

# 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. The internet opens up a world of educational and cultural resources for your children, but without careful parental monitoring they can easily be exposed to explicit material and online predators.

## If you suspect your child is communicating with an offender

Talk openly with your child about your suspicions and the dangers of online offenders.

Review what is on your child's computer for pornography or any sexual communication.

Use the caller ID service to determine who is calling your child. Most telephone companies also allow you to block your number from appearing on someone else's caller ID.

Monitor your child's access to all types of online communication, such as chat rooms. Online offenders almost always meet potential victims in chat rooms then continue to communicate with them via email.

*Information from  
U.S. Department of Justice, FBI*

## Signs that your child might be at risk online

### Your child spends large amount of time online, especially at night

Most children who fall victim to online offenders are online a lot, particularly in chat rooms in the evening.

### You find pornography on your home computer

Sex offenders often supply their potential victims with pornography as a means of opening sexual discussions and for seduction. The child may hide the pornographic files on portable electronic storage if the computer is used by family members.



### Your child receives phone calls from adults you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize

Most online offenders want to talk to the child on the telephone, often engaging in "phone sex" and seek to set up a meeting for real sex. Even if the child doesn't give out their telephone number, the offender can easily find it out using caller ID.

### Your child receives mail or gifts from someone you don't know

As part of the seduction process, it is common for offenders to send letters, photographs and gifts to their potential victims. They have even sent plane tickets for a child to travel to meet in person.

### Your child becomes withdrawn from the family

Online sex offenders will work hard to drive a wedge between a child and his or her family. They will accentuate any minor problems at home a child might have. The child may also become withdrawn after sexual victimization.

### Your child is using an online account belonging to someone else

Online offenders will sometimes provide the child with a computer account for communications with the offender. The child may also meet an offender while online at a friend's house or at the library.



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PROTECTION

Learn more about the Archdiocese of Washington's commitment to protecting children  
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## Don't let an online offender exploit your child

- Talk to your child about victimization and the dangers of online predators.
- Spend time with your child online and have him or her show you favorite websites.
- Keep the computer in a common area of the house where you can monitor what your child is doing online.
- Use the parental controls provided by your internet service provider but do not totally rely on them. You still need to be aware of your child's online activity. Use of chat rooms in particular should be heavily monitored.
- Maintain access to your child's online account and check his/her email. Do not be concerned about invading privacy. Be up front with your child about your access to his or her online accounts and why.
- Teach your child about responsible use of the internet and explain that even items you delete can remain on the internet for years.
- Find out what computer safeguards are at your child's schools, the public library and their friends' homes.
- Understand that even if your child is a willing participant in sexual victimization, he or she is not at fault and is the victim.



*Information from U.S. Department of Justice, FBI*

## Common online jargon

**Blog:** An online diary or journal, usually published by one person.

**Chat room:** An area on the internet where people can communicate in real time by typing messages back and forth.

**Download:** To save a file on to your computer, smartphone or tablet.

**Social networking:** Online communities where you can create a profile to share information, photos and videos. The most popular social networking sites are Instagram and Twitter.

**Snapchat:** A mobile app that allows users to Snap a photo or a video, add a caption, and send it to a friend. The Snap can be viewed for a set period of time then disappears from the screen – unless the viewer takes a screenshot.

**Web cams:** Small digital cameras that can be connected to a computer and used to communicate with others on video in real time.

**YouTube:** A popular free video sharing web site where users upload, view and share video clips.

## By the numbers

- 93 percent of teens ages 12 to 17 go online.
- Of children five years old and younger who use the Internet, 80 percent use it at least once a week.
- One in 25 children ages 10 to 17 received an online sexual solicitation where the solicitor tried to make offline contact.
- Four percent of cell phone owning teens ages 12 to 17 say they have sent sexually suggestive nude/semi-nude messages to others via text message.
- 15 percent of cell phone owning teens ages 12 to 17 say they have received sexually suggestive nude/semi-nude images of someone they know via text.

*Information from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children*

