



North Carolina Parent Information and Resource Center (NC PIRC)
Parent Partners E-PIC
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Many parents are unaware of the dangers and risks that await children on the internet. A multitude of websites are not age appropriate, others have too many opportunities for children to interact with strangers, and some subject children to being harassed and bullied. This month's E-PIC includes internet safety tips for parents, an explanation of what cyber bullying is and what you can do about it, and useful websites to help keep children safe.

Internet Safety Tips:

- Supervise young children at all times on the computer and the internet
- Place the computer in a location where it can easily be seen (office or kitchen)
- Stay informed about safety on the internet
- Share your information about the dangers and risks with your children
- Explain to your child what cyber bullying is and for your child to inform you if he or she is a victim of bullying
- Come up with an agreement or contract about what your child will and will not do on the internet and have everyone sign
- Purchase and install web filtering software
- Tell your child that while you respect his/her privacy, you may review any online communication you feel may be reason for concern.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, *Stop Bullying Now!* Campaign, cyber bullying is sometimes referred to as online cruelty or electronic bullying, and can involve:

- Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images
- Posting sensitive, private information about another person
- Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad
- Intentionally excluding someone from an online group

Children and youth can cyber bully each other through emails, instant messaging, text or digital imaging messages sent on cell phones, web pages and blogs, chat rooms and other information communication technologies. Since cyber bullying can range from rude comments to lies, impersonations and threats, your responses may depend on the nature and severity of the cyber bullying. Here are some actions that you may want to take if cyber bullying has occurred.

- Strongly encourage your child not to respond to cyber bullying.
- Do not erase the messages or pictures. Save these for evidence.
- Try to identify the individual doing the cyber bullying. If the cyber bully is anonymous or using a fake name, there may be a way to track them through your Internet Service Provider. If the cyber bully is criminal, contact the police and ask them to do the tracking.
- Consider contacting Internet Service Providers, Email services, or cell phone providers and filing a complaint if inappropriate language may violate "Terms and Conditions."
- Contact your school and make them aware of the problem and to help resolve it.
- Consider contacting the cyber bully's parents-contacting them in writing, not face-to-face, presenting them with the evidence and asking them to make the cyber bullying stop.
- Consider contacting an attorney in cases of serious cyber bullying.
- Contact the police if cyber bullying involves acts such as: threats of violence, extortion, obscene or harassing phone calls or text messages, harassment, stalking or hate crimes, or child pornography.

Useful websites:

www.SafeKids.com
www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov
www.Cyberangels.org
www.pta.org/mediasafety
www.connectsafely.org

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