

Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats: Helping students stay safe and healthy

- **Cyberbullying:** Sending or posting harmful messages and/or images through the use of cell phones, computers, or other digital technologies.
- **Cyberthreats:** Sending or posting direct threats against others or yourself that raise concerns that the person may be considering committing an act of violence.

Strategies to recognize and address this behavior

- All online activity must be limited to "safe places" in the home-an environment where a responsible adult can supervise all online activity.
- **Emphasize the importance of kindness and avoidance of harm to others.** Remember-the concept of invisibility while online influences a child's irresponsible behavior.
- **Help young people recognize harm caused to unseen others.** "Thinking empathy" towards others online whom they can not see is an essential foundation for efforts to address cyberbullying.
- **Help young people learn to do what is right in accord with their own personal values and enhance their reliance on their own internalized personal moral code, while recognizing that young people are in the process of developing this kind of code.**
A consistent reminder to young people that "the choices you make reveal the kind of person you are" is a message that should be conveyed as children grow.
- **Help young people learn to use effective decision-making strategies.**
Ask questions such as:
 1. Am I being kind and showing respect to others and myself?
 2. How would I feel if someone did the same thing to me or my best friend?
 3. What would my mom (or dad, guardian, or other adult who is important in my life) think?
 4. Is this action in violation of any agreements, rules, or laws?
 5. Would it be okay if I did this in the real world?
 6. Am I trying to rationalize a wrong act?
 7. How would I feel if everyone could see me?
 8. How would this action reflect on me?

- Educate youth about real-world consequences of online actions.
There are legal ramifications of making cyberthreats. Students must understand that if they post material online that appear to be a threat, they run the risk of being suspended, expelled, or even arrested-EVEN IF THE MESSAGE WAS JUST A JOKE!
 - Educate youth about the strategies that can be used to detect their identity.
 - *In most cases, if they are engaged in inappropriate online behavior, their identity can be traced.
 - *There are some inexpensive keystroke monitoring technologies that can be installed on home computers that will allow parents to monitor every online action, including private communications.
- Additionally, it is vital to keep communication lines open. Students need to feel that they can talk to their parents about what is happening online, especially if any problems arise.

Please contact your student's grade level counselor if you have any further questions/comments regarding this information.

Information within this text was retrieved from:

- Willard, N.E., 2007. *Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats: responding to the challenges of online social aggression, threats, and distress.* Research Press. Champaign, IL.