

**Safe and
Drug-Free Schools**

Cyberbullying

The Internet can be a
dangerous place to be.



• **Talk to your child about bullying online.**

- Because they don't see facial expressions, body language, and other visual cues we rely on offline, students may feel free to do or say things online that they wouldn't otherwise. Remind your child that behind the screen names and profiles are real people with real feelings.
- Ask your child to let you know if an online message or image makes him or her feel threatened or hurt.

• **If your child is cyberbullied:**

- Provide constant assurance to your child that he or she doesn't deserve to be bullied and that he or she will get help.
- Do not erase the evidence.
- Contact your Internet provider, the social networking site, or cell phone company and file a complaint.
- Contact the child's school if the bullying is occurring through your school district's Internet system. Even if the cyberbullying is occurring off campus, you can make your school administrator aware of the problem. They may be able to help you resolve the cyberbullying or be watchful for face-to-face bullying.
- Contact local law enforcement if your child has been threatened or if a crime has been committed.

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Cyberbullying

is the use of technology to degrade or humiliate another person or group.

Cyberbullying includes the following:

- Mean, vulgar, or threatening e-mail
- Instant Messaging (IM)
- Humiliating text messages or digital images sent on mobile phones
- Harassment on social networking sites, Web pages, blogs, virtual worlds, or interactive game sites

To prevent miscommunication or becoming a cyberbully, students should be taught:

- Not to e-mail when they are angry.
- Not to forward an e-mail that someone sent as a private message.
- Not to allow peers to pressure them into bullying someone online.

Students who are cyberbullied should be taught:

- **STOP.** Don't respond to the bully. Victims often want to befriend the bully to solve the problem, or they may want to retaliate. Responding to the cyberbully only escalates the problem.
- **BLOCK.** Block the cyberbully or limit all communications to those you can trust. This is especially effective with bullying in chat rooms, IM, and e-mail. Most electronic communication programs allow users to block specific screen names or e-mail addresses. With social networking sites, it may be necessary to delete the student's current account and open a new one that limits access to trusted friends.

- **TELL.** Tell a trusted adult. The messages posted by the cyberbully are often vulgar or embarrassing. Victims often keep the bullying a secret for this reason. Encourage students to tell someone if they are harassed or threatened online or if someone they know is bullied.

Parents should consider the following:

- Keep the computer in a family room, kitchen, or living room, not in your child's bedroom.
- Find out what e-mail and IM accounts your child has and ask for his or her passwords for those accounts.
- Talk to your child about socializing online:
 - Remind your child that once information is posted online, he or she can't take it back.
 - Use privacy settings to restrict who can access and post on your child's profile.
 - Review your child's friends list. You may want to limit your child's online "friends" to people he or she actually knows.
 - Know what your child is doing. Get to know the social networking sites your child uses. If you're concerned that he or she is engaging in risky online behavior, you may want to search the social sites they use to see what information they're posting.
 - Talk to your child about sexting. Explain to him or her that sexting is sending inappropriate images on the cell phone of children or teens who are naked or engaged in sexual acts. If he or she receives such an image, he or she should report it immediately to a trusted adult (e.g., counselor, teacher, principal).