

KEEPING KIDS SAFE

A PARENTS' GUIDE

The Archdiocese of Washington is dedicated to promoting and ensuring the protection of all children. This flier is one in a series produced by the archdiocese to help parents better understand how to protect their children from victimization, both inside and outside the home. This guide is to help you understand what cyberbullying is, how it is conducted and what to do if you suspect your child is being bullied online.

If you suspect your child is being cyberbullied:

- Teach your child not to respond to cyberbullies. Show them how to block the bully's messages and delete them without reading them.
- Tell your child he or she should never try and seek revenge on a bully or cyberbully.
- Remind your child to keep passwords a secret from everyone except you.
- Tell your child it's not their fault and you won't revoke their internet privileges if they are cyberbullied.
- Help your child keep a record of bullying incidents. If it involves threats and harassment or frequent cyber attacks, call the police to ensure your child's safety.

*Information from the
National Crime Prevention Council*

Bullying: Not just in the school yard anymore

Bullying does not just happen in hallways or the school yard anymore. With so many teens using the internet to instant message friends, create blogs, set up profiles on social networking sites, share photos and text message on their cell phones, harassment has taken on a new form — cyberbullying.

Cyberbullies use email, social media, instant messaging, cell phones and websites to spread rumors and gossip, steal passwords to assume someone else's identity, post pictures of someone without their consent and threaten or harass with offensive language.

Although cyberbullying does not inflict physical harm on a child, it is emotionally and psychologically damaging. It can be an extension of bullying that the child is experiencing at school, and because the threats and taunts are online and visible to anyone 24 hours a day, it can feel like constant victimization and take away the place children feel most safe.

Cyberbullying messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed very quickly to a wide audience. It can often be difficult and sometimes impossible to trace the source. Not knowing who is responsible for bullying messages can add to a victim's insecurity. Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts and pictures can be extremely difficult after they have been posted or sent.

Teen suicide, school shootings and physical bullying incidents are a few ways teens have chosen to handle the problem. Others keep the bullying to themselves, sinking into depression that affects their grades, relationships and self-esteem.

Several cases of cyberbullying have made the news when the teenage victims committed suicide. In one well known case, a 12-year-old Florida girl, Rebecca Sedwick, jumped from a tower at an abandoned concrete plant after enduring months of bullying and taunting on social media sites.

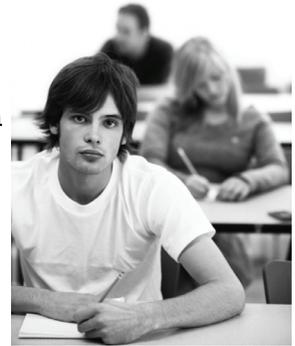
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ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON
**CHILD
PROTECTION**

Protect your child from cyberbullying

- Teach your child about cyberbullying and let him or her know that engaging in cyberbullying is unacceptable.
- Explain that teens who cyberbully sometimes bully because they have a feeling of anonymity and a lack of accountability; however, cyberbullying is harmful and has negative consequences.
- Explain that teens who cyberbully aren't always anonymous; they can be traced, located and punished if the bullying becomes harassment.
- Block cyberbullying messages through your internet service provider, social network site or chat room moderator; over 70 percent of teens believe this is the most effective way to prevent cyberbullying.
- Get your child's school involved. Learn about the school's cyberbullying policy and urge administrators to take a stance against all forms of bullying.
- Encourage positive behavior. Make sure your child is not sending or posting text messages or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.
- Keep computers in a highly trafficked room in the house where online activities are hard for teens to hide.
- Share examples of inappropriate incidents that can happen online, which teens may view as harmless or normal.
- Learn what your child is doing online and keep track of online behavior.
- Tell your child never to give out personal information online.



Information from the National Crime Prevention Council

For more information...

- **www.ncpc.org/topics/cyberbullying**: National Crime Prevention Council website with cyberbullying and internet safety information for parents.
- **www.stopbullying.gov**: Provides information from various government agencies on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk and how you can prevent and respond to bullying.
- **cyberbullying.us**: The Cyberbullying Research Center provides up-to-date information about the nature, extent, causes and consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents.
- **www.wiredsafety.org**: Internet safety information for children, teens and adults.
- **www.stopcyberbullying.org**: Cyberbullying prevention and internet safety information for parents, teachers, police officers and teens.

By the numbers

In a 2011 study examining how American teens aged 12-17 use social network sites:

- **88%** of social media-using teens have witnessed other people be mean or cruel
- **15%** of social media-using teens say they have been the target of online meanness
- **25%** of social media-using teens have had an experience on a social network site that resulted in a face-to-face argument or confrontation with someone.
- **67%** of teenagers who have witnessed online cruelty have also witnessed others joining in and **21%** of teens say they have joined the harassment themselves
- **19%** of teens have been bullied in the past year in person, online, by text or by phone

Information from Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project