CYBERBULLYING

These days bullying doesn’t just happen on the playground. Cyberbullying is a different threat to children. Cyberbullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies and is a fast growing trend that experts believe is more harmful than typical schoolyard bullying.

WHAT’S DIFFERENT ABOUT CYBERBULLYING?

- It can occur anytime, anywhere
- The audience can be large and messages received quickly and easily if these messages are passed around or posted online
- You can be bullied 24/7, even in the privacy of your own home
- It can be unintentional since kids may not think about the consequences of sending messages or images
- Children can escape threats and abuse in the classroom, only to find text messages and emails from the same tormentors when they arrive home

The most common ways for cyberbullying to occur are through social networking and personal websites. A cyberbully can also masquerade as your child and do the following:

- Sign up for porn sites, email lists
- Doctor pictures of your child
- Send threats to others
- Solicit sexual content
- Spread lies and rumors about others.

There are two types of cyberbullying: 1) Direct attacks 2) By proxy (getting others to bully even without their knowledge)

No type of bullying is harmless. In some cases it can constitute criminal behavior. In extreme incidents, cyberbullying has led to suicide. Most victims, however, suffer shame, embarrassment, anger, depression, and withdrawal. Cyberbullying is harder to spot and more difficult to stop than “traditional” bullying because it is often seen as anonymous.

WHAT MOTIVATES KIDS TO CYBERBULLY?

Anger	Revenge	Frustration	Entertainment	Too many tech toys
Just for laughs	To torment	To get a reaction	Boredom

PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

Today children are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown by adults and away from adult supervision. They organize their social lives through these mediums. Victims of cyberbullying often don’t tell their parents because they think their parents will only make the problem worse, or that parents might even confiscate their phone or take away their Internet access that act as their social lifeline.
WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

- **COMMUNICATE** – Discuss cyberbullying with your child
- **KEEP YOUR HOME COMPUTER IN A BUSY AREA OF YOUR HOME** - All leading experts state that placement of the computer where parents can see it and monitor what is on it is safest. Teenagers often demand privacy from their parents, but moving the computer may be the safest thing to do
- **LIMIT THE TIME KIDS CAN BE ON THE COMPUTER** - Experts say no more than 2 hours a day
- **MAKE SURE THAT YOU KNOW** – Your child’s screen names, passwords, and any personal information in their online profiles
- **GO OVER THEIR INSTANT MESSAGES** - Ask who each person is and how your child knows them
- **REMIND YOUR CHILD TO PROTECT PERSONAL INFORMATION** – By not sharing private information such as their full name, address, phone numbers or passwords
- **RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENT PARENTAL CONTROLS** - Contact the Internet Service Provider (ISP) for recommendations and regulations about cyberbullying
- **IF CYBERBULLYING IS EVIDENT AND THERE ARE THREATS** – Contact your local police department. It is also advisable to contact your child’s school

ESTABLISH AND USE INTERNET GUIDELINES AND BASIC RULES

- Never give out personal information.
- Never tell anyone (but parents) your password(s), not even your best friend.
- Don’t respond to an inappropriate message. Save it or print it and show it to parents.
- Keep computers used by children in common areas of the home.
- Look for signs of cyberbullying (partial list):
  - Having sleeping problems
  - Avoiding school
  - Falling behind in homework
  - Acting sad or withdrawn
  - Exhibiting mood swings
  - Showing a sudden disinterest in computers
  - Rapidly switching screens when a parent enters the room
  - Becoming anti-social

RESOURCES TO USE & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation “A Parent’s Guide to Internet Safety”
Cyber Tip Line (www.cybertipline.com)
Stop Cyber Bullying (www.stopcyberbullying.org)
National Crime Prevention Council (www.ncpc.org)
National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (800-843-5678)
Wired Safety (www.wiredsafety.com)