



Safe Environment Tips for Parents, Guardians and Caregivers 2019-2020

Connected and Safe

Tips to keep your child safe when connected

Text, tweet, Facebook, email, blog, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube ...

Between cell phones and computers youth can stay in touch with anyone, anytime, anywhere. But staying connected has its risks.

Educate yourself. Any child can become the victim of an online predator. Become familiar with social networking sites and any apps that youth are using to communicate. Ask your child to explain or demonstrate the app.

Teach youth to protect their identity.

Teach youth to choose their screen names carefully and not use ones that can easily identify them. Teach them to keep their passwords and any identifying information private. This includes their name, address, phone number, school grade, family members information etc. Predators can use this information to locate and groom a victim.

Dangers of Checking In. Discuss the dangers of “checking-in” with your child. Some apps allow users to share their current location sites which tell predators exactly where to find them. Disable geotagging on mobile devices so that youth’s locations are not disclosed.

Strengthen privacy settings. Make sure that privacy settings on all social networking sites are set high and that they remain unchanged after updates.



Talk regularly. Conversations about cyber and personal safety have to take place more than once. As children age, peer and social activities—as well as social media, technology and platforms—evolve, and the conversations about being safe need to also evolve and stay current to youth’s needs.

Monitor youth’s activity on computers and all mobile devices. Become familiar with parental monitoring options and monitor desktops, laptops, tablets, cell phones and video game consoles that have online connectivity. You have a responsibility to protect youth. You are not spying.

Don’t forget about young children. 91% of children play video games, and gaming among young children has increased the most. Many video game consoles now come equipped with the capability for children to chat with other players. Warn children that the other player may not actually be a child, but rather a predator posing as a child. Remind them not to share any personal information.

For more parental resources on preventing and reporting child abuse go to:

<https://www.eriecd.org/childprotection/Resources-1.html>

Why Sexting Isn't Smart

Sexting is illegal. All across the county, states are passing laws against posting or sending messages meant to hurt, insult, or spread nasty rumors about another person—including sexts. And posting or sending sexual pictures of anyone under the age of 17, even the youth's own pictures, may be considered child pornography in the eyes of the law. In Pennsylvania and Florida, for example, teens who "sexted" naked pictures of each other have been arrested for child pornography, a felony. Even if a sext did not start with the youth, there may be legal consequences for forwarding someone else's sexts.

Talk about sexting. Many youth are engaging in sexting. Sending or receiving explicit images of minors is considered child pornography and can result in legal consequences for both the youth and parents, guardians or caregivers.



The Internet is FOREVER. Messages and posts are things youth can never take back. Many Internet sites keep records of everything posted, and may share that information with other people including the police and potential employers. And there is nothing youth can do to control copies that may have been downloaded or forwarded by other parties.

People forward things. Nearly half of all teens who receive "sexts" forward them on to someone else, and 15% of teens say that they have had private chats made public. Many times messages and images are forwarded after a relationship ends as a means of "revenge porn." Messages or pictures intended for just one person could end up anywhere and be seen by anyone.



People can get hurt. Sexting can ruin people's lives. When sexual messages or pictures reach other people— including family members, schoolmates, coworkers or potential bosses—they can lead to broken friendships, getting kicked out of school, not getting hired for a job, losing a scholarship or worse.

Communicate. Maintain open and respectful communication with youth and set and enforce rules regarding online safety. Assure youth that they can come to you for help.

Be supportive. If you know or suspect that a youth is being cyberbullied as a result of sexting, get the facts and contact law enforcement and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's CyberTipline at: <http://www.missingkids.com/cybertipline>. Teach youth about the consequences for those that cyberbully.

Information provided by: National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (2015). *Trauma types*. Retrieved July 5, 2019, from <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/staying-safe-while-staying-connected-tips-caregivers>