

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. The internet opens up a world of educational and cultural resources for your children, but without careful parental monitoring they can easily be exposed to explicit material and online predators.

If you suspect your child is communicating with an offender

Talk openly with your child about your suspicions and the dangers of online offenders.

Review what is on your child's computer for pornography or any sexual communication.

Use the caller ID service to determine who is calling your child. Most telephone companies also allow you to block your number from appearing on someone else's caller ID.

Monitor your child's access to all types of online communication, such as chat rooms. Online offenders almost always meet potential victims in chat rooms then continue to communicate with them via email.

*Information from
U.S. Department of Justice, FBI*

Signs that your child might be at risk online

Your child spends large amount of time online, especially at night

Most children who fall victim to online offenders are online a lot, particularly in chat rooms in the evening.

You find pornography on your home computer

Sex offenders often supply their potential victims with pornography as a means of opening sexual discussions and for seduction. The child may hide the pornographic files on disks if the computer is used by family members.



Your child receives phone calls from adults you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize

Most online offenders want to talk to the child on the telephone, often engaging in "phone sex" and seek to set up a meeting for real sex. Even if the child doesn't give out their telephone number, the offender can easily find it out using caller ID or asking them to call collect.

Your child receives mail or gifts from someone you don't know

As part of the seduction process, it is common for offenders to send letters, photographs and gifts to their potential victims. They have even sent plane tickets for a child to travel to meet in person.

Your child becomes withdrawn from the family

Online sex offenders will work hard to drive a wedge between a child and his or her family. They will accentuate any minor problems at home a child might have. The child may also become withdrawn after sexual victimization.

Your child is using an online account belonging to someone else

Online offenders will sometimes provide the child with a computer account for communications with the offender. The child may also meet an offender while online at a friend's house or at the library.

Information from U.S. Department of Justice, FBI.



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**CHILD
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Learn more about the Archdiocese of Washington's commitment to protecting children
www.adw.org • Office of Child Protection Services • 301-853-5328

Don't let an online offender exploit your child

- Talk to your child about victimization and the dangers of online predators.
- Spend time with your child online and have him or her show you favorite web sites.
- Keep the computer in a common area of the house where you can monitor what your child is doing online.
- Use the parental controls provided by your internet service provider, but do not totally rely on them. You still need to be aware of your child's online activity. Use of chat rooms in particular should be heavily monitored.
- Maintain access to your child's online account and check his/her email. Do not be concerned about invading privacy. Be up front with your child about your access to his or hers online accounts and why.
- Teach your child about responsible use of the internet and that there is much more to it than chat rooms.
- Find out what computer safeguards are at your child's schools, the public library and their friend's homes.
- Understand that even if your child is a willing participant in sexual victimization, he or she is not at fault and is the victim.



Information from U.S. Department of Justice, FBI

Common online jargon

Blog: Short for web log. An online diary or journal readers can subscribe to.

Chatroom: An area on the internet where people can communicate in real time by typing messages back and forth.

Download: To copy a file from one computer system to another.

Instant Messaging (IM): Notifies you when someone on your private email list is online so you can start a real time chat session with them through text, voice or video.

Social networking: Online communities where you can create a profile page about yourself that may include photos and videos that others can see. The most popular sites are MySpace.com and Facebook.com.

Web cams: Small digital cameras that can be connected to a computer and used to communicate with others on video in real time.

By the numbers

1 in 7 youth online (10 to 17 years old) receive a sexual solicitation or approach over the internet.

4% receive an aggressive sexual solicitation - a solicitor who asked to meet them somewhere; called them on the telephone; or sent them offline mail, money, or gifts.

34% have unwanted exposure to sexual material -- pictures of naked people or people having sex.

27% of the youth who encountered unwanted sexual material told a parent or guardian. If the encounter was defined as distressing - episodes that made them feel very or extremely upset or afraid - 42% told a parent or guardian.

Information from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children