

Cyberbullying Prevention and Intervention Tips for Families

Prevention



1. Bring the Topic “Out in the Open”

Initiate discussions about your child/teen’s online experiences. Establish a consistent, helpful presence when monitoring technology use that discourages the perception that adults are violating his/her privacy. If you choose to use filtering and monitoring software, don’t rely on it as a substitute for direct participation in your child’s online life.

2. Educate Youth about Responsible Online Behavior

Discuss with your child/teen the dangers of sharing personal information with others online and continually reinforce the importance of this guideline. Clarify the kinds of things that should never be shared, including names, addresses, phone numbers, school names, age and grade levels.

In addition, provide your child/teen with the necessary skills, tools and resources to assess the accuracy of Web site content. Spend time visiting Internet sites with him/her and provide supervised opportunities to practice these analytical skills online.

3. Discuss Response Strategies

Instruct your child/teen to immediately notify trusted adults and/or the appropriate authorities (parent or other adult family member, teacher or other school personnel, technology coordinator, librarian, etc.) when he/she encounter cyberbullying or hate-related behaviors online. Discuss and provide opportunities for your child/teen to practice strategies for responding to cyberbullying and online intolerance and hate. Even if your child is not being bullied, talk about what it means to be an ally to peers who may be the targets of cyberbullying. Distinguish between immediate strategies (logging out of chat room)

and long-term strategies (notifying the local Anti-Defamation League office or police department about information on a Web site).

4. Provide Structure

Restrict time your child/teen spends online, and provide guidance for structuring online time. Limit unstructured random surfing and consistently supervise your child’s/teen’s online activities.

5. Set an Example

Model safe use of the Internet, avoiding potentially dangerous situations, including online romance and gambling. Your child/teen is a keen observer of adult behavior and will do likewise, despite warnings to the contrary.

6. Encourage Personal Responsibility

Stress personal responsibility in your child/teen. He/she should understand his/her important role in creating respectful online communities. Knowledge and education are key weapons against cyberbullying and other forms of hate and intolerance.

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Cyberbullying includes a wide range of online behaviors that vary in severity. Your response needs to take into account the nature of the cyberbullying and its impact on your child/teen. The following guidelines will help you respond, if you learn your child/teen has experienced cyberbullying.



1. Don't Reply to Cyberbullying

Do not reply to the cyberbullying and instruct your child/teen not to reply.

2. Identify the Evidence

Identify the evidence that exists (online conversations, text messages or images, emails, etc.), and do not destroy it! This evidence will be helpful in identifying the perpetrator and may be requested by law enforcement officials if criminal behavior was involved.

3. Block Future Cyberbullying Attempts

If the cyberbullying is coming through cell phone text messaging or e-mail, determine if there are features that enable you to block future contact from the perpetrator.

4. Try to Identify the Perpetrator

Determine if your child/teen knows the perpetrator or if you can identify the person from available evidence.

5. Contact the Parents/Guardians of the Perpetrator

Discuss the incident with the perpetrator's parents. When the identity of the person who is committing the cyberbullying is known, consider the feasibility of contacting his or her parents or guardians. They may share your concern and be strong advocates in stopping their own child's/teen's behavior. Understand that families sometimes react defensively

when hearing negative reports about their child/teen. Contact with parents is best done in writing with copies of any evidence which shows their child's/teen's involvement.

6. Contact Your Service Providers

Determine if the behavior violates Internet or cell phone service providers' "Terms & Conditions" of usage and, if so, file a complaint. Ask if assistance is available in identifying the perpetrator.

7. Consider If Criminal Behavior has Occurred

Contact law enforcement if you believe the cyberbullying includes the following: any threat of violence, repeated obscene or harassing language, violations of hate crimes statutes and/or inappropriate sexual content. If law enforcement determines that a crime has been committed, ask them to press charges.

8. Get Legal Advice:

In serious cases, seek out the advice of an attorney who can make recommendations and assist you in taking appropriate steps to respond.

9. Notify Your Child's/Teen's School

Inform school administrators of the problem; they may be able to help you respond, can determine if the cyberbullying is occurring via school computers, and can take note of any manifestations of bullying at school where your child/teen is the target.