

Kid-Safe Communities

The Kid-Safe Communities is a division of the Fighting Back Institute, a proactive, non-profit group focused on providing educational and pro-active training resources on children's safety issues.

Thousands of young boys and girls each year are assaulted, sexually abused, and abducted. We are committed to helping communities reduce this number through ongoing "danger awareness" education and practical "Kid-Safe" self-defense training..

With more than 29,000 registered sexual predators recently identified in a recent sting operation of MySpace.com, it is evident that the Internet is becoming a major tool in the efforts of pedophiles to troll for, meet and groom prospective victims online.

Our organization is committed to helping raise awareness of the dangers of the Internet and how to "surf safely" on the World Wide Web.



Cyber-bullying is a growing problem



Keeping Your Kids Safe in Cyberspace



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The World At Our Fingertips



The Internet is a true marvel of modern innovation. With the click of a mouse, we can navigate virtually anywhere in the world.

What used to take days can now be done in an instant, and the world has gotten a lot smaller in the process.

While the technology behind the Internet is truly amazing,

the dangers posed by this new medium of commerce and communication are real.

The Dark Side of the Internet

At any given time, there are over 3,000,000 people in anonymous chat rooms in the Internet. Chat rooms and social networking sites like MySpace, Yahoo!Chat, and Facebook are common places for people of all ages to go to chat with their friends, and make new friends all around the globe.

The problem is that predators use the Internet as a means to identify and target prospective victims. The FBI recently ran the MySpace.com names against the registered sex offender list and identified 29,000 registrants with active MySpace accounts (using their own name). The number who remain in sites like this that are using anonymous screen names is still unknown.

Thousands of sex offenders pose as young girls or boys each day, hoping to coax their next victim into a face-to-face meeting or learn where they live so they can seek them out. If you enter a chat room, it won't be long before you are asked, "A-S-L" (Age, Sex, Location). A few innocent questions later and the predator can know your hobbies, interests, school name, and often your address.



Internet Safety Tips

- **C**lear, simple, easy-to-read house rules should be posted on or near the monitor. Create your own computer rules or print the Internet safety pledge provided by Netsmartz.org. The pledge can be signed by adults and children and should be periodically reviewed.
- **L**ook into safeguarding programs or options your online service provider might offer. These may include monitoring or filtering capabilities.
- **A**lways read a web site's privacy policy before giving any personal information. Also make sure that a web site offers a secure connection before giving credit-card information.
- **W**eb sites for children are not permitted to request personal information without a parent's permission. Talk to children about what personal information is and why you should never give it to people online.
- **I**f children use chat or E-mail, talk to them about never meeting in person with anyone they first "met" online.
- **T**alk to children about not responding to offensive or dangerous E-mail, chat, or other communications. Report any such communication to local law enforcement. Do not delete the offensive or dangerous E-mail; turn off the monitor, and contact local law enforcement.
- **K**eeep the computer in the family room or another open area of your home.
- **H**ave children use child-friendly search engines when completing homework.
- **K**now who children are exchanging E-mail with and only let them use chat areas when you can supervise.
- **B**e aware of any other computers your child may be using.
- **I**nternet accounts should be in the parent's name with parents having the primary screen name, controlling passwords, and using blocking and/or filtering devices.
- **C**hildren should not complete a profile for a service provider and children's screen names should be

nondescript so as not to identify that the user is a child.

- **T**alk to children about what to do if they see something that makes them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. Show them how to turn off the monitor and emphasize that it's not their fault if they see something upsetting. Remind children to tell a trusted adult if they see something that bothers them online.
- **C**onsider using filtering or monitoring software for your computer. Filtering products that use white-listing, which only allows a child access to a pre-approved list of sites, are recommended for children in this age group. NetSmartz does not advocate using filters only; education is a key part of prevention. Visit the resources section for web sites that provide information on filtering or blocking software.
- **I**f you suspect online "stalking" or sexual exploitation of a child, report it to your local law enforcement agency. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) has a system for identifying online predators and child pornographers and contributing to law enforcement investigations. It's called the CyberTipline®. Leads forwarded to the site will be acknowledged and shared with the appropriate law-enforcement agency for investigation.

The Best Protection



Make surfing the Internet a family affair. Help your children enjoy the benefits and having a world of information at your fingertips, but teach them there are very real dangers out there.

Visit sites and play games together. Get to know the friends your child is talking with online.

The Internet is a great window into the world, but if you don't properly guard that window, undesirable elements can enter your household through the back door of your computer, putting your loved ones at serious risk.

For more Internet tips, visit www.Netsmartz.org.