

STEPS TO SAFETY

Cyber-Bullying

Appropriate use of the Internet and all social media is essential for preventing cyber-bullying. While there are legal implications for one's use of the Internet to do harm to another person, it is important for children to understand that it is also a character issue. As a member of society, children must understand that they are accountable for behaving in a responsible manner on the Internet and on all social media. As a parent, it is your responsibility to consistently monitor your child's use of the computer, tablet, phone, and behavior on all social media.

- ✈ What are the rules for the use of the Internet in your home?
- ✈ Where is your computer located in your home? Is it in a public place in your home?
- ✈ What spam filters and safety settings are enabled on your computer and other devices?
- ✈ Create a list of Internet safety rules and expected behaviors on social media for your household. Post them in a conspicuous place, next to a computer, tablet, or a phone charging station. Review these rules with your child and allow your child to explain to you why each rule is important in helping them to make safe and appropriate choices.
- ✈ Talk to your child about their use of the Internet and social media. Help them to understand that once something is posted, it can never really be deleted, so it is important to always make safe and responsible choices.

Protecting Your Child From Cyber-Bullying

✈ Step 1

Help your child to understand that cyber-bullying is different from other types of bullying.

- Can be anonymous
- Has ability to reach a large number of people
- Both unkind comments and inappropriate, embarrassing pictures are shared
- Can't always confront the bully
- Anyone can be a Cyber-Bully

✈ Step 2

Discuss the ways that Cyber-Bullying can be hurtful to others:

- Information travels instantly
- Information and pictures that are posted, emailed, or texted are permanent and never go away completely — even if deleted
- It can cause great emotional harm

✈ Step 3

Talk with your child about the ways that Cyber-Bullies harass and intimidate others:

- Spreading rumors
- Telling lies
- Sending embarrassing pictures
- Distributing private information to others about someone
- Targeting a person and sending threatening messages by a group

Step 4

Communicate with your child your expectations for their conduct on the Internet and with social media. Use the Internet Code of Conduct to help your child agree to responsible and appropriate use of the Internet and social media. Ask your child if they have participated in using the Internet or social media to bully someone. If they have, help them to correct that situation by taking down anything that has been hurtful, by no longer participating in the bullying, and by reaching out to that person and apologizing. This will take courage on the part of your child and will possibly open them up to bullying, but it is the right thing for your child to do.

Step 5

Ask your child if they are being bullied on the Internet and social media. Your child may be reluctant to tell you because they are afraid or embarrassed and may feel like it will just get worse. It is very important that you know if your child is being cyber-bullied as there are many avenues for help.

If you find that your child is a victim of cyber-bullying, you must intervene. Talk with your child's principal and teacher and let them know what is happening. Sometimes schools are hesitant to get involved because the bullying happens off school grounds, but schools are in a unique position to help, as usually the bullies are on that campus. Help your school officials to understand the need for an aggressive and proactive approach in helping to curb this behavior. Talk with the parents of the bullies and work together to resolve the issue. Make sure to have copies of the postings, texts, pictures, etc.

Most parents will not condone such behavior on the part of their children and will work to ensure that your child will no longer be targeted. Contact law enforcement. Some of the cyber-bullying rises to the level of a misdemeanor or, in some cases, a felony. Cyber-Bullying is a growing problem, and there are many laws in place now to protect victims.

