

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

A Parent's 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.

Archdiocese

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TEENS & TECHNOLOGY

A national survey reported teenagers spend, on average, 8 hours a day using various forms of media, not including time spent doing school work or talking and texting on a cell phone. This includes television, commercial or self-recorded video, movies, video games, print, radio, recorded music, computers, cell phones, and the Internet.



INFORMATION FOR KEEPING YOUR KIDS SAFE ONLINE

- **Communicate!** Talk to your child about potential online danger.
- **Spend time with your children online.** Have them teach you about their favorite on-line destinations.
- **Keep the computer in a common room in the house, not in your child's bedroom.** It is much more difficult for a computer-sex offender to communicate with a child when the computer screen is visible to the household.
- **Utilize parental controls** provided by your service provider and/or blocking software.
- **Always maintain access to your child's online profiles** and randomly check his/her accounts.
- **Teach your child the responsible use of the resources online.** There is much more to the on-line experience than chat rooms.
- **Understand, even if your child was a willing participant in any form of sexual exploitation, that he/she is not at fault and is the victim.** The offender always bears the complete responsibility for his or her actions.

Information from DoSomething.org, The National Children's Advocacy Center and PreventTogether.org

The issue of cyberbullying is one that many children deal with. Cyberbullying is defined as bullying which occurs through the use of electronic technology. As technology continues to grow, cyberbullying will continue to be an important issue and it is necessary for parents to know what cyberbullying is so they can help their child if they believe it may be occurring.

KNOW THE FACTS ABOUT CYBERBULLYING

1. Nearly 43% of kids have been bullied online. 1 in 4 has had it happen more than once.
2. 70% of students report seeing frequent bullying online. Filling up your friends' Facebook feeds with positive posts instead of negative ones can boost school-wide morale.
3. Over 80% of teens use a cell phone regularly, making it the most common medium for cyberbullying.
4. 68% of teens agree that cyberbullying is a serious problem.
5. 81% of young people think bullying online is easier to get away with than bullying in person.
6. Only 1 in 10 victims will inform a parent or trusted adult of their abuse.
7. About 58% of kids admit someone has said mean or hurtful things to them online.

CREATING A FAMILY MEDIA USE PLAN

From TV to smartphones to social media, our lives are dominated by 24/7 media exposure. Despite this, many children and teens have few rules around their media use. While media consumption by itself is not the leading cause of any health problem in the U.S., it can contribute to numerous health risks. At the same time, kids can learn many positive things from “prosocial” media. The key is to teach children to make healthy media choices.

1 Take into account not only the quantity, but the quality and location of media use. Consider TVs, phones, tablets and computers. **The rules should be written down and agreed upon by all family members.** If you're unsure of media time in your household, consult with your child's pediatrician.

2 Become familiar with popular social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. You may consider having your own profile on the social media sites your children use. By “friending” your kids, you can monitor their online presence. **Identify guidelines in the media plan that give you access to your child's accounts, and be sure to monitor them.** Talk to your children about keeping important information to themselves. Details like street address and phone number is private and should not appear on their profiles.

3 Consider making a rule about being a good “digital citizen,” and discuss the serious consequences of online bullying and sexting. Make sure kids of all ages know that it is not appropriate to send or receive pictures of people without clothing, or sexy text messages, no matter whether they are texting friends or strangers.

5 After reviewing your child's media pledge with the entire family, parents write out a media pledge and sign it. For example:

- I will check what my kids are doing online and on their phones and consider using parent controls judiciously.
- I will let my kids know before I check their computers or enable parent controls.
- I will take the time to be interested in what my kids are doing online and in the digital world.
- If my child makes a mistake, I will ask questions and learn what happened before I punish or take away technology.

Family Media Plans are a great way to start the important conversation about technology and safety with children.

4 Have your child write out a media pledge and sign it.

For example:

- I will never give out personal information online or by text.
- I understand my parents have a right to check into my media history on my computer and phone and other devices.
- I will try and keep my total screen time to 2 hours a day except when doing a project for school, or when my parents give me permission.
- I will not watch shows or play games that are inappropriate for me or for friends that are watching or playing with me.