

ATTENTION PARENTS:

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT INTERNET SAFETY

FOR YOUR CHILD





As access to technology and the Internet continues to grow, children are increasingly interacting with strangers online, accessing Internet pornography, and experiencing cyberbullying. This is extremely dangerous. Most parents routinely warn their children not to talk to strangers, but did you know that many video games have chat features that allow your child to converse and share images with strangers? Children may think they're playing with other children, but the person on the other computer could be anyone.


Children also have greater access to pornography, particularly on the Internet, than ever before. Research has shown that pornography can harm children for many years through adulthood. The effects of pornography can be addictive, traumatizing, and lead to unhealthy or abusive sexual relationships as children grow up.


Cyberbullying also becomes a real issue as children begin using social media. Louisiana state law defines cyberbullying as "the transmission of any electronic textual, visual, written, or oral communication with the malicious and willful intent to coerce, abuse, torment, or intimidate a person under the age of eighteen", and also includes sexually charged content such as revealing photos and messaging of a sexual nature. Louisiana has enacted strong laws to address bullying and cyberbullying by public school students ([R.S. 17:416.13](#), [Act 369 of the 2018 Regular Session](#), [R.S. 17:100.7](#)).

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

 **KNOW** what technology your child uses and how it works. Does the device connect to the Internet? Does game or app allow for online upgrades or purchases, or include a chat feature or multiple players? Is your child required to have an account to play the game or use the app that will include their personal information?

 **MONITOR** how your child uses technology and restrict the time they spend on the Internet by establishing ground rules. If your child interacts with strangers or accesses inappropriate material online, talk to them about the dangers of doing so and take steps to prevent it from happening again.

 **TALK** regularly with your child about how he/she uses technology and how to do so safely. Tell your child what to do if contacted by a stranger, if inappropriate materials are accessed, or if your child feels bullied. Tell your child to never share personal information or photos with stranger, and encourage open communication so that he/she feels comfortable coming to you with questions or concerns.

 **REPORT** any suspicious communications to the police and speak with school administrators about possible cyberbullying so that action can be taken.

WHAT RESOURCES CAN HELP?

There are many resources to support parents in protecting their child from dangerous online content and communications, including:

- NetSmartz.org offers information, tips, and advice for parents and educators on safe technology use.
- Louisianabelieves.com, the Louisiana Department of Education's website, contains information and procedures to follow in the event that your child is experiencing bullying. (Type "bullying" in the search box.)
- Stopbullying.gov offers tips on how to identify and safely stand up to bullying
- www.fbi.gov/resources/parents, FBI resources for parents that address cyberbullying, advice for kids, social networking sites, child sexual exploitation, missing children, and more.
- Free Internet filters you can install at home: cleanbrowsing.org, OpenDNS Family shield (<https://www.opendns.com/home-internet-security/>), K9 Web Protection (<http://www1.k9webprotection.com/>), and Windows Live Family Safety (account.microsoft.com/family).

