What Parents Want to Know about Cell Phone and Internet Safety

Technology is becoming more and more available in our society. More parents are providing their children with cell phones in order for them to be more accessible and safe. Approximately 62% of Americans have Internet access in their homes, many of which who have children who use the computer to do homework, play games, and communicate using e-mail and chat capabilities. Parents and caregivers are required to be watchful at all times to ensure children are using cell phones and the Internet safely, however this is becoming more challenging as new technology is introduced. Many parents report not being able to manage these new innovations and are not aware of the potential danger that children can encounter without being fully aware of the consequences. As adults, we need to ensure the safety of all children. Being informed and proactive can help prevent children from being targets of abuse through cell phones and the Internet. Below are some facts that parents and caregivers should consider about potential risks for children using the Internet and cell phones.

Things Parents Should Know:
- Gaming devices such as a Wii and PlayStation have online capabilities that allow children to communicate with others
- Children can open social networking sites without parent permission or proof of age. These sites are often not monitored by adults
- Children can post pictures and personal information online; things said or typed online as well as pictures can stay on the Internet forever, and there is no regulation that requires it from being removed if the person willingly provided it to someone else
- Sending naked pictures or pictures involving sexual activity (sexting) over a text message on a cell phone is considered a felony and/or child sexual offense that involves very serious consequences
- Sexting can also involve sending language or messages involving sexual content by text message to others

Facts about Internet Predators:
- 1 in 25 youth receive an online sexual solicitation where the person tried to make contact "offline" for example in person, by mail or by phone
- Internet predators don't always try to be "friends" with children online but instead attempt to seduce young people by using flattery or sympathetic appeals, often seeming to understand or appreciate how the child is feeling
- Using social networking sites can be dangerous for children ONLY when they are not being monitored by parents or caregivers and when children offer personal information to predators online; parents and caregivers can help keep children stay safe by providing them with Internet safety rules and carefully monitoring children while they are online

Some Warning Signs that a Child Might be Being Targeted by an Internet Predator:

- The child spends large amounts of time online, especially at night

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
15757 North 78th Street Suite B · Scottsdale, AZ 85260 · T 480-922-8212 · F 480-922-7061 · www.childhelp.org/SpeakUpBeSafe

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- The child receives phone calls from an unknown person or adult, sometimes long distance from a number you don't recognize
- The child receives gifts or packages from someone you don't know
- The child becomes preoccupied with being online and becomes more withdrawn from you or the family

Ways You Can Keep Children Safe:
- Enable safety measures on your computer and/or web browser to limit Internet sites your child can access.
- Talk to your child about Internet and cell phone safety and set rules on when and how they should be used and with whom, specifically talk to your child about situations to avoid and to report to an adult
- Teach your child about responsible technology use, be a good model and spend time with them during these activities
- Monitor your child's cell phone, video game, and Internet use; always maintain access to your child's online accounts and do random checks
- Go over specific rules about cell phones and Internet use and post the rules as a reminder; some rules to consider reviewing with your child:

  - You can go online only at certain times
  - You can only visit certain websites
  - NEVER give your complete name, address, or phone number to a person you meet online, that includes people you play games with online; offenders who give their numbers to children to call can find out the children's number through caller ID
  - NEVER tell someone online what school you go to, what clubs or activities you're involved in, or where you like to hang out
  - NEVER meet anyone in-person whom you met online, or especially do not meet them alone without a safe adult present
  - NEVER send pornography, or any pictures of yourself or someone else's private body parts, over the Internet
  - Tell an adult if someone tries to engage you in discussions about sex or private parts, sends you pornography, asks to meet with you, calls you on the phone, or plans to visit you; tell an adult, and do not respond to the person on the Internet
  - You can only use your cell phone to call your parents, 911, and some friends (list them)
  - Do NOT use inappropriate words in text messages – remember that you cannot erase it or control who it will be sent to once it is online

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