

Cyber Safety

Issues, Prevalence and Prevention

Statistics, Research and Strategies compiled by: Brian Cavanaugh, Ed.M.
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Online Use, Risky Behavior & Adolescence

25% of youth use a computer for non-school related activities for 3 or more hours a day

Communicating and Meeting with Unknown People

- 65% ignore or delete communications sent online by unknown people
- 3% have told an adult or someone in authority
- 35% of online teens have someone on a “buddy list” they do not know
- 5% of teens have talked about sex online with strangers
- Youth with blogs are more likely to post personal information online
- Only 5% of offenders pretend to be minors when communicating with youth

Several studies contributed to this list of online risky behavior including:

Mitchell, Kimberly, Janis Wolak, and David Finkelhor. “Are blogs putting youth at risk for online sexualsolicitation or harassment?” *Child Abuse and Neglect*. 2008. Vol 32

Wolak, Janis, David finkelhor, Kimberly Mitchell (of UNH) and Michele Ybarra (Internet Solutions of Kids). “Online “Predators” and Their Victims: Myths, Realities, and the Implications for Prevention and Treatment” February–March 2008 *American Psychologist* Copyright 2008 by the American Psychological Association. Vol. 63, No. 2, 111–128 [online]

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Social Networking
Facebook, MySpace, Xanga etc.

Youth on social networking sites generally appear to protect themselves. However, a small but significant percentage of youth engage in risky behavior online:

82% of profile creators have included their first name in their profiles

79% have included photos of themselves.

66% have included photos of their friends

61% have included the name of their city or town.

49% have included the name of their school.

40% have included their instant message screen name.

40% have streamed audio to their profile.

39% have linked to their blog.

29% have included their email address.

29% have included their last names.

29% have included videos.

2% have included their cell phone numbers.

6% of online teens and 11% of profile-owning teens post their first and last names on publicly-accessible profiles;

3% of online teens and 5% of profile-owning teens disclose their full names, photos of themselves and the town where they live in publicly-viewable profiles.

(Lenhart and Madden 2007)

Cyber Bullying

- 18% of 6-8th graders have been bullied online at least once
- 15% of children 10-17 have been aggressors online
- Girls are 2X as likely to be involved in cyber bullying
- 80% of teens said they have been exposed to cyber bullying
- incident rates of cyber bullying have doubled since 1999/2000
(www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov)
- Cyber Bullying is the 3rd most prevalent form of bullying behind verbal and physical bullying (Williams & Guerra, 2007)
- Like other forms of bullying, cyberbullying appears to peak in middle school age youth although it is still prevalent in high school age youth
- Adolescents are reluctant to report online bullying (other than death threats) to parents for fear that internet use will be restricted (Kowalski & Limber, 2007)
- Adolescents are reluctant to report text-messaging cyber bullying at school given school policies related to cell phone use in school (Agatson et al. (2007)
- Half of students do not know identity of person that bullied them online (Wolack et al., 2007)
- One study showed that the most common methods of bullying others are instant messaging-55%, chat rooms-23.2% and on websites- 16.1% (Kowalski & Limber, 2007)

Signs of Cyber Bullying in children and youth may include:

- Unusually long hours on the computer
- Closes windows (on computer) when you enter room
- Secretive about internet activity
- Getting behind in school work
- Lack of appetite
- Stomachache
- Fear

(www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov)

Child Predation

- One in five children who use computer chat rooms have been approached over the Internet by a pedophile. (i-Safe Inc)
- One in seven kids who use the Internet have been solicited for sex online. (Crime Against Children Research Center)
- Law enforcement officials estimate that as many as 50,000 sexual predators are online at any given moment. (Dateline, January 2006)

*****Internet predators do not appear to “stalk” children but use it to develop relationships with teens that result in an eventual meeting with the child (Mitchell, et al., 2008)**

*****The riskiest online behavior for children appears to be sending personal information to unknown people**

From: *Online “Predators” and Their Victims: Myths, Realities, and Implications for Prevention and Treatment* by, Janis Wolak, David Finkelhor, and Kimberly J. Mitchell Michele L. Ybarra, American Psychologist, 2008

This informative article can be downloaded from:

<http://www.apa.org/journals/releases/amp632111.pdf>

or <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/>

Consequences

Students Victimized (broadly defined) Online Are More Likely to Experience:

- **Psychosocial problems**
- **substance use**
- **Involvement in offline victimization and perpetration of relational, physical and sexual aggression as well as delinquent peers**
- **Anger management issues**
- **Poor emotional bond with caregivers**
*Statistically 68-97%
(Ybarra et. al., 2007)

- **18.6% of teens who ever had boyfriend/girlfriend said boyfriend or girlfriend spread rumors about them using a cellphone, email, IM, text, Web chat, blog or social networking site. (USA Today)**

What Do Youth Say About Communicating With Unknown People

From Pew Internet and American Life Project

"My parents limit my time on the Internet. I can only spend about 1-2 hours of non-school work time on it. They try checking up on me but I can get away with a lot if I wanted. They make sure to tell me never to meet people on it because people pretend to be someone they are not." --Boy, High School

"It's a sense of attention. For some people it's like 'well, people know I exist, I'm there, people acknowledge me,' you know you feel like you're a part of something." -- Boy, Early High School

"I go on MySpace. I have my own. I do it to comment on people and look at other people's MySpace. You get to know their personality by their MySpace. It says a lot about them just like how they decorate it and the pictures." -- Girl, Early High School

I don't want anyone to know where I'm from. You don't need the people that you know to be able to read where you're from because they already know." -- Girl, Middle School

"i try to post as little information as possible. there is no way of knowing who is going to see the information posted and i'm really stingy. i don't think it's okay to share last names, date of birth, where i live, anything that will help people identify me. pictures are OK because it's really difficult to find someone if the only thing you know about them is what they look like." -- Girl, Early High School

"I mean, I'm not really making new friends, I'm just not hurting peoples' feelings. If I know that they're friends with someone else that I don't feel like they're [going to] come and attack me, and so it's safe." -- Middle School Girl

"If people I don't know request to be my friend I'll add them but I don't talk to them. I don't know why I add them if I don't talk to them, now that I think about it. That's kind of stupid. It just means they're on my friends list. I don't really get anything out of it. They can just send me comments." -- Girl, Late High School

"I know when I get a friend request, if I don't know the person I won't automatically deny them, I'll go to their page and see who's in their top eight and see if I know any of their friends... They're not like strangers if your good friend knows them, like they are to you, but it's not like they're dangerous." -- Girl, Middle School

"It gets weird. I think two weeks ago I got a request. And one of my friends hit approve. And the person, this guy started sending me weird comments....And he's sending me these comments like oh, you're so hot, where do you live? I want to meet you. That gets a little weird." -- Girl, Late High School

"yeah ive had instant messages from random people i didnt know. i was really uncomfortable but usually its a friends friend. and if its not i bs everything about myself or i just ignore them or block them all together." -- Girl, Late High School

"My brother got into an online relationship with a [older] girl. He told her where he lived and she moved to [town] the next week. She would show up at our house. She followed me around. 'Where is your brother?'" -- Girl, Early High School

Strategies & Tips

For Educators

- Google yourself
- Talk to your students
- Question the content of websites your students are on
- Find out what your students are doing online
- Monitor your computers
- Treat online threats seriously
- If an incident took place online and it is impacting your school climate it is in your best interests to intervene even if it happened outside of school
- Educate your students (not anonymous, you don't know who's on the other end)
- Don't have MySpace or Facebook even if you set it to "private"
- Know your internet policies and adapt them to the evolving technology
- Know that Bullying Prevention efforts do impact cyber bullying (Williams & Guerra, 2007)
- Media literacy can mitigate negative effects of electronic media on youth (Worthen, 2007)

For Parents

- Monitor your computers
- Use Keystroke Software on your computers
- Look into other computer monitoring software
- Ask about the names your children have on their chat/ buddy lists (Can they name them all? Where do they live?)
- Ask to see their MySpace, Facebook, Xanga page
- Look at their myspace pages- they probably have more than one
- Take all expectation of privacy out of computer use especially when they are with another child
- Have computer(s) in open, common areas of the house
- Talk to your children about the potential consequences of posting information about yourself online (I.E. College admissions and job applications, identity theft, criminal Issues, predators)

Cyber Bullying and Internet Safety

Web Resources for Parents and Educators

List compiled by: Brian Cavanaugh, Ed.M.; Deputy Director, Middlesex Partnerships for Youth, Inc.: 2007

www.isafe.org

<http://www.safeteens.com/>

http://www.idsafety.org/files_cms/PreventionSmallV2.pdf

<http://www.netsmartz.org/safety/definitions.htm>

www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov

www.stopcyberbullying.org

<http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov/>

<http://www.netsmartz.org/netparents.htm>

www.netsmartz.org

<http://www.nsteens.org/>

www.icctraining.org

<http://www.computeraddiction.com/>

www.NetSmartz.org/icac/presentations

www.iab.ie

