Prevent Child Abuse
Kentucky

internet safety
TOOLKIT

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Internet Safety

A toolkit for parents and caregivers to help keep children safe

The Internet offers a world of possibilities to children. It provides up-to-date information about almost anything. It is a tool used in education, a tool used to communicate and it is a form of entertainment. Our children are learning how to utilize computers at a very young age. Often times, their skills are greater than that of their parents and caregivers.

While increased access to technology is a good thing, it also has a negative side. Sadly, Internet access provides frightening opportunities for children to be exposed to the risk of unwanted or unsafe material and to predators, who are unyielding in their efforts to manipulate them. There is good news. Children and adults can safely use technology, avoid the risks, and cope with unsafe situations if they occur. Just like any other dangerous situation, adults must arm themselves with information, knowledge and skills to keep their children safe. Understanding and learning how to use technology may seem difficult and may feel uncomfortable. It is very important, for the sake of our children, that we overcome these barriers. This Tool Kit, created in collaboration with experts from across the state of Kentucky, will help provide information parents and caregivers need to know to allow their children to benefit from all that technology has to offer in a safe manner.

The web, cell phones or other technologies are not inherently good or bad. It is the use that determines if they are good or evil.

GOOD	EVIL
Information	Pornography
Learning	Hacking
Communicating	Victimizing
Connecting	Stalking
Collaborating	Bullying
Sharing	Sexting
Researching	Stealing

Potential and Real Harm

Three in four (74%) young people have a home Internet connection (31% have high speed access). Nearly one third (31%) have a computer in their bedroom, and one in five (20%) have an Internet connection there. In a typical day, about half of young people (48%) go online from home, 20% from school, and 16% from someplace else (Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8–18 Year Olds. Victoria Rideout, Donald F. Roberts, Ulla G. Foehr. March 2005. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. 17 November 2006).

According to IDC, a technology research firm, by the end of 2004 approximately 21 million 5–19 year olds had wireless phones.

At any given time, 50,000 child predators are on-line prowling for children (US Department of Justice, 2006).

Child pornography has become a $3 billion annual industry (Top Ten Reviews, 2005).

Fifty nine percent of 7th–9th grade victims said their perpetrators were a friend they know in-person; 36% said it was someone else they know; 21% said the cyber offender was a classmate; 19% indicated the abuser was an online friend; and 16% said it was an online stranger (Rochester Institute of Technology, 2008).

While 2:3 of teens are likely to be harassed or bullied off-line, nearly 1:3 have been harassed as a result of technology (Lenhart, 2007).

Sixty four percent of all teens say they do things online they don't want their parents to know about (Lenhart, Madden and Rainie, 2006).

Seventy one percent of teens receive messages online from strangers, 45% of teens have been asked for personal information online and 30% of teens contemplate meeting a person they met online (Teenage Research Unlimited, 2006).

Forty two percent of youths (age 10–17) have seen internet porn in the past year. Two-thirds of these exposures were unwanted (DeNoon, 2007).

What can parents and caregivers do?

Educate yourself and take time to learn how to use the Internet, monitor online usage and how to implement parental controls on your home computer. You may find a class at a local library or literacy center. You may also find assistance from the Family Resource or Youth Services Center at your child's school.

Find out what **computer safeguards** are utilized by your child's school, the public library, and at the homes of your child's friends and any other place outside of your normal supervision.

Take time to **understand the risks**. It is easy to think, "my child knows better." Don't be naïve or unprepared about the risks. First, you must realize things you read online may be untrue and people you are communicating with may not be who they say they are or may have motives that are very different from what they seem. Child predators are skilled at using manipulation. They portray themselves to be a friend, boyfriend, girlfriend, mentor or confidant to a child and even sometimes to the child's parents or caregivers as well. They sometimes make themselves out to be helpful, interested and wanting to improve the life of their potential victim in some way. They may not immediately introduce unwanted communication but gradually and deliberately begin to "groom" the child after a "trusting" relationship is established. Parents and caregivers must be skilled and on top of things to combat the risks online relationships can pose.

Utilize parental controls offered by your service provider and/or blocking software. Your Internet provider can explain options and help you understand how they work. There are many options available that allow home computer usage to be monitored and to even "shut down" should unapproved activity take place.

> "Many times, online predators do not lie about their age or who they are. They meet the needs of their potential victim by listening to them, understanding them, offering them advice. They become a real friend to the child they have targeted."
>
> —Detective David Flannery
> *Lexington Fayette Urban County Government Police Department*

What can parents and caregivers do?

> "Teaching children this stuff should be right up there with teaching them about the birds and the bees and drugs."
>
> —Kyle Edelen
> *U.S. Attorney Office Eastern District of Kentucky*

Keep the computer in a common room in the house, not in your child's bedroom. The screen should be visible to parents or other members of the household. Remember when children have access to the Internet via cell phone or other hand held device, their usage is completely unsupervised. Parents should always know their children's usernames and passwords for all online accounts and activity.

Communicate with your children. Do not just rely on parental controls. While they are important tools, your children will have Internet access where there are no parental controls in place. Talk to them about positive aspects of Internet use as well as the dangers. Have a discussion about how child predators may go online to exploit or victimize youth. They too, must realize things they see or read online may be untrue and they may be communicating with someone who is not who they say they are. Communicate regarding these issues on a regular basis. Don't wait for something to happen to have these discussions.

Review age appropriate online safety material with your children such as resources found at www.netsmarts411.org. Do this early. By doing so, rules and guidelines are established from the very start.

Spend time with your children online. Have them teach you about their favorite online activities and sites. Enjoy the positive aspect of the Internet with them.

Learn chat and messaging shorthand. There is a lingo associated with chat and texting that is meant to keep parents and caregivers in the dark. Knowing the language will assist you as you monitor Internet activity.

Understand the prevalence of chat and instant messaging. Instant Messaging allows for real time dialogue between two or more people and is frequently used by individuals using the Internet. Parents must know how it works and what measures can be taken to monitor the activity.

Teach your children about strategies that predators use such as gradually seducing their targets through the use of attention, affection, kindness and even gifts. Predators often invest considerable time and energy into their prowling. They may be familiar with the latest music, hobbies and interests of children. They will gradually lower children's inhibitions by slowly introducing sexual context and content into their conversations long after a trusting relationship is formed.

> "It is best that parents and caregivers, rather than peers, introduce children to the Internet. That way, adults can also introduce safeguards and limits at the same time."
>
> —Allison Dickinson
> *Glasgow Independent Schools, PCAK Board member*

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> "In most cases I have prosecuted, children go to meet the predator willingly. They see this person as someone with whom they have a bond (a boyfriend or best friend) and not a stranger."
>
> —Erin May Roth
> *U.S. Attorney's Office Eastern District of Kentucky*

Limit the amount of time your children are allowed to spend on the Internet. Online activity, like other "screen time" activities (television, video games, etc.) should be used in moderation. Keep track of how long your children engage in these activities.

Set limits and instruct your children to:

• Never upload (post) pictures online without permission.

• Never request or agree to a face-to-face meeting with someone met online even if a relationship has been established.

• Never give out identifying information such as name, phone number, address or school name.

• Never download pictures from an unknown source. This is used as a method to transmit sexually explicit images.

• Never respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are sexually suggestive, obscene or harassing in nature.

• Never use the Internet in an aggressive manner to make fun of, ridicule or harass another person.

• Do not download file-sharing programs (programs that share things such as music or pictures). Often times they are illegal and can be utilized to distribute child pornography.

> "It is important to set limits and boundaries from the very beginning to prevent a child from feeling punished for having restrictions placed on their Internet use after an unsafe situation occurs."
>
> —Kellie Kozee Warren
> *Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky*

Social Networking

> "Many, if not most, of the crimes I have investigated began with a social networking site."
>
> —DETECTIVE DAVID FLANNERY
> *Lexington-Fayette Urban County Crimes Against Children Unit*

The popularity of social networks has exploded in recent times. Adults and youth alike utilize social networks such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and many other networks to connect with friends and relatives and communicate with people who share common interests.

Typically, individuals will create an account and a profile. Profiles contain a variety of information and may be made public or private. Public profiles can be viewed by anyone who is a member of the same network. This includes information, posts, pictures and anything else that may be included as part of the individual's profile. Private profiles are shared with only those individuals who are "friends." A friend is described as someone who has requested to be your friend and has been accepted, thereby being allowed access to your information. It is important for adults and youth alike to understand social network "friends" may not be real friends but rather people you agree to allow access to you via the social network. Additionally, there are considerations related to youth utilizing social networks:

Sex offender, 35, arrested after sending plane tickets to girl, 14, he befriended on Facebook

Research and use privacy settings. They control who may or may not see posted information.

Only accept "friends" you personally know. Would you allow a stranger in your home, in your desk, access to your personal information? Social network friends are strangers and while you may think they are well intentioned, you really have no idea of their motives.

Be cautious of what you post. Only post information or photos you would be comfortable sharing with friends, teachers, parents, current and future employers, law enforcement or any other individual. What is put on the Internet stays on the Internet.

Use the same manners and language on social networking sites you use in a face-to-face social setting.

Protect your password and usernames and do not share this information with anyone except your parent or caregiver.

Parents should monitor social networking sites and further supervise the activity by becoming "friends" with their children on these sites.

Have a plan or agreement in place between parents and children to deal with issues that may be uncomfortable or unsafe (even if it was a broken rule that allowed or created the unsafe situation).

Signs your child may be at risk online…

Your child spends large amounts of time online.
Most children falling victim to computer sex offenders spend large amounts of time online from their computer, cell phone or other handheld device. Predators take notice of when children are home alone and will often communicate during those times to avoid parental interference.

Your child receives mail or packages from someone you don't know.
It is common for offenders to send letters, photographs, and gifts to their potential victims. They have even sent plane tickets for the child to travel to meet them.

Your child is using an online account belonging to someone else.
Computer-sex offenders will sometimes provide potential victims with a computer account that is used solely for communication with them. They will also teach children how to delete history and messages and to deactivate parental controls.

You find pornography on your child's computer.
Sex offenders often supply their potential victims with pornography as a means of opening sexual discussions and for seduction. This material may be stored on a hard drive or on memory sticks (digital data storage technology). Remember, this is part of the "grooming" process and often occurs after the predator has spent a great deal of time forming a "relationship" with the child.

Your child turns the computer monitor off.
Doing this or quickly changing the screen on the monitor may be an attempt to hide what is being looked at on the computer. If this occurs, check the "history" and share your concerns with your child.

Your child becomes withdrawn from the family.
Predators will work hard to drive a wedge between a child and his/her family. They will focus on even minor problems a child is having at home.

Your child makes and receives phone calls to and from people you don't know.
Oftentimes computer-sex offenders will want to talk to the child on the phone as well as online. They sometimes engage in "phone sex" and may seek to set up an actual meeting for real sex. They have been known to set up toll-free 800 numbers, so their potential victims can call them without their parents finding out. They may have a child call collect or send a child a cell phone that can be used for private communication.

What to do if you suspect your child is at risk online…

> "Knowing a child's username and password could save their life in a situation where they have gone to have a face-to-face meeting."
>
> —JAMES JOHNSON
> *Office of the*
> *Attorney General*

Talk about it.

Let your child know you are concerned and that it is your job to keep them safe. Give them the opportunity to discuss any potential or actual victimization without fear of getting in trouble.

Review what is on your child's computer.

If you don't know how to do this, ask for help from a friend, co-worker or relative. Explore all Internet history and activity as well as email and social networking sites.

Closely monitor your child's Internet usage on the computer, cell phone or other handheld device.

Set very clear boundaries that allow for close monitoring and supervision. Stick to the boundaries that you have set. Continue to have open communication with your youth. Continue to remind them that online supervision is not a consequence, but rather your job and duty as a parent wanting to keep your child safe.

ALWAYS REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

1. Communicate your concerns to all adults living in the home so they may assist in monitoring activity.

2. Communicate your concerns to your child's teacher, principal and/or school counselor so that monitoring will continue at school.

3. Contact your local police department or the Kentucky State Police regarding your concerns.

4. Contact The Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 800-THE-LOST (800-843-5678) for help and information or go to www.cybertipline.com to report concerns. Tips can be made anonymously.

Cell Phone Safety

Cell phone accessibility has made keeping in contact with kids easier than ever. A charged and answered phone gives parents immediate contact with their children. Kids also have access to their parents without having to find a pay phone. This ability to immediately be in contact with children is convenient and reassuring. Long gone, however, are the days when parents or other household members were aware of every call coming into a home. Now, children can receive calls and messages without anyone knowing the frequency or content of the communication. So, like the Internet, it is very important to teach our youth how to appropriately and safely communicate using cell phones and other handheld devices.

When purchasing a phone/plan, **review phone options and parental controls**.

Both you and your child should **become familiar with the phone** and all features. Make sure your child knows how to use the phone in emergency situations and make sure you are equally as skilled at using the phone and reviewing phone usage.

Monitor cell phone usage via online management of the account or monthly phone bills. Opt for a detailed bill outlining each number receiving and sending calls and texts. Talk to your child about with whom they are communicating. Look for changes in patterns.

Communicate with your child how talking on the phone can cause them to be distracted and less aware of their surroundings. Remind them people can hear what they are saying when speaking in public, including child predators who may be listening to their conversation.

Warn your child about the dangers of texting while driving. Set a good example. It is against the law.

Limit internet access on cell phones. As already mentioned, online activity needs to be monitored. Online activity cannot be closely monitored if it can be accessed via cell phone or other handheld device.

Consider deactivating the camera feature on your child's phone. The absence of a camera will not limit communication, however, it will prevent inappropriate pictures being taken and sent via text.

Learn the lingo. There is a rapidly growing shorthand used when texting and instant messaging. Learn and keep up with this language.

Pay attention to child's behavior as it relates to texting. For example, is the child being more secretive regarding texting?

Set limits and be consistent with these limits. Make sure your child understands continued cell phone use is contingent upon following the rules. Limits should include:

• Never talk or text with people who you do not personally know. Remember, children may not consider their online friends as "strangers," however, you must be clear that phone communication is not allowed with these individuals despite any online relationship.

• Never discuss personal information in public. A child predator can gain a wealth of information—such as child's school and address—from eavesdropping.

• Place a curfew on the cell phone. Having possession of the phone at night will give parents the opportunity to review phone activity; and also prevent late night calls and texts. Start this rule from the beginning.

• Have an honest discussion about concerns and risks and have a plan for unusual calls or texts. It is important your child knows what to do in the event he/she receives any type of harassing, threatening, sexually explicit or bullying calls or text messages. They need to understand by telling you, the two of you can work together to resolve the situation.

• Maintain zero tolerance for sexting.

What is Sexting?

Sexting is the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photographs, primarily between mobile phones or other handheld devices. It is becoming an increasingly popular practice amongst youth. Many youth engage in this practice willingly, however, youth can also be coerced into sending a picture or sexually explicit text. Education is critical to prevent irreversible consequences. Sending and/ or receiving sexually explicit pictures or texts will have consequences that go beyond embarrassment and the potential for exploitation.

Youth need to understand the seriousness of sexting. Sending or receiving sexually explicit photos via mobile phones or other handheld device (even when it is a picture of themselves they are sending) has a multitude of consequences, including:

- Suspension from school.
- Loss of employment.
- Humiliation.
- Risk of harassment, bullying or threats (i.e. for the picture to be forwarded/shared with unintended recipients including classmates, parents, child pornographers).
- Suspension from athletic teams, clubs and/or extracurricular activities.
- Risk of legal trouble, including arrest.
- Risk of being identified as a sex offender for receiving or sending child pornography (this includes any sexually explicit photos of children under 18—even if it is of yourself).

> "Children may not fully realize that their best friend in middle school may be their worst enemy in high school. They need to be taught the consequences of trusting people not to share their pictures or texts."
>
> —JAMES JOHNSON
> *Office of the Attorney General*

Remember, youth may not have the developmental skills to anticipate the consequences of their actions. Most youth will need a caring adult to help them fully understand the risks. Action steps adults can take include:

- Purchasing and implementing parental controls.
- Talking to your youth. Make sure they understand the rules, consequences, and that this is a safety issue for them—and it is your job to protect them from harm.
- Communicate openly about potential or actual victimization (including bullying, harassment, and threats).
- Report any suspected illegal interaction with adults to your local law enforcement agency or Kentucky State Police.
- Take the phone or limit access.

Cyber-Bullying

There have been many recent news reports about cyber-bullying and the irreversible, life changing and even fatal consequences it has caused. Bullying is not a new issue. It remains a serious problem for our youth and one that must be addressed by parents, educators and all of society on an ongoing basis. Unfortunately, the Internet, cell phones, text messaging and social media offer new ways for children to be hurt by their peers. Oftentimes, youth do not consider this type of interaction to be harmful, but rather a form of joking around. Sadly, they may not realize the negative impact of their actions until it is too late.

Cyber-bullying is a term generally used to describe using the internet, cell phones, video game systems, or other technology to send or post text or images intended to harass, threaten, embarrass or otherwise hurt another person. Cyber-bullies have a variety of options and tools when it comes to victimizing someone. They include:

- Sending offensive, threatening or hurtful messages via text and instant messaging.
- Stealing passwords to access social network profiles other accounts to access information meant to be private such as emails or photos.
- Using blogs to write about someone to spread rumors or make fun of them.
- Creating websites meant to tease, taunt and humiliate the victim.

- Sending or forwarding embarrassing pictures through e-mail, social network sites and cell phones.
- Internet polling (asking people to answer a mean-spirited question regarding someone) to tease and humiliate them.
- Sending pornographic material via email or social networks.
- Using impersonation to make it look as though the victim was sending messages or posting information or to trick someone into revealing personal information.

Community in shock
Torment of cyber bullying may be to blame in teen's suicide.

Using responsible and safe online behavior can prevent some types of cyber-bullying. Keeping personal information private and protecting your usernames and passwords can stop someone from using it to hurt or embarrass you.

Despite responsible behavior and parental monitoring, cyber-bullying can still occur. It can often be an extension of taunting and teasing that is going on at school. It is important to teach youth how to respond to cyber-bullying and where to seek help. They need to know it is not their fault and

parents need to understand that revoking a child's online access as a result of cyber-bullying may make them hesitant to communicate about what is going on.

An effective approach to deter the bullying is to teach kids how to block messages and/or delete messages without reading them. They can also report bullying incidents to Internet Service Providers (ISPs), website monitors and social networking sites.

Parents and educators need to be reminded cyber-bullying can be emotionally destructive, cause anxiety or depression or cause the victim to retaliate or seek revenge in a manner that creates more problems for the victim. Youth need to be supported and in some cases, professional counseling should be sought to help identify and implement coping strategies.

When facing such difficult situations, the child and family should avoid isolation, but rather seek support and assistance. Contact your child's Family Resource Youth Services Center or call 1-800-CHILDREN to access information regarding counseling or mental health services in your local community.

On the Flip Side…

> "Communication is essential as we work to keep kids safe."
>
> —Jessica Fletcher
> *Training Resource Center Associate Director, University of Kentucky*

It would be a safe bet most parents want to protect their children from being bullied. How many parents, however, take the time to consider their child may be the aggressor? While it is of critical importance to teach youth how to protect themselves online, it is equally as important to teach youth cyber-bullying is a serious offense that goes beyond joking or teasing and it will not be tolerated.

Action tips for parents and caregivers:

- Model appropriate online behavior.
- Establish an atmosphere of mutual caring and trust within the home.
- Help your child to understand the pain the victim feels. Share real examples so they understand how even joking can be hurtful.
- Describe acceptable behavior vs. aggressive behaviors.
- Impose and enforce consequences for aggressive online behavior.
- Have the bully take responsibility for his/her actions.
- Seek help from a teacher, Family Resource Youth Services Center, doctor or professional counselor should the aggressive behavior continue.

Common Myths

If your child uses modern technology for any activity, they must understand the falsehood of the following statements. Consider reviewing these statements with your child and using it as a guide for conversation regarding safe use of technology and the potential risk for danger.

1. Information on the Internet can always be trusted as factual—it wouldn't be online if it were not true.

2. Anything I send in my private email, IM or chat cannot be seen by anybody other than who I send it to.

3. There are no legal ramifications of taking a provocative picture of myself and sending it to my boyfriend. Or, it is ok for me to show my friends nude pictures of my boyfriend that he took of himself and sent me.

4. If someone I meet online asks me to keep a secret from my parents I should.

5. If I meet someone online and they ask to be added to my "buddy list" I should, because we are friends.

6. A website must have my permission to put any personal information about me online, like my phone number, address or birth date.

7. If I want to know something about a stranger who sends me an Instant Message, I can check their profile and trust that information.

8. Installing blocking software and a virus checker on my computer will keep me safe.

9. I can always trust emails and attachments I get from friends.

10. I'm visiting a site of an organization I've heard of before—it is okay to give my name and phone number to enter a contest.

> "Remember, children have access to technology at a very young age, and the risks they face are different at different ages. It is critical that parents and caregivers have ongoing conversation with youth regarding these risks."
>
> —JOEL GRIFFITH
> *Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky*

Additional Resources

www.ncpc.org The National Crime Prevention Council has downloads for parents, including a cell phone use contract and parent tip sheet.

www.dhs.gov/stopthinkconnect The Department for Homeland Security offers messages and tools to promote responsible Internet use and awareness of fraud, identity theft, cyber predators and cyber ethics.

www.netsmarts.org A program of the Center for Missing and Exploited Children that has resources for parents/ guardians, educators, law enforcement, teens and kids about safe Internet use.

www.netsmarts411.org Offers an "ask the expert" section that can help parents navigate software, websites, commonly used acronyms, etc.

www.state.id.us/ag Provides a Parent's Guide to Social Networking.

Search engines such as **www.google.com** often help translate messaging or chat shorthand.

Websites such as **www.chatslang.com** or **www.netlingo.com** provide an extensive list of text, instant messaging and chat shorthand.

Sample Text, Instant Messaging and Chat Shorthand	
8	Oral sex
143	I love you
182	I hate you
1174	Nude club
420	Marijuana
AEAP	As early as possible
ALAP	As late as possible
A/S/L	Age/sex/location
CD9	Code 9: parents are around
F2F	Face to face
GNOC	Get naked on camera
GYPO	Get your pants off
KPC	Keep parents clueless
LMIRL	Let's meet in real life
PRON	Porn
PIR	Parent in room
S2R	Send to receive (picture)
zerg	To gang up on someone

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The Child Victims' Trust Fund (CVTF) has provided funding for child sexual abuse prevention programs since 1985. Administered by the Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention Board, the CVTF receives revenue from proceeds of the "I Care About Kids" special license plates, the Kentucky Income Tax Refund Check-Off and private donations.

To purchase the "I Care About Kids" plate, contact your local county clerk office

To participate in the KY tax refund check-off campaign, just look for this box on your Kentucky Sate Income Tax Form.

Contributions may also be made directly to:
Child Victims Trust Fund
Office of Victims Advocacy
1024 Capital Center Drive, Suite 200
Frankfort, KY 40601

For more information, call (502) 696-5312.

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