Online Safety Tips for Parents

1. Keep your child's computer in an open area of the house. It is easier to monitor what your child is viewing.

2. Install filtering software on the computer your child uses or use child-friendly search engines. Many Internet Service Providers offer filtering software.

3. Read a website's privacy policy before giving out any private or personal identifying information.

4. Never give out personal information online to someone you do not know. Explain to your children that people are not always who they say they are. Even small amounts of information like hobbies or a child's favorite hang out provide too much detail to be shared on the Internet.

5. Never meet in person with someone you first met online. Tell your child that no matter how long they have been communicating online, it is virtually impossible to know if a new "friend" is who they say they are.

6. Do not respond to offensive or dangerous E-mails. Encourage your child to follow three simple steps: **Stop, Block, and Tell.** Stop the correspondence immediately; responding can make the situation worse. Block the user from sending additional E-mails. Tell a parent or trusted adult about the situation.

7. Tell your child not to open attachments from unknown sources, or respond to pop-ups on your computer. If something seems too good to be true, it usually is. Many of these attachments or enticements to win a free prize come with the high price of computer viruses or spyware.

8. Visit the Web sites your child visits. Spend some time familiarizing yourself with your child's online world. Many children know more about the Internet than their parents do. Ask them to show you what they like to do online.

9. Teach your child to be a responsible cyber citizen. Just as being a citizen of your local community carries responsibilities, so does being a citizen of the cyber community. Use good manners, be respectful of others, be safe, and respect the laws. Finally, if you see something online that makes you uncomfortable, report it immediately to a parent, your Internet Service Provider or to law enforcement.

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Report any suspicion of illegal activity involving technology to law enforcement!

Call Us—We Can Help!

Internet Safety, Cyberbullying and Sexting

To create a safe environment for children is of paramount importance for the Church, and everyone in the Church is responsible for ensuring that this exists. No one can say, 'it's not my job.'

Teresa M. Kettlekamp, Former Director Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection

Internet Safety

The Internet is a wonderful resource for adults and children alike. It has changed the way we experience and interact with each other and with the world. Used as an instant communication tool, it beats regular mail delivery and when doing research on any subject or topic the internet is a time saver and can beat time spent in a library with limited reference materials. Online shopping saves gas and playing interactive games is lots of fun!

In spite of the many benefits the Internet offers, it also has numerous hazards that can affect a child's innocence as well as pose dangers to the emotional, spiritual and psychological wellbeing of youth and adult alike.

For example, a child might do an online search for "Lego," and with one missed stroke, the word "legs" is entered instead and the child is directed to several websites that may contain pornographic material. Other risks associated with the internet besides exposure to inappropriate material, has been the means to obtain personal information for identity theft. The internet has been used as a means to prey and /or exploit the innocent and vulnerable, as well as a tool to bully.

Internet Safety Laws

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, a federal law passed in 2000 was created to protect children online. This law prevents anyone from obtaining personal information from a child under the age of 13 without a parent knowing about it and agreeing to it first.

Even with this law, a child's best defense is a parent or guardian who monitors the use of computer by a child and educating them about the dangers and risks that are online.

Cyberbullying and Texting

This bullying behavior occurs not face-to-face, but through the use of technology such as computers, cell phones and other electronic devices. Cyberbullying is more likely to occur in the middle school years through high school. 93% of teens from 12-17 years are online at any given time within a 24 hour period.

Cyberbullying can include sending rude, mean or hurtful electronic messages; spreading rumors or lies via social networks, email or by texting. Using social networks to create websites, videos or a social media profile to embarrass, humiliate or make fun of another is bullying behavior.

Bullying online is unique from face-to-face bullying because it can be done 24-7, sent anonymously and sent to a very wide audience and easily shared.

Victims of Cyber bullying are more likely to be unwilling to attend school, have poor grades, lower self-esteem, and have more health problems.

Young people who have been cyberbullied are significantly more likely to use alcohol and drugs, skip school and be victims of bullying in-person.

Sexting

Sexting is sending sexually implicit texts or photographs via cell phones. Sexting can have serious legal implications and consequences based on a variety of state and federal laws. Four different California legislations are currently pending to enact penalties for sexting between minors. Individuals 18 years of age and older convicted with possession of sexting materials or images are in violation of state and federal child pornography and exploitation laws that may be punishable with fines, time in prison and the individual may have to face registering as a sex offender.

Suggestions on how to keep safe:

- Never post or send sexually explicit pictures.
- Mutual respect is the basis of healthy relationships.
- Refuse to send explicit pictures. If threatened to do so talk to a trusted adult.
- Never open or forward an explicit picture received from someone you do not know. Remember an online friend that you have not met or don't know is really a "stranger."
- Use caution when using a webcam. Be aware of what you are doing and wearing when on online.
- If someone sends you explicit pictures repeatedly, talk to a trusted adult. Law enforcement may have to get involved.
- Be a good friend and discourage friends from sexting behavior. Keep each other safe!