



Cyber Safety

One quarter of young Canadian Internet users (25%) say that someone has e-mailed them material that said hateful things about others.

Source: Young Canadians In a Wired World Survey, Media Awareness Network, 2001

The Internet is a powerful tool in which our children are often more well-versed than we adults. They are often on-line away from any adult supervision. In fact, 50% say they are on-line alone most of the time and only 16% say they talk to their parents about what they do on-line.

Cyberbullying includes the use of email, cell phones, text messages, and Internet sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships. The anonymity of on-line communications means that children may do things online that they would never do face to face. Unfortunately, for the victim of cyberbullying, there is no refuge from the harassment, not even in one's own home. Children need to be made aware that on-line bullying may be considered a criminal act.

Children and youth can cyberbully each other through:

- e-mails and instant messaging
- text or digital imaging messages sent on cell phones,
- web pages and web logs (blogs)
- chat rooms or discussion groups

Some tips for parents:

- Keep your home computer in an easily viewable place so that you can learn what your children are doing on-line.
- Encourage your children to come to you if they feel uncomfortable or threatened when on-line.
- Talk to your children about responsible Internet use. Emphasize that they are not to give out personal information such as their phone number, on-line name, or email address.
- Explain that cyberbullying is harmful and unacceptable behavior. Outline your expectations for responsible online behavior and make it clear that there will be consequences for inappropriate behavior. Consider creating, with your children's input, an on-line agreement or contract for computer use.

If your child is being cyberbullied:

- Save any harassing messages or photos so they can be forwarded to police and/or your Internet Service Provider.
- Contact your child's school if the cyberbullying is occurring with another student or through a school website or email.
- Report the incident to police and your Internet Service Provider.

For more information, visit www.cyberbullying.ca or www.media-awareness.ca.

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