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**Information about:**

## **CHILD SAFETY**

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### **KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFER IN THE CAR**

The most important rule to remember is: one person, one seat belt. At no time are children (two and older) allowed to share a single seat belt. Crash tests have found that children sharing a seat belt in a crash are at extreme risk of death by severe head trauma because of the increased potential for the children's heads to collide given their close proximity to one another. Children are also at risk of injury sitting on an adult's lap sharing a seat belt as the adult's weight could crush the child against the seat belt causing internal trauma.

### **Child Safety Seats**

The ideal safety seat is the one that properly fits your child, car model and your family's needs. Before purchasing a safety seat, do some research. Safety and test information are both readily available online from the manufacturer.

### **INTERNET SAFETY**

The first step in protecting your children from potential online risks is to stay informed about internet trends and learn to recognize the warning signs of these risks. Whether your child is online posting on a message board, using a social networking site or sending emails, assist them with these tasks to ensure they practice safe online behavior.

**Cyber Bullying** is the intentional harassment through the internet via e-mail, social networking sites, instant messaging or cell phones. Cyber bullying can include but are not limited to;

- Rumors spread through social networking sites, email or text messaging
- The doctoring of photographs to make the subject appear to be in a humiliating, compromising or uncomfortable situation
- The sending or posting of messages with the intent of engaging a subject's negative emotions

### **Over Sharing**

It is important to never share personal information such as home addresses, phone numbers private thoughts and feelings and pictures online. This information can be used by cyber bullies to alter photos, taunt victims or share private emails with others. Predators are particularly eager for such personal information as it can be used as an in-road into a child's life. This information enables the predator to manipulate his/her victim into trusting them to reveal more information about themselves.

Girls are more likely to be targeted. Youth who identify as Gay, Lesbian, Queer, Bi-sexual or Trans are more likely to be involved as victims.

### **Parent Tips**

- Don't let your children go anywhere alone. Be sure your child is accompanied by a friend when going out. Tell your children to ask your permission before accepting anything or going anywhere with anyone.
- Let your children know that saying "NO" is an appropriate response if someone tried to touch them or treats them in a manner that makes them feel uncomfortable. The appropriate reaction would be to promptly get out of the situation.
- Be sure to keep an open line of communication with your children. They should feel at ease about telling you whether they are feeling sad, frustrated, scared or uncomfortable.
- Be sure not to forget your older children. Children 10-17 years of age are also at risk of victimization while at the same time they are steadily increasing their freedoms.
- Establish expectations, let your child know that you think bullying and cyberbullying are unacceptable.
- Set consequences. Let your child know that using the internet is a privilege that can be taken away or restricted.
- Model good online behavior yourself. Children learn from adults around them.

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## **CYBER PREDATORS**

Cyber predators use the internet as a way of reaching potential victims. Child predators groom potential victims in chat rooms, message boards, and over social network sites. Cyber predators are mostly men, age 26 or older. Studies show 99% of predators are male. Online predators rarely lie about being an adult. Studies show 5% of offenders pretend to be teens.

Cyber grooming constitutes actions taken with the purpose of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child. Be aware if your child is;

- Calling unknown numbers
- Gets upset when s/he can't get online
- Minimizes the screen when an adult is near

### **Parent Tips**

- Talk to your child about sex and healthy relationships.
- Set policy about meeting offline for older teens.
- Encourage your child not to accept friend requests from anyone they don't know.
- Talk to your child about grooming and the ways predators try to manipulate their victims and not to share too much information online.

### **Sexting**

- The act of sending sexually explicit messages and/or photographs, primarily between mobile phones.
- 20% of teens aged 13-19 and 33% of young adults aged 20-26 have shared explicit pictures of themselves via text or by posting online.
- 51% of teen girls cite pressure from guys as a reason to send messages.
- 88% of self-made explicit images are stolen and then made available on other media sources.
- Once a "sext" is made, it can easily be accessed and spread without the originator's consent.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Teenagers taking, sending, or possessing explicit photos can be charged with distribution and/or possession of child pornography.

### **Parent Tips**

- Talk to your child about the consequences of sexting.
- Teach them to never forward a sexting image.
- Talk to your child about ways an image can spread online without their control.
- Report sexting to your child's school or local police if you know a child is being blackmailed, a photo is being shared without consent, or if a child is being bullied.

### **How to Help Your Child**

- Save the evidence. You'll need proof if there is an investigation.
- Block cyber bullies. Use website features that allow you to block a user who is bothering your child.
- Set up new accounts for example, email, IM, social media and cell phones. Only give this information to friends you trust.
- Talk to the school. Work with teachers and administrators to address the bullying in school.
- Report it to the website where the bullying is taking place. You can report unwanted text messages to your cell phone provider.
- Above all, call the police if you suspect your child is talking to an online predator.

### **PERSONAL INFORMATION YOU SHOULD NOT SHARE**

- Passwords
- Location
- School Address(es)
- Phone Numbers

### **REPORT ABUSE AND SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY**

**National Center for Missing and Exploited Children**

1-800-843-5678