

Online Safety Facts & Conversation Guide

I. THE FACTS

Children today spend an unprecedented amount of time consuming various forms of unfiltered information and entertainment and communicating with others online or via cell phone. According to a recent Pew Research Center survey¹:

- Children age 8-18 use various forms of media from 6 to 11 hours every day;
- 95% of youth (12-17 yrs) go online and 80% have profiles on social networking sites such as Facebook and Myspace; and
- Most use cell phones (77%) and teens who text send and receive on average 1800 texts a month.

The escalation of unsupervised communication via cyberspace has provided sexual predators increased opportunity and easy access to young people.

Online sexual predators use social networking sites, chat rooms and instant messaging to hide their true age, identity and motive for interaction. It provides them anonymity, instant gratification and easy access to youth. They typically build trust with their victims by appearing “cool”, concerned, or understanding. In time, through manipulation and increased knowledge of their targets, predators start to introduce sexual topics and the possibility of meeting the young person face to face.

A national survey² involving 10-17 year olds found:

- About 1 in 7 received a sexual solicitation or approach* over the Internet in the last year;
- Approximately 1 in 25 youth received an aggressive sexual solicitation in which the sender asked to meet them somewhere, called them on the telephone, or sent them regular e-mail, money, or gifts; and
- Of those solicited online, 3 in 4 of them were female and less than 20% disclosed the incident to a parent, guardian, or school staff member.

*requests to engage in sexual activities or sexual talk or give personal sexual information that were unwanted or, whether wanted or not, made by an adult.

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children’s CyberTipline receives leads and tips regarding suspected crimes of sexual exploitation committed against children nationwide. Through November 2012, more than 1.6 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation have been made to the CyberTipline and more than 77 million child pornography images and videos have been analyzed.

The Hawai’i Department of the Attorney General’s Internet Crimes against Children Task Force, which investigates and prosecutes online sexual predators, reports that many unidentified internet predators in Hawai’i do not have a prior record and represent a wide range of backgrounds, such as academic professionals, army personnel and family men.

II. THE CONVERSATION

- ✓ Before the conversation with your teen, review the questions below and note the ones you'd like to focus on.
- ✓ Review *Conversation Tips* [click here](#)

1) Having internet access has lots of benefits. What do you consider some of the main benefits? What is your favorite thing to do online?

Also share what you like best about being online.

2) What do you think are some of the drawbacks or dangers for young people going online?

getting distracted from school work or other responsibilities, cyberbullying (e.g., receiving unkind/ threatening messages, spreading hurtful rumors), seeing inappropriate or sexual content, being approached by online sexual predators, etc.

3) What have you heard about online predators?

people who pose as friends in cyberspace to trick young people into activities such as sexual chat, photo/video sharing and/or meeting in person

Explain that online predators are dangerous criminals that harm children and youth. You may want to share a statistic or two from the Facts on page 1 and/or discuss an online predator news story. (news stories at <http://ag.hawaii.gov/hicac/>)

4) If you meet someone online, how can you be sure who they are if you haven't met them in real life?

5) If an online predator was trying to gain a young person's trust online, how do you think they could do that?

by lying, pretending they are younger than they really are, sounding "cool", acting like a good friend, pretending they like the same music, sports, movies, etc.

Explain that after online predators establish trust with a young person, they may start talking about sexual things or want to exchange sexy or nude images. These are red flags, especially if they ask the young person to keep this activity or meeting with them a secret.

**6) What would you do if someone sent you sexual photos or messages?
Asked you to meet them in person?**

stop all communication, tell you or another adult I trust, call the police, report it to <http://www.cybertipline.com> – a website where you can report suspected sexual predators so the authorities can follow up on it, etc.

Reinforce the rule: Never meet face to face with anyone you meet online without talking to me first.

7) How can you be safer online?

Add to your teen's suggestions the following tips provided on the Netsmartz Workshop website <http://www.netsmartz.org>

-Don't share personal information, such as address and telephone with people you meet online

-Never open e-mails from unknown senders

If your child uses social networking sites:

-Don't accept strangers or just anyone as a friend. Be choosy. Use your judgment. Who are they?

-Use your privacy settings (ask yourself: What is on my profile & who can see it?)

-Don't post sexy, revealing or suggestive photos of yourself (it may give others the wrong idea about you)

-Use settings on IM (Instant Messaging) programs to block messages from those you don't know.

- Know how to block others in chat rooms and IM. (do you know how to do it?)

**** See Steps Adults Can Take on next page**

III. BOTTOM LINE (wrap up conversation)

- Never meet face to face with anyone you meet online without talking to me first.
- Internet predators take advantage of young people, so protect yourself. (mention 2 or 3 ways discussed above)
- If you ever feel uncomfortable or concerned about any online communication, you can always talk with me about it.

NOTE: Teens are often reluctant to report personal or safety related online concerns to parents for fear that they will restrict their online access. It helps to stress that you will not take away internet privileges if they come to you for help. Let them know that their safety is your top priority.

IV. SAFETY STEPS ADULTS CAN TAKE

- Be familiar with the technology your children use;
- Monitor usage of their internet enabled devices; and
- Regularly check online activity such as their Facebook page for inappropriate postings or photos.

For information, advice and safety tips check out the resources below.

V. RESOURCES

- The Hawai'i Department of the Attorney General offers "Keeping Safe in Cyberspace" community presentations. Contact:
Crime Prevention & Justice Assistance Division
Phone: (808) 586-1444
E-Mail: valerie.s.mariano@hawaii.gov
- The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (<http://www.missingkids.com/home>) provides services, resources and technical assistance to child victims of abduction and sexual exploitation, their families and the professionals who serve them.

The NCMEC operates the **Cybertipline** (<http://www.cybertipline.com>). It is a national website to report incidents of online sexual exploitation of children.

- Hawai'i Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (<http://ag.hawaii.gov/hicac/>), created by the Office of the Attorney General, is dedicated to protecting children in the online environment. In addition to providing educational resources to the community, its **Internet & Technology Crimes Unit** investigates and prosecutes persons who victimize Hawai'i's children through the use of computers and the Internet.
- Netsmartz Workshop (<http://www.netsmartz.org>) is an interactive educational site of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® that entertains while it educates children (5-17) how to be safer on and offline. There are excellent resources for parents and educators too. Be sure and check out the easy to use Tip Sheets for adults and children (<http://www.netsmartz.org/TipSheets>)
- Enough is Enough (<http://www.internetsafety101.org/about.htm>) is a website dedicated to empowering adults to protect children from online threats. It provides the latest information, resources and software tools to protect children. Check out their Rules N'Tools that spells out age appropriate internet usage guidelines and safety tools.

(1) Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Teens-and-social-media.aspx>
<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Teens-and-smartphones.aspx>

(2) David Finkelhor, Kimberly J. Mitchell, and Janis Wolak. 2006. Online Victimization: A Report on the Nation's Youth: Five Years Later. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.