

KEEPING KIDS SAFE

A PARENTS' GUIDE

The Archdiocese of Washington is dedicated to promoting and ensuring the protection of all children. This flier is one in a series produced by the archdiocese to help parents better understand how to protect their children from victimization, both inside and outside the home. This guide is to help you understand what cyber bullying is, how it is conducted and what to do if you suspect your child is being bullied online.

If you suspect your child is being cyber bullied:

- Teach your child not to respond to cyber bullies. Show them how to block the bully's messages and delete them without reading them.
- Tell your child he or she should never try and seek revenge on a bully or cyber bully.
- Remind your child to keep passwords a secret from everyone except you.
- Tell your child it's not their fault and you won't revoke their internet privileges if they are cyber bullied.
- Help your child keep a record of bullying incidents. If it involves threats and harassment or frequent cyber attacks, call the police to ensure your child's safety.

*Information from the
National Crime Prevention Council*

Bullying: Not just in the school yard anymore

Bullying does not just happen in school hallways or the school yard anymore. With so many teens using the internet to instant message friends, create blogs, set up profiles on social networking sites, share photos and text message on their cell phones, harassment has taken on a new form — cyber bullying.

Cyber bullies use email, instant messaging, cell phones and websites to spread rumors and gossip, steal passwords to assume someone else's identity, post pictures of someone without their consent and threaten or harass with offensive language.

Although cyber bullying does not inflict physical harm on a child, it is emotionally and psychologically damaging. It can be an extension of bullying that the child is experiencing at school and because the threats and taunts are online and visible to anyone 24 hours a day, it can feel like constant victimization. It is most prevalent among 15- and 16-year-old females.

Teen suicide, school shootings and physical bullying incidents are a few ways teens have chosen to handle the problem. Others keep to the bullying to themselves, sinking into depression that affects their grades, relationships and self-esteem.

Several cases of cyber bullying have made the news when the teenage victims committed suicide. In one well known case, Missouri teen Megan Meier, 13, hanged herself in her bedroom in 2006 after a fictitious 15-year-old boy she befriended through the social networking site MySpace turned hostile towards her.

The mother of a former friend of Megan's created the fictitious profile of the boy online in order to gain Megan's trust and learn what Megan was saying about her daughter. When the fictitious boy began sending cruel messages to Megan, she was so devastated she took her own life.

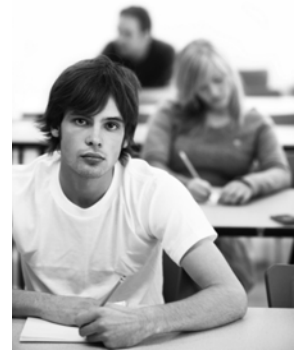


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Protect your child from cyber bullying

- Teach your child about cyber bullying and let him or her know that engaging in cyber bullying is unacceptable.
- Explain that teens who cyber bully sometimes bully because they have a feeling of anonymity and a lack of accountability; however, cyber bullying is harmful and has negative consequences.
- Explain that teens who cyber bully aren't always anonymous; they can be traced, located and punished if the bullying becomes harassment.
- Block cyber bullying messages through your internet service provider, social network site or chat room moderator; 71 percent of teens believe this is the most effective way to prevent cyber bullying.
- Encourage positive behavior. Make sure your child is not sending or posting text messages or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.
- Get your child's school involved. Learn about the school's cyber bullying policy and urge administrators to take a stance against all forms of bullying.
- Keep computers in a highly trafficked room in the house where online activities are hard for teens to hide.
- Share examples of inappropriate incidents that can happen online, which teens may view as harmless or normal.
- Learn what your child is doing online and keep track of online behavior.
- Tell your child never to give out personal information online.



Information from the National Crime Prevention Council

For more information...

- **www.ncpc.org/cyberbullying**: National Crime Prevention Council website with cyber bullying and internet safety information for parents.
- **www.wiredsafety.org**: Internet safety information for children, teens and adults as well as a downloadable translator for cyber-lingo and acronyms used online and in text messages by teens.
- **www.cyberbully411.org**: Resources for youth who have questions about or have been targeted by online harassment, including a discussion forum.
- **www.cyberbullying.info**: Teens direct themselves on an interactive journey through a detective's office to learn more about cyber bullying, uncovering clues and information about cyber bullying and how to recognize what to do.
- **www.stopcyberbullying.org**: Cyber bullying prevention and internet safety information for parents, teachers, police officers and teens.

By the numbers

In a 2006 study of 824 students aged 13-17:

- **43%** had been victims of cyber bullying
- **81%** thought others cyber bullied because it was funny; **64%** thought the bully did it because they didn't like the person; and **45%** thought it was because the bully viewed the victim as a loser.
- **59%** said the cyber bully didn't think the action was a "big deal"
- **56%** of cyber bullying victims claim to have felt angry; **33%** reported feeling hurt; **32%** were embarrassed; and **13%** felt scared.
- **23%** were bullied by someone they don't know
- **45%** said cyber bullies didn't think they would get caught
- **11%** talked to their parents about incidents of cyber bullying

Information from the National Crime Prevention Council