#)**

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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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