

Cell Phone Safety Tips for Parents

- Take the time to teach your child how to use the cell phone. Learn its features so that you can occasionally check the child's cell phone usage. Discuss with your child the rules that you expect him/her to obey.

- Set a time limit for the use of your child's cell phone. Be sure that cell phones do not interfere with family time, homework, or sleep time. It can be beneficial to take the child's phone at night.

- Be aware of and teach your child about the expenses of cell phone ownership and usage, especially text messaging, games and sharing photos.

- Explain to your child that there are risks involved with cell phones. Let them know that they should not answer calls or messages from unknown numbers. Watch out for prank calls and for sexting. Sexting is the sending or receiving of inappropriate pictures and videos of self or others.

- Be aware that cell phones may offer complete internet access with e-mail, web browsing, and instant messaging, and that your child is at risk of receiving calls, text messages, and e-mail from the outside world as well as from friends.

- Make sure that your child is ready to accept the responsibilities that come with owning a cell phone. They should be expected to follow the rules of usage at school, assemblies, sporting events, etc. In most cases your child will be able to use a regular phone or the cell phone of an adult who is supervising the activity.

Parent Checklist

Protecting Your Children from Internet Pornography

The Internet is full of both opportunities and pitfalls. Kids today have more information at their fingertips than we could have dreamed of just twenty years ago. On the other hand, they also have access to more inappropriate content than we could have feared.

Chances are, if your child uses the Internet, he/she has seen pornographic content whether he/she wanted to or not. As parents, it is important that we talk with our kids about who they are hanging out with and what they have seen online. Internet “incidents” can be a great opportunity to talk to your child about important issues like sex, alcohol and drugs, and relationships. Do not miss the opportunity to connect with your child on these important issues.

- Keep the computer in a family common space, making it easier to see what sites the child is visiting online.
- Talk to your child about where he/she has been and what he/she has seen online.
- Talk to your child about how you feel about online pornography and your family values.
- Talk to your child about what to do if he/she ends up on a site that makes him/her feel uncomfortable or receives messages that are inappropriate.
- Establish Internet house rules so that your child understands the expectations and consequences.
- Become familiar with the way the Internet works and with popular teen sites.
- Check into and use filtering or tracking software and parental controls.
- Limit the amount of time your child spends on the Internet.
- Use Internet “incidents” as opportunities to communicate – not as platforms for endless lectures.
- Expect some exploration from your child – do not be surprised if your child has deliberately or accidentally seen pornography online.
- If you find that your child has been to a site with pornography, initiate a conversation with your child about why they went to the site, what they saw when they got there and how they felt about it. Remember to LISTEN first!
- Young people are curious. Don’t let websites provide the only answers to their questions or curiosity. Let them know that they can talk to you.
- Review with them what they should do when they see something that makes them feel uncomfortable – turn off the monitor and tell you about the incident.
- Make sure your child has a clear understanding of how you feel about online pornography and your expectations for responsible Internet use.

Understanding the Grooming Process: Preventing Inappropriate Behavior and Sexual Misconduct with Children

In most cases of sexual misconduct with children, offenders use a subtle and gradual process known as grooming to put children and their families at ease. Grooming is typically done over weeks, months or years to slowly lure and manipulate children into abuse. On the surface, grooming behaviors can appear quite innocent, and may even give the perception that the individual is good with children.

Over 90% of sexual offenders are individuals known and trusted by the child and family. Notoriously friendly and likable, they insinuate themselves into a child's life through his/her family, school, house of worship, sports and hobbies.

Secrets typically play a significant role in the grooming process. Teach children early on that there should be no secrets from parents, even seemingly innocent ones. Secrets often lay the groundwork for future abuse.

Most incidents (81%) of child sexual abuse occur in one-on-one situations. Therefore, limit opportunities for individuals to be alone with your child. Adults who must spend one-on-one time with children should be within sight and earshot of other adults. Question the motives of adults who want to spend the majority of their time with children.

Abusers come from all walks of life. Both men and women offend, although men offend more often. Notably, juvenile offenders (abusers under the age of 18) are responsible for over 30% of child sexual abuse. Average onset of juvenile sexual assault behavior is 12-14 years old. For safety's sake, supervise children whenever possible, especially during sleepovers and gatherings involving multi-aged youth. Abuse often occurs while adults are socializing and youngsters are playing unsupervised in separate areas.

By being aware of the Grooming Process, adults can interrupt behaviors that may lead to inappropriate or sexual misconduct with children, thus allowing youngsters to grow up healthy and safe.

Grooming Behaviors:

How Offenders Build Familiarity & Trust

- Befriending the youngster and their family to slowly gain trust.
- Giving gifts, money, trips, and/or performing special favors for youngster.
- Promoting the notion that the relationship with the boy or girl is special.
- Encouraging harmless secrets, laying the foundation for future sexual secrets.
- Taking pictures/video of the child.
- Communicating with the boy or girl excessively; texting, emailing or calling.
- Desensitizing the child through nonsexual touching, "accidental" touching of privates and/or walking in on bathroom or dressing time.
- Testing a child's boundaries by using inappropriate language and/or telling dirty jokes.
- Playing body contact games with children; tickling, backrubs or wrestling.
- Making alcohol/drugs available to the boy or girl.
- Introducing pornography to initiate sexual interest or to normalize the behavior.
- Offering to carpool and babysit, including overnight trips or sleepovers.