

**OLON COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM
PARENT TIP SHEET #7**

“A PARENT’S GUIDE TO INTERNET SAFETY”

This Parent Tip Sheet is a follow-up to Tip Sheet #5. It reports key points from an excellent presentation on “A Parents’ Guide to Internet Safety” (sponsored by the Solon CAT, October, 2001). Presenters were Joseph Persichini Jr., Assistant Agent in Charge, Cleveland FBI and Mary Trotman, Supervisor of the Local Crime Squad. They shared real life accounts and criminal acts of the horrors of the Internet when not properly monitored.

CAT realizes this information may be surprising and frightening. We believe you will find these tips extremely helpful and hope that you and your children will always take careful precautions when on the Internet.

- ?? The FBI has seen a “rapid increase” in Internet crimes against children over the last few years.
- ?? The FBI arrests 2-3 predators a month in Cuyahoga County!
- ?? Over the past 4-5 years there has been an increase in child pornography and online predators.
- ?? The Internet, or the *new playground*, makes it convenient for kids to isolate. Rather than talking to friends on the telephone, watching T.V., or doing homework, they are chatting online with friends, acquaintances, and strangers.
- ?? Children use the Internet/computer primarily after school 2:30 – 4:00 p.m. In fact, 3-4 million kids are online at this time. Predators are “online” during these hours as well.
- ?? Predators can be quick to learn where these kids reside via a personal *profile*, a registered hobby, an interest group, IM, chat rooms, emails, etc.
- ?? Now a day, email addresses are given out so freely for online newsletters, promotions, announcements, and sales. Do you ever wonder who these people are that actually receive your email? Unfortunately, even the so-called “child friendly” sites like Nickelodeon.com, scholastic.com, and Nintendo.com cannot be fully protect.

PREDATOR’S TRICKS AND ENTICEMENTS ---- Predators :

- ?? Make promises to their victims for things that the victim’s parents forbid such as body piercing, tattoos, certain clothes, jewelry, make-up, drugs. These promises made by the perpetrator create a wedge between the parent/child bond.
- ?? Send thoughtful gifts and/or plane tickets to meet.
- ?? Tell kids how to accept their calls late at night so parents will not hear the phone ring. For example, “at 11:30 p.m., call the weather, I’ll click in, and then take my call...the phone will never ring”.
- ?? Nurture an online relationship generally for months (but it may be shorter) breaking down and the parental bond and promoting secrecy among friends and family in order to steal the victim away.
- ?? Often block their Caller ID. But it is easy for them to obtain information from a caller whose number is not blocked. Once they have the caller’s phone number, a street address is easy to locate. They can do mapquest.com and can be at the victim’s door in no time.
- ?? May have 800 numbers for easy access.

HOW A PREDATOR STALKS Starting point

Chat room...predator has to find a potential victim > a photo is sent (not of the real person, instead probably of some good looking guy) > emailing starts (a more private way to communicate than a chat room) > phone calls begin > predator sends a phone card or has an 800 number > predator encourages victim to send photos of self

> predator often will send photos of other children to put victim at ease “others send me their photos; they trust me” > EVERY PHOTO IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE.

WARNING SIGNS

- ?? Child refuses to give screen name(s) or password(s) to parents.
- ?? Turning off the computer quickly and incorrectly when someone walks in the room.
- ?? Switching screens quickly when someone walks in the room.
- ?? Not unlocking the door right away when on the computer or Internet.
- ?? History file on computer is blank; means he/she often deletes files.
- ?? Finding pornography on the computer (disks, photos, .gif/.jpg).

STRATEGIES FOR CONCERNED PARENTS

- ?? Talk with your child about sexual victimization and potential online danger. For example, inappropriate Im (Instant Messages), photos, or solicitations.
- ?? One out of four kids are bothered by solicitations, what does this mean for the other ¾?
- ?? Spend time with your children online. Have them teach you about their favorite online destinations.
- ?? Install hardware for site blockers: Net nanny, cyber sitter, etc. The reality.... kids know how to remove the blockers. To date, there are no blockers for chat rooms or Ims.
- ?? Always know your child’s screen name(s) and password(s). They may have several accounts.
- ?? Know with whom your child converses.
- ?? Children need to be taught never to give out any identifying personal information about themselves or their families.
- ?? Be aware of gifts, packages, and phone cards.
- ?? Be aware of changes in your child’s behavior (isolation, severing bonds between family and friends).
- ?? The computer should be placed in a well-visited area of the home.
- ?? Get to know computer language and lingo; **Emoticons** (search yahoo.com key word “emoticons” for additional information).
 - A si = love you like a sister
 - Pos = parent over shoulder
 - ii = 2 eyes watching you
- ?? Notify the police, FBI, Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and Internet server if you feel your child is in danger.

Additional Resources:

Greenfield, David, Ph.D. (1999). Virtual addiction. CA: New Harbinger Publishing Co.

Hughs, Donna Rice. (1998). Kids online: protecting your children in cyberspace.

Revell/Baker book House.

Young, Kimberly S., (1998). Caught in the net. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Tarbox, Katherine. Katie.com.

www.FBI.com

Cleve.@fbi.gov (216-522-1400) to report any unsettling activity.

Center for On-Line Addiction’s web site www.netaddiction.com

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Solon CAT Tip Sheets are available from: **Jackie Robertson, President, 440-248-7467 (4/02)**

