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# Preventing Sexual Exploitation via Internet and Technology

Each week the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's (NCMEC) CyberTipline receives an average of more than 2,000 reports concerning child sexual exploitation. Approximately 90% of those reports concern suspected images/videos depicting a child or children being exploited. Further, it is estimated that 244,000 to 300,000 children are at risk each year of becoming victims of commercial child sexual exploitation (children used for prostitution) (National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation, 2008). Recent advances in technology have led to unprecedented access to sexually exploitive materials, removed protective barriers, and created additional opportunities for sexual crimes against children. According to research cited by Bourke & Hernandez (2009), the online enticement of children has increased by more than 400% since 1998.

According to the National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation (2008), the production and distribution of abuse images of children is a multi-billion dollar industry. Analysts at NCMEC have reviewed more than 18.5 million images and videos of pornography depicting children since 2002. Of growing concern is the increasing percentage of images created by the children themselves.

## The Numbers

Studies lag behind technology and likely reflect very conservative estimates of the extent of online victimization. Crimes Against Children (2000) reported that one in 33 youth aged 10 to 17 received an online sexual solicitation and one in four had exposure to pictures of naked people or people having sex. In 2006, the U. S. Justice Department reported that one in five youth ages 10 to 17 received an online unwanted sexual solicitation.

A 2005 study (Cameron & Salazar) found



that adolescents ages 14 to 17 reported that exposure to sexually-explicit Web sites was mostly accidental or unintentional via unsolicited e-mails (as many as 10 to 20 per day) containing explicit content or links to it. A survey of 500 college students found that 72.8 percent (93.2 percent of male students and 62.1 percent of female students) reported that they had viewed online pornography before age 18. Males were more likely to have viewed pornography frequently, and to have viewed a variety of images while females were more likely to have been exposed involuntarily (Sabina, Wolak & Finkelhor, 2008).

Even very young children are being exposed. For example, Deblinger et al. (2010) surveyed 289 caretakers of children in Kindergarten through third grade (mean age 8.5 years). More than half (57%) indicated that their child used the Internet. Only 3 percent reported their children used Internet chat rooms with 1 percent being unsure. Six percent indicated that their child had been exposed to sexually explicit material on the Internet and 7 percent were unsure.

In 2003, the Crimes Against Children Research Center (Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhor; see also Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak, 2005) collected information from a national sample of law enforcement agencies about the characteristics of Internet sex crimes against minors and the numbers of arrests during a 1-year period in 2000. The study serves as a baseline for comparison in future years. In 2000, the Crimes Against Children Research

Center estimated 2,577 arrests nationally for Internet crimes against children.

The growth of online activity is also reflected in the calls to the NCMEC CyberTipline. In its first year of operation, there were 4,578 tips. The numbers have increased every year. By 2004 there were 112,017 tips and currently, the Cyber Tipline receives over 2,000 calls per week (Albanese, 2007; NCMEC, 2010).

## Are There any Potential Benefits from the Internet's Openness?

Some experts argue that adolescent exploration of sexual issues via the Internet has potential benefits as well as the considerable risks (Brown, Keller & Stern, 2009). The Internet offers anonymity, is available 24/7, and can be free from adult scrutiny, allowing sensitive or embarrassed young people the ability to access sexual health information about diseases, pregnancy, and sexual intimacy. In one study 41% of young adults said they had changed their behaviors because of health information found online and almost half had seen a health provider as a result (Ybarra & Suman, 2008, cited in Brown et al.).

Online sources can offer youth help with difficult topics such as date rape and how to handle pressure to engage in sexual activity. Another potential advantage of the Internet is that youth with sexual health concerns can locate peers in similar circumstances or who have successfully navigated the difficulty. The social and emotional support could be life-saving for a teen experiencing emotional trauma due to sexual abuse. Others worry that youth may access less-than-credible sites and encounter misinformation. Another worry is that youth may substitute the Internet for the real people in their lives who may be in a better position to help them.

*continued on page 2*



## Preventing Sexual Exploitation

*continued from page 1*

Public health departments, nonprofits, and concerned individuals are starting to offer curriculum, interactive sites, and text messaging to appeal to teens who are seeking credible information about sexual health. These efforts have few evaluations, but some data is promising. For example the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy partnered with MySpace to produce the “Stay Teen” PSA contest. In its first month, the contest attracted 100,000 page views and 8,000 “friends.”

### Types of Online Child Sexual Exploitation

In its 2003 study, the Crimes Against Children Research Center delineated three categories of internet sex crimes against minors. These are:

- **Internet child pornography.** This category included possession/distribution/trade of child pornography and excluded crimes where child pornography was produced. In their nationwide survey of law enforcement, this category was 36% of the arrests. Most offenders had images depicting graphic sexual activity with children including penetration of the victim; oral sex; and violence such as bondage, rape, or torture.
- **Internet crimes against identified victims.** This category included online enticement of children, the sending of unwanted sexual materials, and included the production of child pornography. This category encompassed 39% of all arrests. The researchers further determined that 20% of the arrests were Internet-initiated (the offender had no prior acquaintance with the victim) and in 19% of the arrests the offender was a family member or prior acquaintance of the victim who used the Internet to communicate with the victim.
- **Internet solicitations to undercover law enforcement.** This category accounted for 25% of the arrests. Undercover agents posing as minors in chat rooms and Internet personal profiles wait to be contacted by offenders who seek underage victims.

Approximately one in seven youth ages 10 to 17 who use the Internet receive a sexual so-

licitation or approach online (Wolack, Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2006). The authors (on their website, December, 2007) stress that these solicitations were not necessarily from “online predators.” Many solicitations could come from other youth and when youth knew the sender, and about half of the solicitations were from other youth. Many of the solicitations were brief, rude or vulgar comments or instant messages. Many of the recipients did not view the solicitations as serious or threatening. Four percent of the solicitations (1 in 25) were aggressive solicitations that included attempts to contact the youth off line. Two youth from the sample of 1500 were actually victimized.

### Which Youth are Most at Risk?

#### Youth at Risk for Online Solicitation

According to Brown et al. (2009) and according to research from the Crimes Against Children Research Center (2008), some teens are at higher risk than others for online sexual exploitation. Those with prior histories of sexual abuse, with sexual orientation concerns, and those with patterns of online or offline risk-taking were at higher risk. Display of sexual content online increases a teen’s chances of online victimization. Teens who send personal information or talk online to strangers about sex are at the greatest risk for sexual victimization, since they are the most likely to receive solicitations. Other researchers agree with Brown et al. For example, provision of personal information to online contacts and communicating with people met online were the strongest predictors of victimization in a study using a sample of college students (Marcum, 2009).

According to Wolak et al. (2008), the reality of adolescent sexual development is growing curiosity, knowledge, and experience as youths make the transition from childhood to adulthood. In the past, romances occurred under the scrutiny of parents and peers and others in the social network of the youth. The relative isolation of online relationships may lead to greater intensity and greater disclosure than typically occurs in face-to-face contacts. Adding the factor of youth who lack mature judgment and those who lack emotional regulation skills, then vulnerability is increased.

It is interesting that some of the risk factors cited by online safety experts were not found to distinguish between youth who were exploited and other youth in Wolak et al.’s investigation (2008). For example, posting personal information by itself did not appear to be a particularly risky behavior. Despite admonitions against doing so, Wolak et al. found that most youth post personal information online. Names, the name of their school, telephone numbers, and general pictures of themselves did not appear to predict risk for online solicitation. Likewise, youth who par-

ticipated in social networking sites did not appear at increased risk for victimization by online sexual predators. Many youth reported interacting with unknown people on the Internet without receiving unwanted solicitations. Even for youth who were actively seeking to meet new people, the contacts were not likely to be uncomfortable or frightening. Rather, youth who interact in specific ways (talking about sex or sending personal information to unknown persons) were at increased risk. Wolak et al. note that the majority of youth refrain from these risky behaviors. According to the authors, youth who visit chat rooms were likely to have problems with their parents, and to suffer from sadness, loneliness, or depression. These youth with poor social skills may be interacting in chat rooms in order to compensate for problems forming friendships in more conventional ways. The authors comment that online molesters do not appear to be stalking unsuspecting victims but rather seek youth who are vulnerable and susceptible to seduction.

Wolak et al. (2008) identified online behaviors that were considered risky. These included:

- interacting online with unknown people;
- having unknown people on a buddy list;
- talking online to unknown people about sex;
- seeking pornography online;
- being rude or nasty online.

As the numbers of these behaviors increased, so did the odds of online interpersonal victimization.

In order to explore potential factors that render children vulnerable to contact by predators, Jayawardena & Broadhurst (2007) created fictional identities for four female children age 12, varying several characteristics. They found that the presence of photographs and e-mail addresses garnered more suspicious responses for both “vulnerable” (needy; lonely) and “non-vulnerable” (happy; family-oriented) identities. In similar situations of contact information, the factor of vulnerability did predict responses, with “vulnerable” profiles receiving more suspicious attention.

### Children and Youth at Risk for Child Pornography

In considering child pornography, Wolak et al. (2003) offered an analysis of the age groups of victims found in child pornography arrests. Nineteen percent of offenders had images of children younger than age 3; while 39% possessed images of children ages 3 to 5; 83% possessed images of children 6 to 12; and 75% had images of teens ages 13 to 17.

Children enter pornography by various routes. Albanese (2007) describes a progression from sexual abuse by family or friends gradually escalating into the production, then the sale, of images and videos. Children in developing countries may actually be purchased from parents who think the child is

getting a job and an education and believe that the family will receive payments.

A 2007 staff report of the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee found the number of sexually-explicit images of children on the Internet was increasing and that the victims were typically younger and the images more violent than in prior years. It was estimated that more than half of the child pornography on the Internet was on Web sites hosted in the United States (reported in Lewis et al., 2009).

## Who are the Offenders?

According to Burgess, Mahoney, Visk, and Morgenbesser (2008), the overwhelming majority of Internet-related child sexual exploitation cases have male offenders (94.8%). Other studies (Mitchell et al., 2005; Wolak et al., 2003) have found even higher numbers of male offenders (99%). While the age range is from 18 to 72, the majority of offenders are between 30 and 49 (53.4% in Burgess et al., 2008; 45% between 26 and 39 in Wolak et al., 2003; 43% between 26 and 39 in Mitchell et al., 2005). Most Internet offenders (97%) acted alone and most are non-Hispanic white (92%) (Wolak et al., 2003).

Wolak et al. (2008) maintain that most Internet online child molesters are not pedophiles (although pedophiles use the Internet to distribute pornography or to locate vulnerable children through leads from other pedophiles). Rather, the online solicitation generally involves adult men who use the technology to meet and seduce underage adolescents into sexual encounters. In a great majority of cases, the adolescents are aware that they are online with adults and offenders rarely deceive victims about their sexual interest. Generally, the sexual conversation is broached online and the teenage victims go to in-person meetings expecting sexual activity. The adolescents generally profess love for the offenders and the majority of teen victims meet in person with the offender multiple times. Most offenders are charged with a crime such as statutory rape that involves non-forcible sexual activity with victims who are too young to consent to sexual intercourse with adults.

Internet offenders are not always strangers. Internet use can occur in sexual crimes against minors by family members and acquaintances (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2005). Acquaintances can use the Internet to "bypass" the scrutiny of parents or caretakers. Data from the National Juvenile Online Victimization (N-JOV) Study yielded an estimated 460 arrests for Internet-related sex crimes against minors involving family and acquaintance offenders in the one-year period beginning July 1, 2000. This number represents 18% of all arrests for Internet sex crimes against minors. Family members encompassed grandparents, parents, stepparents, uncles, and parents' intimate partners. They were more likely to abuse younger children.

Acquaintances included neighbors, teachers, relatives of juvenile friends, family friends, and leaders of youth organizations. Acquaintances were more likely to abuse adolescents and nearly half of the victims were boys. Some form of sexual activity occurred in all cases. Half of the family/acquaintance offenders used the Internet to store and disseminate child pornography images of the victims, while only 6% used the Internet to arrange meetings. For 8% of the family and acquaintance offenders, the Internet was used as a reward to attract the children to the offender's home. In only a few cases (2%) did family members or acquaintances use the Internet to prostitute or sell the victim (Mitchell et al., 2005).

## Parents and Caregivers

There appears to be general agreement that parental supervision is the primary defense against online exploitation. It is apparent, however, that parents either lack the skills or lack the time to adequately monitor their offspring's computer use. For example, a study by Cox Communications and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (Teenage Research Unlimited, 2006) found that over half (51%) of parents either did not have or did not know if they had software on their computer that could monitor where their child or teen went online and with whom they interacted.

Parents can learn to use computer software such as firewalls, anti-spy software, wireless encryption, and antivirus software designed to protect children. It is important to note, however, that technology should supplement, not replace, the supervision and actions of caregivers (Dombrowski, Gischlar & Durst, 2007). Technology is constantly evolving and savvy individuals may be able to circumvent controls on computers. Determined individuals can include both the predators and the curious children and youth.

Since technology safeguards are not fool-proof, emphasis needs to be placed on monitoring by parents and on educating youth. Fortunately there is considerable help (especially online help) as Internet companies, nonprofits, and schools have scrambled to create interactive, engaging learning forums for youth of all ages (see separate block, this issue, for a sampling). Education is also important because many youth access the Internet through mobile phones and outlets outside the home that are very difficult to monitor.

Laurie Nathan, speaking at an online forum on "Preventing Child Victimization Associated with Technology" that was sponsored by the Office for Victims of Crime (06-22-10) commented, "I would advise those who educate youth to take a two-part approach to prevent children from being victimized online. First, children need to be educated on the actual risks and empowered to make responsi-

*continued on page 4*



## CORRECTION

The picture on page one of VCPN volume 88 had an incorrect caption. The picture shows Governor Mills Godwin signing the child abuse and neglect legislation effective July 1, 1975. The history of the bill was that Governor Linwood Holton and his cabinet held a series of public hearings throughout Virginia. As a result of concern expressed at the public hearings, Governor Holton appointed a task force to recommend new legislation. The resulting bill, drafted by Dr. Anthony Shaw and others working closely with legislators, especially representative (later Senator) Tom Mitchie, passed by unanimous vote in both the House and Senate and was signed into law by Governor Mills Godwin.



*In  
Memory  
of*

## Corinne Carr Nettleton

Corinne Carr Nettleton, MSW was the first editor of the Virginia Child Protection Newsletter. She passed away August 7, 2010.

As the senior social worker for pediatrics at the University of Virginia Medical Center in 1970, Ms. Carr was well aware that Virginia laws at the time were inadequate to protect children from abuse by caretakers. In 1971, she teamed with Anthony Shaw, M.D. to create the first multidisciplinary Committee for Child Protection in the Commonwealth. The committee identified and managed abused children who entered the UVA Medical Center. In the late 1970's Corrine Carr founded and edited the Virginia Child Protection Newsletter (VCPN) at UVA. In 1981, VCPN moved to James Madison University and is still published at JMU. Corinne Carr Nettleton helped many children to achieve a better life. For more information about Corinne Carr Nettleton, visit the VCPN website.

## Special Risks for Adolescents

Adolescents spend considerable time engaged with some form of media. Media has expanded from the “traditional” sources (television; radio; music; movies; magazines) to include internet, social networking sites, and cell phones. Some teens apparently seek opportunities to view sexually explicit material while other teens avoid it. Brown, Keller & Stern (2009) summarized some findings about adolescent use of media and the effects of sexual content:

- **Television-** The average teen spends 12 hours a week watching TV with males averaging 1.5 hours per week more than females. Of the “top ten” teen programs, 70% include sexual content. Frequent exposure to sexual content on TV has been shown to hasten sexual initiation and early pregnancy.
- **Radio/Music-** The average teen spends 16 hours a week listening. An analysis of popular songs found that 37% refer to sexual activity and two-thirds of these (most often Rap) include degrading sex. Frequent exposure to sexually degrading music is associated with earlier sexual intercourse.
- **Movies-** The average teen watches two movies per month in a theatre. Twenty-five percent of teen movie characters engage in sexual intercourse. Exposure to X-rated movies has been linked to a greater number of sexual partners and less contraceptive use.
- **Magazines-** Most teens (63%) had read a magazine for fun in the prior month with girls preferring magazines for fashion and boys preferring sports and activity stories. Teen girl magazines portray girls as obsessed with guys. Teen boys’ magazines are visually suggestive. Reading fashion and sports magazines relates to body image concerns and eating disturbances for both sexes.
- **Internet-** Teens average 12.5 hours online per week. Viewing internet pornography is common for males (50% to 70%) and 30% of females report viewing online pornography.
- **Social Networking-** For older teens (15-17) 77% report having a SNS profile and for younger teens (12-14) 38% report a profile. About 1 in 10 teens are posting sexually suggestive images online.
- **Cell phones-** About half (52%) of younger teens ages 12-13 have cell phones while 72% of those 14 to 16 own phones and by age 17, most (84%) own a cell phone. Between 1 in 10 to 1 in 5 teens have engaged in sexting.

What are the Concerns?

- Teens may perceive that sex is risk-free and may feel pressure to become sexually active.
- Teens may experiment with risky sexual behaviors.
- Teens may harm their reputations and increase their exposure to sexual solicitation.
- Teens, especially girls, may engage in self-objectification, learning to treat their bodies as the objects of someone else’s desires.
- The display of sexual content online is likely to increase the chances of online victimization.

In 2010, Cox Communications released a study of 1,032 online interviews with teenagers ages 13 to 17. This survey updates prior research done in 2006. They found that teens were using technology in even greater numbers. For example, 63% of those 13 to 17 had a cell phone in 2006. In 2010, 84% of youth had a cell phone. Social networking was similar with 61% involved in 2006 and 84% in 2010.

The 2010 Cox survey found that most teens were aware of the dangers on the Internet (for instance 88% were worried about consequences of posting their contact information). However, even though most teens are aware of dangers and worried about dangers, they engage in the risky behaviors anyway (for example 80% post contact information). Over 60% would be embarrassed if a parent or a teacher viewed their online profile. Researchers concluded that teens need to be jolted out of a false sense of security. Filled with excitement about new technologies and sure of their own digital awareness, the teens feel immune to dangers and consequences and overstate their own capabilities. The researchers comment that teens are noted for feeling invincible about other dangers (for example, drinking and driving; susceptibility to becoming pregnant; texting while driving). While there are programs and guidance on other dangers, online behaviors are not addressed in many safety programs.



## Preventing Sexual Exploitation

*continued from page 3*

ble decisions about their online behavior. Too many messages exaggerate the online risks, but children cannot be scared into making wiser decisions online. Programs that empower children and teach them to take responsibility for their actions are more effective. The second aspect is the necessity for parent involvement and monitoring children’s online behavior. This does not necessarily mean installing filtering and monitoring software, which can only protect your children so much; it requires active parental supervision. Encourage parents to establish guidelines for Internet use and have an ongoing conversation with their children about their online activities.”

## Law Enforcement Response

Cases involving Internet sex crimes against minors are complex and time-consuming. Many are multijurisdictional and involve more than one law enforcement agency. Many involve collaboration between local and federal law enforcement. They require collaboration and training in how to conduct joint investigations.

In spite of difficulties, the rates of dismissal and acquittal are lower than in other types of sex crimes (Wolak et al., 2003). Internet features such as transcripts of conversations and the actual images sent online may aid in conviction rates and offset the complexity of the prosecution. For that reason, Mitchell et al. (2005) suggest that law enforcement officers should ask all child sexual abuse victims about the ways that the offender talked with them and about everything the offender showed them (including through the Internet), as officers may find evidence such as e-mail correspondence and pictures that might strengthen cases and result in additional charges for crimes such as child pornography. Given that physical evidence is rare in child

## Crimes Against Children Research Center

The Center (CCRC) seeks to combat crimes against children by providing high-quality research, statistics, and program evaluation. CRC maintains a publication list of articles concerning the nature and impact of crimes such as child abduction, homicide, rape, assault, property crimes, and physical and sexual abuse of children written by researchers associated with CCRC.

The CCRC was created in 1998 at the University of New Hampshire. It grew from and expands upon the work of the Family Research Laboratory which has been devoted since 1975 to the study of family violence, child victimization, and related topics.

More information is available from: Crimes Against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire, 20 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3586 (603) 862-1888 Web site: [www.unh.edu/ccrc](http://www.unh.edu/ccrc)



sexual assault cases, the potential of online evidence should not be ignored.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics published a special report (2007) on federal prosecution of child sexual exploitation offenders in 2006. The report states that in 2006, there were 3,661 suspects referred to U.S. Attorneys for child sexual exploitation offenses. Child pornography offenses were 69% followed by sexual abuse (16%) and transportation for illegal sexual activity (14%). Of these referrals, 60% were prosecuted and 90% of those were convicted. The median prison sentence was 63 months. All of the statistics represent substantial increases over the prior decade. Most suspects charged with pornography were white male U.S. citizens with some college education.

## National Efforts at Prevention

There is federal law that requires Internet service providers to report child pornography on their systems to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (Mukasey, Daley & Hagy, 2007). Federal programs include the FBI's Innocent Images National Initiative and a U.S. Postal Service program focusing on child obscenity sent through the mail. (Readers can consult VCPN, volume 68 for more detailed descriptions of these programs.)

The Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program (ICAC) helps state and local law enforcement agencies develop an effective response to cyber enticement and child pornography cases. The ICAC program is a national network of 61 coordinated task forces representing over 2,000 federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies. Since the program's inception in 1968, more than 230,000 law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and other professionals have been trained in the United States and 17 countries on techniques of investigation and prosecution.

On an international level, the United States participates in World Congresses on commercial sexual exploitation of children and supports United Nations programs that attack commercial sexual exploitation on a global level.

## Implications for Prevention

- Target interventions to youth with a pattern of Internet risk-taking behaviors.
- Target prevention efforts to the most at-risk youth. For example, girls between the ages of 13-15 are more likely to be solicited by an online predator so the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children offers specific resources for teen girls including public service announcements (Think Before You Post) and NetSmartz Real-Life Stories videos (Julie's Journey; Amy's Choice) (Nathan, 06-16-10).

- Give adolescents specific information about online criminal behavior (both so that they can identify such behaviors and avoid or report them and also to help youth avoid violating laws themselves). Educate teens about statutory rape laws and the pitfalls of sexual relationships with adults.
- Focus prevention efforts on adolescents as they are at greater risk for sexual exploitation via Internet and media than are younger children.
- Children and youth should be very cautious about placing photographs of themselves in their profiles and should avoid publication of e-mail addresses.
- Educate teens about how to assess the credibility of the Web sites they consult for sexual health information.
- Encourage teens to use privacy settings on social networking sites.

## Summary

Internet safety is still an evolving area, as technology continues to change rapidly. Legislation is being modified to combat online crime against children. Education efforts for youth are being developed and piloted. There is much to learn still about online sexual offenders and how to combat online victimization of children. The Internet offers unlimited potential to help youth learn and grow. Adults must face the challenges of helping youth safely navigate cyberspace.

*References Available on the Website  
or by Request*



**There's More on  
the Website!  
Visit us to learn  
about:**

- **Stop It Now!**
- **The FBI Innocent Images Initiative**
- **Web Resources**
- **A Glossary**
- **Tips for Parents**
- **Bully-Free Virginia**



## National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

The Center (NCMEC) was established in 1984 as a private, nonprofit organization. Its mission is to help prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation; help find missing children; and to assist victims of child abduction and exploitation, their families, and the professionals who serve them.

NCMEC fulfills several federal mandates including the operation of a national, 24-hour, toll-free telephone line where individuals may report information about the location of a missing child; the national resource center and information clearinghouse for missing and sexually exploited children; provision of technical assistance and training in the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and treatment of cases involving missing and sexually exploited children; and operation of a CyberTipline for reporting Internet-related child sexual exploitation.

The 24-hour, toll-free line: 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5687)  
The TTY line is 1-800-826-7653

## NetSmartz

NetSmartz is a free, interactive, online educational resource that was created by NCMEC in partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. It is a program that is widely used and enjoyed by teens, parents, educators, and law enforcement. Using age-appropriate activities, NetSmartz provides children with the information they need to make smarter and safer online choices. The animated spokesperson, Clicky, has been enormously popular in teaching Internet safety. NetSmartz has been implemented into schools and school districts in all 50 states and in all 4,300 Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

## Global Campaign Against Child Pornography

Started in 2004 by a combined \$1 million donation from Shelia Johnson and Microsoft, the National Center provides training to law enforcement worldwide and develops and promotes systems for identifying victims of child pornography.

## The Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography

Thirty-two prominent financial institutions and Internet industry leaders joined with the National Center and its sister organization, the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) in 2006 in the fight against online pornography. The goal is to eradicate the commercial viability of child pornography by following the flow of funds and shutting down payment accounts that are being used by the illegal enterprises. As a result of efforts, operators of child pornography websites have had to spend more money to avoid detection. They have had to raise monthly subscription rates, making the sites less affordable. In addition, there has been the virtual elimination of the use of credit cards to buy subscriptions to sites. The FCACP includes leading banks, credit-card companies, third-party payment companies, and Internet-service companies. The membership represents 90 percent of the U.S. payments industry and there is growing international participation.

More information available from: The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, Charles B. Wang International Children's Building, 699 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-3175 (703) 274-3900, FAX: (703) 274-2222, Website: [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

# Sexting



Teens have a new method for trying to attract attention. ‘Sexting’ is the transmission of nude photos to a friend or casual acquaintance from cellular phones, with or without a sexually explicit message. The practice was first reported in 2005 (Chalfen, 2009).

There are three basic “sexting scenarios” according to the Pew Research Center (Lenhart, 2009). First, images are shared between romantic partners instead of or as part of sexual activity. Pictures can be forwarded to others, especially at the time of a breakup. A second scenario is when images are sent between friends or between two people when one wishes to become romantically involved with the other. Third, sexting can be part of an experimental phase for teens who are not yet sexually active.

Since the Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project began tracking teen cell phone use in 2004, the age at which American teens acquire their first cell phone has declined. In the 2004 survey, 18% of teens age 12 said they owned a cell phone. In 2009, 58% of 12 year-olds said they owned a cell phone. Likewise the numbers of older teens with their own cell phone increased from 64% in 2004 to 83% in 2009 (Lenhart, 2009).

The capacity of cell phones has also changed. Now they are used not simply for telephone calls but to access the Internet and to take and share photos and videos. Texting has become a centerpiece of teen social life.

According to a 2008 survey by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 20% of youth ages 13 to 19 admit to having transmitted sexually explicit images of themselves over the phone or through e-mail. Additionally, 48% said they had received sexually suggestive e-mails and text messages and 31% had received a nude or semi-nude image from someone else. Over half of the girls who admitted to sexting said they did so due to pressures from boyfriends.

Cox Communications did a 2009 online survey. They found that 9% of responding teens ages 13-16 had sent a sexually suggestive text message or e-mail with nude or nearly-nude photos. Also, 3% had forwarded nude or nearly nude photos and 17% had received a sexually suggestive text message or e-mail with nude or nearly nude photos. MTV (2009) found similar data with 1 in 10 teens and young adults ages 14 to 24 reporting they have shared a naked image of themselves and 15% have had someone send them naked photos or videos of themselves.

The Pew Internet project, a nationally representative telephone survey conducted from June, 2009 to September, 2009, found lower numbers with 4% of cell-owning teens ages 12 to 17 reporting sending a sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photo of themselves

to someone else. Researchers suspect that respondents were reluctant to admit to sexting to a researcher over the telephone. Of those who were age 17, 8% reported having sent nude or nearly nude photos. Girls and boys were equally likely to have sent photos. Teens who paid for their phones themselves had higher rates of sending photos with 17% reporting sending sexually suggestive texts versus 3% of teens who did not pay the total costs of their phones. The Pew data (Lenhart, 2009) showed that 15% of teens ages 12 to 17 had received a sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photo of someone they knew on their cell phone. Only 4% of 12-year-olds had received such photos while 30% of 17-year-olds had. Again, both boys and girls were equally likely to have received the photos.

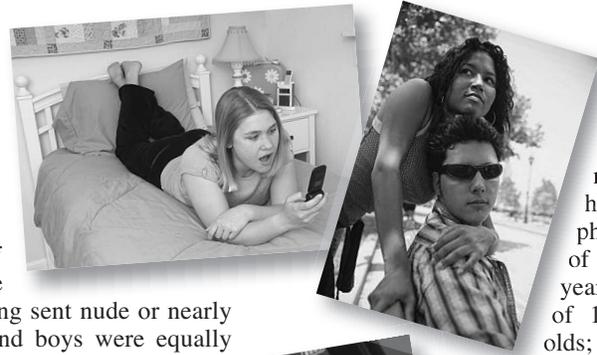
## What are the Concerns?

Researchers and commentators have discussed several concerns about sharing sexually explicit pictures. One concern is that sexual material shared between teens may promote the perception that sexual activity is expected, glamorous, and accepted. Sharing sexually explicit photos might prompt increased or early engagement in sexual activity or increased perceived pressure to engage in sexual activity. Once the image(s) is sent, the youth who sent it has no control of its eventual use.

At a June 22, 2010 online forum sponsored by the Office for Victims of Crime, Laurie Nathan commented on the potential consequences of sexting. “In addition to public humiliation, teens who have been caught sexting have been kicked off sports teams, suspended or expelled from school, and faced criminal charges for child pornography.” Nathan added that to date, no minor had been convicted on child pornography charges due to sexting and made to register as a sex offender.

## How Does Sexting Fit into Other Media Sexuality?

A wide variety of media offer teens and children the opportunity to view sexual content. Some teens apparently seek opportunities to view sexually explicit material while other teens avoid it. According to studies reviewed by Brown, et al., adolescents spend, on average per week, 12 hours watching television, 16 hours listening to music or the radio, and 12.5 hours online. Further, the average adolescent views two movies per month in a theatre and 63% read a magazine for en-



ertain-ment. Most have cell phones (52% of 12 to 13 year-olds; 72% of 14-16 year-olds; and 84% of 17 year-olds). Additionally, 38% of those between 12 and 14 and 77% of those 15-17 have a social networking profile.

Teens do not appear to appreciate the seriousness of sexting.

They mistakenly believe that because the photos are of themselves, they can not be classified as pornography. Teens fail to believe that it can be illegal to send a photo of themselves to a friend (Taylor, 2009). Meanwhile, teens are being charged with distributing child pornography, with disorderly conduct, illegal use of a minor in nudity-oriented material and similar crimes (Lenhart, 2009).

The Code of Virginia has statutes that prohibit sexting. Creating sexually explicit images of anyone under age 18 is considered child pornography and distributing such pictures is distribution of child pornography. Manufacture or distribution of child pornography is a felony and may carry sentences of 5 to 20 years. Obscenity charges are also possible. Virginia has not modified statutes to grant exceptions to adolescents.

Some ways to help educate youth about the issues involved in sexting include:

- Talk with students about Internet safety. Remind them that the photos they share will not likely remain private.
- Remind students that once something is in cyberspace, it is there permanently. Objectionable pictures or information may compromise later jobs or even college applications.
- Educate students to refrain from taking pictures of anyone without their permission.
- Let students know that sending nude photos is illegal. Even teens who have simply forwarded nude photos have been charged criminally.
- Teens should be instructed to let an adult know immediately if they receive nude photos. They should also inform the sender that the activity is illegal.
- Refer teens to awareness programs such as “It’s Your Call” created by Web Wise Kids (found at: [www.web.wisekids.org](http://www.web.wisekids.org)).

*References Available Upon Request or on the Website*



# Prevention of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a form of social cruelty that is often psychologically and emotionally devastating.

Found mainly in adolescent years, it can affect victims in a profound way. Degrading, threatening, and sometimes sexually explicit messages are conveyed to the victim willfully and repeatedly. While it has its roots in traditional bullying, technology allows the cruelty to flourish in distinct ways that create numerous challenges. For example, cyberbullying can be anonymous in nature and allows participation by an infinite audience (Shariff & Hoff, 2007).

Cyberbullying includes electronic bullying through e-mail, instant messaging, in chat rooms, on a Web site (Web pages; blogs), or through digital messages or images sent to a cellular phone. More recently, youth have been bullied via portable gaming devices, in 3-D virtual worlds, and in social gaming sites. Cyberbullying is somewhat different than traditional bullying as it can be anonymous and can affect the child or adolescent everywhere. Cyberbullying is often perpetrated by other youth, but there are also cases where adults have bullied children and youth. Readers should note that there is debate about whether to include adults who bully children and youth who bully adults such as teachers in the definition of cyberbullying (Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2008). Cyber harassment and cyber stalking are terms that can be applied to adult behavior.

Methods of cyberbullying can be direct or indirect. Direct methods include sending messages to the victim. These might be simply be mean messages or could include death threats or taunts. A website might be created about the victim or victims where negative messages are posted. For example, a site might include a number of individuals with comments about whether the youth are "hot or not." Indirect methods include hacking into the victim's account and sending out harassing, inappropriate and hateful messages in the name of the victim. Recipients assume the inappropriate messages are coming from the victim. Another form of harassment involves repeatedly reporting the victim to the internet service provider by clicking the "warning" button on the instant messenger screen. When a sufficient number of individuals send warnings, the victim's account is terminated. If the target (victim) became angry and responded to harassment in an irate manner, it can appear that the target is the one sending objectionable content.

Cyberbullying is different from traditional bullying in several ways. For example, a single youth or adult can communicate with a victim using multiple identities and multiple e-mail addresses, making it appear that many people are harassing the victim. The identity

of the bully can be obscured or hidden, making the victim feel that he or she has no one to trust. Cyberbullies can also post information about the victim that places him or her at risk. They can, for example, advertise their victim for sex. Images and information posted on line can be accessed by anyone with a computer. Traditional bullying requires the victim and bully being physically in the same space; cyberbullying is possible 24/7, at the convenience of the bully. Moreover, there may be no bystanders or witnesses to the events.

## Why is Cyber bullying more prevalent than traditional bullying?

Some aspects of new technologies increase the likelihood of harassment and exploitation. First, electronic bullying can be anonymous whereas in traditional bullying, the victim knows who the aggressor is. It takes less time and energy to cyberbully. The anonymity means that some persons will be uninhibited. Youth may find it more difficult to control their impulses on line. "There is power in being anonymous, in assuming a false identity, in having the ability to spread rumors and lies to a wide audience, and in being able to harass a victim anywhere and anytime" (Kowalski et al., 2008, p. 62).

Supervision is lacking in cyberspace, especially for personal messages sent between individuals. There is no adult to intervene, to correct the bully, or to redirect escalating exchanges. Since the cyberbully and the victim do not see each other, the cyberbully may convince himself or herself that the victim is not really harmed. There are no cues about when "enough is enough" (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Even so, Dr. Hinduja comments, "We don't believe that cyberbullying is more prevalent than traditional bullying. It is simply more visible."

## Who are victims and perpetrators?

Cyberbullying seems to occur frequently. Depending upon which survey is consulted, anywhere from 9 to 43% of children and youth report being the recipient of cyberbullying or online harassment (Cox Communications, 2010; Finkelhor et al., 2009; studies cited in Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; studies cited in McAuliff, 2008 and in Lewis, Miller & Buchalter, 2009). Surveys have also shown that between 7 and 30% of youth admit to online bullying of others (Finkelhor et al., 2009; studies cited in Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; studies reviewed in Lewis, et al., 2009). Although most cyberbullying occurs in adolescent years, cyberbullying can begin young. Children begin to use the Internet by kindergarten and victimization by cyberbullying can start as early as second grade. By middle

school, students as a group have engaged in or experienced all known forms of cyber-abuse and online aggression (Lewis, et al., 2009). Unlike traditional bullying where the risk peaks during middle childhood (with the highest incidence in 6- to 9-year-olds), the peak risk for cyberbullying is ages 14 to 17 (Finkelhor et al., 2009).

Unlike traditional bullying where boys are more frequently involved, the number of girls and boys who use the Internet to harass their peers appears almost equal. Cyberbullies often have multiple psychosocial issues such as being victims of traditional bullying; having a poor relationship with their caregiver; a pattern of delinquency; and frequent substance abuse (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2000). However, girls are more likely to be the recipients of cyberbullying (Finkelhor et al., 2009).

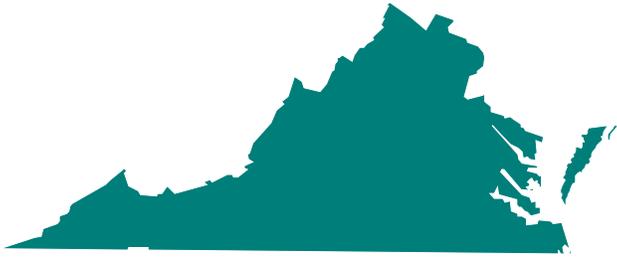
Why are girls experiencing and participating in cyberbullying more frequently than in traditional bullying? Drs. Hinduja and Patchin (2009), offer some possible reasons. Since cyberbullying is text-based and girls tend to be more verbal, it may appeal to them more than to boys. Also, girls tend towards "social sabotage" such as gossip and spreading rumors more frequently than boys and these activities lend themselves to cyberspace. Girls are less confrontational as well, according to Drs. Hinduja and Patchin, and communicating online allows them to act flagrantly from a "safe" setting. Cyberspace may free girls of constraints that prevent them from being active in traditional bullying. Finally, the social support that girls seek can be marshaled more easily on cyberspace.

Victims may be reluctant to report cyberbullying, fearing that their own computer and cell phone privileges may be lost (studies cited in Shariff & Hoff, 2007). In 2005, Hinduja and Patchin (2006), found that fewer than 10 percent of victims tell a parent and less than 5 percent tell a teacher. Dr. Hinduja comments, "Thankfully, these numbers have improved in recent years. According to data we collected in the Spring of 2010, of those who experience cyberbullying, 24.1% told a parent, 11% told a teacher, and 10.4% told another adult at school."

Youth do worry that their parents will not know how to handle the disclosure. Victims, therefore, may try to handle the problem



# Virginia's Response



In June 2006, then-Attorney General Bob McDonnell launched Virginia's Youth Internet Safety Task Force. The Task Force was comprised of distinguished technology experts, business leaders, law enforcement, legislators, concerned parents, and educators. The Attorney General directed the Task Force to convene town hall-style meetings in communities across the Commonwealth to hear about Internet safety from victims, citizens and interested parties.

The Task Force was charged with developing practical and effective ways to promote Internet safety and aid victims of Internet crimes. The Task Force was subdivided into three working groups: Law Enforcement, Technology, and Parent/Educator concerns. At each meeting there was an opportunity for the public to provide comments to the Task Force.

The Task Force convened five times from June through December 2006 in Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, Roanoke and Central Virginia. Meetings included presentations by experts in particular subjects related to Internet safety, after which the Task Force divided into their working groups to make findings, create recommendations, and address questions posed by the Attorney General, the public and other members of the Youth Internet Safety Task Force. A review of their report is on page 9.

## Virginia's Laws

According to the Virginia Youth Safety Internet Task Force (2006), the Virginia Code addresses two main areas of child exploitation: the sexual solicitation of children and child pornography. Virginia law prohibits the use of a communications system to solicit a minor in order to commit sexual conduct such as sodomy, commit indecent liberties if the child is less than 15 years of age, and manufacture, distribute, or possess child pornography. Law enforcement officers across Virginia routinely pose as children in Internet chat rooms to catch predators. The number of arrests is on the rise, as well as public awareness of the issue.

According to the Task Force Report, in 2006, Virginia law failed to protect children ages 15-18 from most sexual solicitations. It also gave courts broad discretion when sentencing criminals, allowing a judge to suspend all of a sexual predator's prison time. This led to inconsistent sentences across the Commonwealth at that time. The **Youth Internet Safety Task Force** confronted these problems

with recommended legislation.

The Virginia Code also prohibits the possession, distribution, production, and reproduction of child pornography. Then-Attorney General McDonnell's 2006 legislative package criminalized facilitating payment for online child pornography and made such practice a felony. Virginia's laws attacked the child pornography problem from both the "supply side" and the "demand side." Yet, the child pornography laws failed to provide for mandatory minimum sentences for sexual predators. The variety of sentences handed down around Virginia necessitated statutory revision. The Task Force addressed this need.

As a result of the Task Force, legislative changes were enacted. Several bills resulted in amendments to offer stronger laws to protect children.

SB 1071 (Internet Safety Omnibus Bill) amended several statutes to:

- Require convicted sex offenders to register e-mail addresses and online user names with the Virginia State Police within 30 minutes of obtaining the address or user name.
- Make viewing child pornography on the Internet a crime.
- Create mandatory minimum sentences for distribution and production of child pornography.
- Add a new crime of online solicitation for indecent liberties with a minor ages 15-17 and mandatory minimum sentences.

SB 1239 (Bail and Forfeiture)

- Created a presumption of no bond for those charged with production of child pornography and online solicitation of a minor.
- Allows for forfeiture of equipment/tools used in the production, distribution, and possession of child pornography and online solicitation of minors.

HB 2953 (Administrative Subpoena)

- Allows attorneys for the Commonwealth to quickly issue administrative subpoenas to Internet service providers for subscriber information related to accounts used in child exploitation crimes.

HB 3017 (Internet Safety Fund)

- Created an Internet Safety fund, controlled by the Office of the Attorney General, to deposit private donations towards the Internet safety educational initiatives.



**Alicia's Law- 2010 (HB 736/SB 284)**

Alicia's Law does not arise directly from the work of the Task Force. Rather, it is the result of an initiative sponsored by PROTECT, a national organization focused on the protection of children from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. In March of 2008, the Virginia legislature voted to provide Virginia's two Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task forces with \$1.5 million in new funding. The ICAC units apprehend child pornography traffickers and rescue their victims. The law is named for Alicia Kozakiewicz who at age 13 was rescued from an abductor in Virginia.

In 2010 another PROTECT initiative obtained funding for investigating Internet crimes against children in Virginia and funding for the Commonwealth's child abuse accountability data system. Details of these efforts can be found on the PROTECT website at <http://www.protect.org/>

## Investigation and Prosecution Efforts

Technologically savvy criminals are innovative. Virginia recognized the need to establish a specially trained and equipped unit skilled in the investigation and prosecution of computer and Internet crimes. In 1999, the General Assembly established the Computer Crime Section within the Office of the Attorney General. The Section is comprised of prosecutors and investigators who handle computer crime and child exploitation cases across the Commonwealth. The Section's prosecutors are also cross-designated as Special Assistant United States Attorneys and routinely bring cases in federal court.

The Computer Crime Section is a founding partner and active participant in the Richmond-based Virginia Cyber Crime Strike Force which works closely with the United States Attorneys' Offices of the Eastern and

Western Districts of Virginia and with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Postal Inspection Service, and the Virginia State Police. The Strike Force investigates and prosecutes cases involving online sexual solicitation of minors and child pornography in state and federal courts.

The Computer Crime Section has also become an important spokesman for computer crime and child exploitation awareness. Its members present an educational program titled "SafetyNet" on youth Internet safety and give talks about identity theft to schools, citizens, and law enforcement. In 2004, the Computer Crime Section received world-wide recognition after its members successfully prosecuted the nation's first felony Spam case in Loudoun County, Virginia. Its members serve on the National Association of Attorneys General executive committee addressing social networking. This group reviews social networking practices and encourages procedures to make those sites safer for children.

### Office of the Attorney General

In addition to continuing to prosecute and convict child predators in both federal and state courts, the OAG has several additional initiatives. Gene Fishel, Senior Assistant Attorney General and Chief of the Computer Crime Section, describes some of the activities. One was sponsoring the Youth Internet Safety Public Service Announcement Contest for all middle and high school youth. Students created a 30-second PSA that addressed an issue about online safety. The Attorney Gen-

eral filmed a 30-minute educational module for parents and children in cooperation with iKeepSafe and Comcast. It addressed tips for becoming safer online and was available statewide on-demand on Comcast cable.

Fishel continues, "We have developed an extensive, interactive presentation that members of the Computer Crime Section deliver to middle and high schools across the Commonwealth that focuses on the dangers of sexting, cyberbullying, and online predators." He adds, "We have also assisted the organization Enough is Enough in developing a comprehensive Internet safety module designed to target parents. We have distributed the module to hundreds of churches and religious organizations statewide." Fishel describes another accomplishment, "Most recently, we have developed an online, interactive Internet safety and educational module in cooperation with Jim Davis, the creator of Garfield, and the Virginia Department of Education. It utilizes the Garfield characters and is now available in every public elementary school in Virginia."

### Initiatives by Virginia Schools

In September 2006, the Virginia Department of Education took steps to increase awareness and understanding of Internet safety among children. In response to legislation passed by the 2006 Virginia General Assembly requiring local school divisions to teach Internet safety to students, the Department of Education developed guidelines for school divisions to follow when creating an

Internet safety curriculum. These guidelines are contained in the booklet *Guidelines and Resources for Internet Safety in Schools*, available at: [www.icsrc.org/safety/](http://www.icsrc.org/safety/)

The school internet safety component must be integrated within a division's instructional program. The website provides not only the guidelines, but many other resources as well. Jean Weller is a staff member at the Office of Educational Technology at the Virginia Department of Education. She explained that the Department of Education has published two Information Briefs since the original Guidelines were created. One is on Cyberbullying and one is on Sexting. They were created to help divisions develop appropriate policies and procedures. The Department of Education also tries to inform school divisions about resources for particular uses. On the main Internet safety page, there is a document called 'Ideas for Integrating Internet Safety into the Classroom' which includes links to lesson plans. For divisions that have difficulty finding ways to reach out to parents, Weller recommends resources such as Common Sense Media which has a solid and free outreach program.

Readers can find the Virginia Internet Safety guidelines at: <http://www.icsrc.org/safety/> This comprehensive site includes information for parents, educators, children and youth, as well as information about Virginia laws and federal laws, identity theft, cyberbullying and age-appropriate guidelines.

One exciting resource is a series of online, animated, interactive lessons for elementary

*continued on page 10*

## Official Report: Attorney General Bob McDonnell: Youth

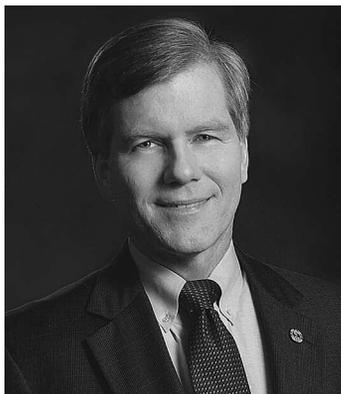
### Internet Safety Task Force, Released December 20, 2006.

Available from: Office of the Attorney General, 900 East Main Street, Richmond, VA 23219, (804) 786-2071, FAX: (804) 786-1726 or online at: [www.oag.state.va.us/KEY\\_ISSUES/FAMILY\\_INTERNET/index.html](http://www.oag.state.va.us/KEY_ISSUES/FAMILY_INTERNET/index.html)

*"...the Internet has revolutionized our lives and the way we communicate, educate, and conduct business. But here in the Internet capitol of the world, Virginia, we must do everything possible to protect the Internet from child pornographers, sexual predators, identity thieves and other criminals."*

Robert F. McDonnell

In June 2006, Attorney General Bob McDonnell launched Virginia's Youth Internet Safety Task Force. The Task Force was comprised of distinguished technology experts, business leaders, law enforcement, legislators, concerned parents, and educators. The Task Force was charged with developing practical and effective ways to promote Internet safety and aid victims of Internet crimes. The Task Force was subdivided into three working groups: Law Enforcement, Technology, and Parent/Educator concerns.



Robert F. McDonnell

Each working group developed a list of recommendations. The Law Enforcement subgroup developed proposed legislative changes including minimum sentences for sexual predators; prohibiting online solicitation of youth ages 15 to 18 (other ages of children and youth were already protected); prohibiting online viewing of child pornography; and eliminating exceptions for possession of child pornography. The Technology working group made several recommendations. They recommended the creation of a regional forensics lab to aid law enforcement and recommended changes that would improve the ability of law enforcement to obtain timely information from Internet providers. The working group on Parent/Educator concerns made recommendations for public education and about how schools should train and educate students about internet safety.

The report includes pages of resources available online about Internet safety and information and links to policies of online providers.

Another Virginia report of interest:

Childhood Sexual Assault Victimization in Virginia (2004), available from the Virginia Department of Health at: [www.vahealth.org/civp/sexualviolence](http://www.vahealth.org/civp/sexualviolence)





## Virginia's Response

continued from page 9

students, developed in cooperation with the Garfield Foundation. Weller notes that there are fewer resources for younger children. Readers can view the resulting resource at: [www.infinitelearninglab.org/](http://www.infinitelearninglab.org/)



### Blue Ridge Thunder

In 1998, Bedford County Sheriff's Office unveiled Operation Blue Ridge Thunder, the code name for the undercover cyberspace patrol, an effort to combat computer-related crimes and child pornography distributed over the Internet. The unit's success was such that the U.S. Department of Justice awarded them a grant of \$200,000 in October, 1998.

Today, Operation Blue Ridge has grown. Interest from all over America and the Commonwealth of Virginia has allowed the unit to be proactive and to collaborate with localities, the Virginia State Police, the F. B. I., and with U.S. Customs, and the U. S. Postal Inspection Service.

More information is available online: [www.blueridgethunder.com](http://www.blueridgethunder.com) or by calling (434)- 525-4725.

Safe Surfin' began in 2000 to support the educational activities of Blue Ridge Thunder.

The Safe Surfin' Foundation provides parents, teachers and school administrators, law enforcement, community groups and librarians with information and resources necessary to keep children safe and their exploration of the internet fun. Safe Surfin' has an interactive website, conducts special events and creates PSAs to help educate the public about Internet crime against children.

More information is available from: Gary Reynolds, PhD, Executive Director, Safe Surfin' Foundation, Bedford County, VA Sheriff's Office, 1345 Falling Creek Road, Bedford, VA 24523 (540) 527-SAFE (7233), E-mail: [greynolds@bedfordsheriff.org](mailto:greynolds@bedfordsheriff.org)



### Children's Advocacy Center's Annual Cyber Crimes Against Children Conference

In April, 2010, the Bristol/Washington Virginia Children's Advocacy Center sponsored their second annual Cyber Crimes Against Children Conference. The conference focused on the cyber world of adolescents and sexting. The conference offered a tract for law enforcement and prosecutors addressing cell phone investigations, trends in online exploitation, and laying the foundation for digital evidence. About 200 participants attended the conference, sponsored in part by Verizon. The focus and issues have not yet been chosen for the 2011 conference, but save the date of April 1! For more information, contact:



### Youth Internet Safety Task Force

For more information, contact:  
Office of the Attorney General  
900 East Main Street, Richmond, VA 23219, [cybercrime@oag.state.va.us](mailto:cybercrime@oag.state.va.us),  
Phone: (804) 786-2071, Fax: (804) 786-1726  
[http://www.oag.state.va.us/KEY\\_ISSUES/FAMILY\\_INTERNET/index.html](http://www.oag.state.va.us/KEY_ISSUES/FAMILY_INTERNET/index.html)

### Darkness to Light

*Darkness to Light* targets adults and places on them the responsibility of preventing child sexual abuse. The organization seeks to raise awareness and teach adults how to protect children. Children can be taught ways to help keep themselves safe, but that effort is not a replacement for adult vigilance.

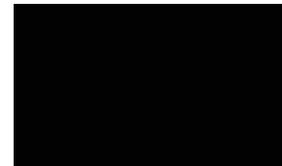
Starting in 2004, Greater Richmond SCAN began to offer the *Darkness to Light* program. The Richmond program is affiliated with the national organization which is located in South Carolina. Initially, Jeanine Harper was the sole trained staff member, but now there is a staff of five who are qualified facilitators.

*Darkness to Light* is primarily web-based, according to Harper, and provides most of its information online. Other educational methods are advertising and group presentations. The presentations usually feature at least one offender as well as survivors and others who have been affected by sexual abuse. A training session can be facilitated when there are at least 10 people who want to be trained in recognizing the signs and symptoms of child sexual abuse. Harper commented,

"If 5% of the population can be trained within the next five years, it will be very difficult for child sexual abuse to continue. There will be too many people watching and offenders will not be able to hide in the shadows."

In April, 2010, A Prevent-a-thon event was held as part of Child Abuse Prevention Month. This month-long media and public awareness campaign included news stories, events, and trainings. It emphasized the seven steps to protecting children from sexual abuse. These are:

- Step 1. Learn the facts. Understand the risks. Realities, rather than trust, should influence adult decisions.
- Step 2. Minimize opportunity by reducing "one adult/one child" opportunities.
- Step 3. Talk about it. Break the barriers to secrecy.
- Step 4. Stay alert. Don't expect obvious signs when a child has been abused.
- Step 5. Make a plan. Learn where to go, who to call, and how to react.
- Step 6. Act on suspicions.
- Step 7. Get involved. Volunteer and financially support organizations that combat child abuse.





# Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse prevention is most effective if approached at multiple levels. Wurtele (2009) suggests conceptualizing the prevention of child sexual abuse as a process of reducing risk factors and building protective factors in the potential perpetrator, in the potential victim, in families, and in the community. She suggests that success depends upon all sectors, not simply individuals, sharing responsibility for safety of children.

## The Extent of the Problem

In October, 2009, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency prevention published a comprehensive national survey on children's exposure to violence (Finkelhor et al., 2009). The survey was conducted between January and May, 2008. Youth ages 10 to 17 were interviewed by telephone and adult caregivers were interviewed for children under age nine. The interview sample (n= 4,549) was a nationally-representative sample (n= 3,053) and an oversample of telephone exchanges with 70% or greater African-American, Hispanic, or low-income households. Interviews averaged 45 minutes and 279 caregiver interviews were conducted in Spanish.

Overall, 6.1 % of children surveyed had been sexually victimized in the past year and 1 in 10 over their lifetimes. Adolescents ages 14 to 17 were by far the most likely to be sexually victimized; nearly one in six (16.3%) had been sexually victimized in the last year and more than one in four (27.3%) had been sexually victimized in their lifetimes. Girls were more likely than boys to report being sexually victimized with 7.4% of girls reporting being victimized during the past year and one in eight (12.2%) reported sexual victimization within their lifetimes.

Virginia data (Simpson, Odor & Masho, 2004) is similar to national findings. Data was gathered by telephone survey from 1,769 women and 705 men. The results indicate that adolescent years are the highest risk time for male children to be sexually victimized with 61% reporting teenage years as the age of their assault. Females were more evenly split with 51% sexually victimized prior to age 13 and 49% victimized in teenage years.

## Child-focused Efforts

In response to concern about the negative short- and long-term effects of child sexual abuse, many prevention programs were developed, starting in the late 1970's. Unlike efforts to prevent neglect and to prevent

physical abuse of children (which focused on modifying caretaker behaviors and risk factors), the focus of many child sexual abuse prevention efforts was to alter the knowledge and skills of children through instruction on personal safety. Children were taught to recognize signs of "bad touching" or "confusing touching" and to run and tell a trusted adult. VCPN reviewed many of these efforts and the research on their effectiveness in Volume 65.

In a more recent review (Wurtele, 2009), the author concluded that child-focused sexual abuse prevention programs can teach children to distinguish between abusive and non-abusive situations and enhance their personal safety skills. Programs can achieve these goals without producing negative effects in children (becoming upset, suspicious, or frightened of nurturing touch). There may actually be positive side effects (such as enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence). Wurtele concluded that there is evidence that children are able to apply the information they learn to real-life situations and that the prevention programs have led to a reduced incidence of child sexual abuse cases.

Finkelhor (2009) also reviewed the empirical literature of child-focused sexual abuse prevention programs. Finkelhor states that no studies based on strong research designs have considered the question of preventing abuse. He does cite research indicating that college students who participated in school-based prevention programs were about half as likely to have been sexually abused as children who had not received training (a study by Gibson and Leitenberg, 2000). Finkelhor agrees that children learn the concepts taught and adds that children of all ages who participate in educational programs are six to seven times more likely to demonstrate protective behaviors in simulated situations when compared to children with no exposure to education. Similar to Wurtele, Finkelhor found no evidence for increased anxiety due to the safety education and few adverse reactions. Children were not more likely to misinterpret appropriate physical contact or make false allegations due to the education efforts. Instead, improvements in parent-child communication were noted.

Finkelhor (2009) notes that educational programs for children have additional goals: promoting disclosure; reducing self-blame; and mobilizing bystanders. According to Finkelhor, a meta-analysis showed evidence that child-focused educational programs result in increased disclosure. One study by Finkelhor and his colleagues found reductions

in self-blame by victims which is believed to be associated with better mental health outcomes.

Finally, Finkelhor(2009) notes that inferential support for sexual abuse educational programs comes from research on other forms of school-based prevention. A variety of programs on reducing bullying, pregnancy prevention, interpersonal skills development, and substance abuse prevention have been proven effective. They are similar to sexual abuse prevention programs in being cognitively complex, involve teaching how to make judgments, and teaching children and youth how to resist pressure.

Clearly child-focused prevention training helps in keeping children safe from sexual exploitation. There are a number of suggestions for improving child-focused efforts.

- Include teaching that it is wrong to exploit other children. Since many sexual offenders begin offending during adolescence, preventing sibling abuse, peer abuse, and abuse of younger children can be added to the goal of children detecting and reporting adult offenders.
- Promoting healthy sexuality (such as awareness of date rape for older teens) could be an added element.
- Emphasizing respect for all (one's self; other people; animals; the environment) can broaden the context of prevention of exploitation.
- Developing healthy relationship skills (communication; social skills; conflict resolution; assertiveness skills) will address broader social and emotional needs.

An advantage to these and similar ideas is that sexual abuse prevention can be incorporated into an integrated approach rather than being offered as a "stand-alone" program. Sexual abuse prevention might fit well with programs on bullying, sexual harassment, dating violence, and family violence as well as possibly with substance abuse prevention or teen pregnancy prevention. Online safety should be incorporated as well (Wurtele, 2009).

Another child-focused effort is early detection and treatment of young offenders. Many sexual offenders begin in childhood or adolescence by molesting younger children. It is less usual to begin an abusive pattern as an adult. Children and youth can now access images of sexual violence through the Internet, cell phones, video games, and iPods. Viewing such images can "normalize" the abusive behaviors for children and youth who have al-



## Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

*continued from page 11*

ready begun a pattern of victimizing others. Preventing online exploitation is discussed in the main article.

### Parent-focused Efforts

There is agreement about the need to involve parents in efforts to protect their children from sexual abuse. Parents can benefit from information about how to identify potential offenders, the types of ploys and manipulations used by offenders to gain trust with children and youth, and how to talk with their children about sexual abuse. Parents can also benefit from learning about new technology and social media that are available to children.

There are many potential advantages to parent involvement in children's education about sexual abuse. Abuse can begin at a very young age, prior to children being enrolled in formal education programs where they might be exposed to prevention training. Parents can be alert to signs and symptoms that their child is being abused. Parents can also educate their children about the importance of reporting sexualized adult behaviors. Parents can educate their children about boundaries and use "teachable moments" to reinforce concepts. Parents can individualize information for their child based on their child's language and developmental level and they can incorporate religious and family values into their teaching. They can follow up and reinforce concepts and continue to clarify ideas that may be confusing to their child. Since most sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone known to the child, parents can be active in making home environments safer for children.

While most parents make many efforts to keep their children from harm, few parents discuss sexual abuse with their children (Deblinger, et al., 2009). Finkelhor (1984) found that sexual abuse was the second-least often discussed topics from a list of 11 difficult topics (such as death; substance abuse; abortion). Parent characteristics did not often predict who might discuss sexual abuse with their children. Education, income, age, occupation, race, religion, and place of residence were not predictive of the likelihood of discussing sex-

ual abuse with children. Parents' own history of victimization was significant with 46% of parents who had been victims discussing sexual abuse with their children compared to 26% of parents with no personal history of victimization.

In 1992, Wurtele, Kwaterick and Franklin surveyed parents of preschool children. While 59% of the 375 responding parents said they had discussed sexual abuse with their preschool children, the majority of those who had initiated discussions had simply warned children about stranger abduction. Only a third of the parents who talked to their children alerted them that relatives could be perpetrators.

Recently, Deblinger, et al. (2010) surveyed 750 parents of kindergarten through third grade children in three New Jersey elementary schools. They had 289 (39%) caretakers respond to the 750 letters sent. Most children (72%) lived in two-parent homes. Their mean age was 8.5 years. The majority of caregivers (79%) had discussed sexual abuse with their child. The most common topics covered were: someone trying to lure the child into a car; someone trying to touch the child's genitals; and someone trying to tempt the child with rewards. Parental experience with sexual abuse predicted the likelihood of discussing the topic with their child. The highest rate of discussion (93.3%) occurred with caretakers who had direct experience as a victim, followed by those with indirect experience (84.8% engaging in discussion) and then those caretakers with no experience (69.7% had discussed sexual abuse with their child). For those in the no-experience group who did discuss sexual abuse with their child, caretakers discussed significantly fewer topics than did caretakers in the other groups.

Overall, these few surveys suggest that many parents do not try to educate their children about sexual abuse. Those who do try continue to focus on dangers from strangers and neglect to instruct children about the dangers of people known to them or in positions of authority or the possibility of abuse from older children and youth. Some parent efforts are brief or one-time rather than ongoing. Parents who have personally experienced sexual abuse or who know someone else who has been a victim appear significantly more likely to attempt education efforts and to protect their children.

Typically, it is difficult to deliver information to parents about sexual abuse prevention. Seminars and workshops are poorly attended (Wurtele, 2009). Innovative methods of involving parents (such as having the information included in well baby visits or early childhood intervention programs) need to be piloted. Some ideas for educating parents include:

- \* Media may be effective in reaching parents, especially if the show is engaging and popular.
- \* Educators should attempt to bring the training to the parents, at places where

parents are already gathered (such as churches; civic clubs; wellness centers or gyms; waiting areas of the public health department).

- \* Parents may be more receptive in small groups. The topic of sexual abuse prevention is difficult for many parents.
- \* Trainings for youth leaders, teachers, and volunteers could incorporate training about recognition and prevention of child sexual abuse.
- \* Libraries or children's museums might offer a display or take-away materials.
- \* Include information about Internet safety and use of technology such as cell phones and video games.

Parents have been shown to be effective in educating their children about child sexual abuse prevention (Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1995 cited in Deblinger, et al., 2010; Roberts & Miltenberger, 1999; Wurtele, et al., 1991). Further, children who received sexual abuse training both at home and at school showed greater gains than children who had only one source of training (Wurtele, Kast & Melzer, 1992).

More recent efforts have stressed parents as reporters of suspicious persons and of having parents learn to recognize grooming behaviors and protect their children from potential predators by supervision or limiting contact with questionable persons. VCPN staff was unable to locate any studies about how effective such approaches are.

### Training Professionals

Professionals who interact with children are important in the prevention of child sexual abuse. Medical professionals, teachers, recreational staff, child care providers, and others can be alert for potential problematic situations. These professionals can report suspected sexual abuse. They can help parents learn and understand prevention information. They can, as a community, hold offenders accountable. Also, they can educate children about self-protection and reporting and about the wrongfulness of peer abuse.

Prevention planning requires making choices. In times of limited resources, some suggestions include:

- Target high-risk families, especially those with problem adolescents who are at risk for run away. Homeless youth who have run away are at extremely high risk for sexual victimization.
- Support after-school programs. Whether because of dangers from the Internet or the neighborhood, boredom and lack of supervision combine to increase a child or a teen's vulnerability. After-school programs should be skill-building and provide opportunities to build self-esteem.
- School Resource Officers and other school staff can help to create safe environments at school. School and recre-

## Cordelia Anderson, MA



Cordelia Anderson's been working since 1977 to develop prevention programs in areas such as child sexual abuse and exploitation, sexual violence, and bullying. She has conducted over 2,000 presentations nationally and internationally. She started her career at the Program in Human Sexuality, and then moved in 1977 to the Hennepin County Attorney's Office as a child advocate. She created one of the first Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs, later bringing it to Illusion Theater. In 1992 she founded Sensibilities, Inc., her own training and consultation business based in Minneapolis. Anderson has co-authored educational plays and videos, created numerous prevention materials including curricula, booklets, and prevention cards, and she has been a leader in two mass media campaigns. Anderson serves on the board of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and she is Chair of the National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation. Contact Cordelia Anderson at: Sensibilities, Inc. 4405 Garfield Avenue, South, Minneapolis, MN 55419 (612) 821-6217 E-mail: cordelia@visi.com Web site: www.cordeliaanderson.com

## THE NATIONAL PLAN TO PREVENT THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

More than 30 major agencies and experts nationwide have collaborated to develop this first coordinated, collective national plan to focus on prevention to end the demand for sexual abuse and exploitation of children. The National Plan seeks not only to reduce childhood sexual abuse, it hopes to strengthen and more fully engage communities, improve response for victims, and promote better awareness-to-action. The plan endorses focusing on what adults need to do to protect vulnerable children and how to send a clear and consistent message: that sexually abusing and exploiting children is harmful and wrong.

The Plan has identified six action areas:

- Promote the use of research to guide prevention practice and also inform the public about trends and the nature and scope of child sexual exploitation.
- Increase public awareness, both of the scope of childhood sexual exploitation and of effective prevention strategies.
- Identify and reduce the factors that fuel the demand for childhood sexual abuse and exploitation. Reducing the profit motive is one part of this strategy.
- Encourage the development and implementation of local, state and national policies and organizational practices to advance primary prevention and strengthen comprehensive prevention measures (such as perpetrator prevention; engaging males and bystanders; reducing the number of runaways; countering normalization of sexual harm; reducing sexual objectifications and commoditization of children; promoting evidence-based prevention programs).
- Promote multidisciplinary and creative collaborations. Inspire and engage "Prevention Champions" who are sparks for local efforts.
- Increase funding invested in prevention in proportion to the harm done and the costs of child exploitation.

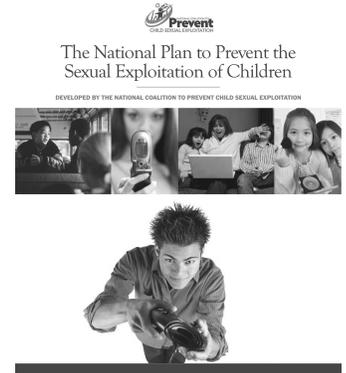
The purpose of the Plan is to help assure that all children have childhoods free from sexual abuse in both physical and digital environments. The Plan addresses the need to reduce the societal demand for commercial and individual sexual exploitation of children and outlines strategies to prevent children from being perceived and used as sexual commodities.

Cordelia Anderson is the Chair for the National Coalition. She explained that the Coalition has been active for four years. "It is a group of 34 agencies and experts and it is growing," she noted. "The National Plan was started because we recognized that in order to prevent child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, we have to move beyond only educating individuals about how to reduce their risk of victimization. We must also focus on broad social factors and change those factors that allow sexual abuse and exploitation. We needed to have agencies committed to work together. Each agency has its own prevention plan but we also needed a national plan, bigger than any one organization for everyone to follow."

Anderson addresses the challenges to prevention. She says, "One of the biggest challenges is to get people to know what prevention actually is. It is a series of activities ranging from education to building broader-based coalitions to addressing policies and organizational practices. Prevention means changing the social norms that support a society where so much abuse of women and children occurs." Anderson emphasizes the need for more education for adults on how to stop exploitation from ever being perpetrated. It is important for each service sector to identify what their particular role is in the prevention spectrum and to collaborate with others.

Anderson wants people to focus on the vision of the Plan. She states, "The vision is to keep prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation in the forefront of people's minds and hearts. If the message is powerful, then sexual exploitation for individual or commercial gain becomes socially, economically, politically, and spiritually unacceptable in our communities, in our nation and in the world."

For more information contact: National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation 4405 Garfield Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55419 (612) 824-6217, Web site: www.missingkids.com/preventioncoalition E-mail: preventioncoalition@ncmec.org



ational environments should be safe, free from bullying and cyber-bullying, and emphasize respect for diversity.

- Alternatives to expulsion from school are needed. Youth who are expelled from schools are more likely to be victimized than other students (Wordes & Nunez, 2002).
- Juveniles in the justice system, children entering foster care, and other high-risk youth should be assessed for victimization and provided appropriate services.

### Management of Sexual Offenders

A primary strategy for preventing child sexual abuse has been management of sexual offenders (Finkelhor, 2009). These strategies include sex offender registration; community notification; mandatory lengthening of sentences; and civil commitment. According to

Finkelhor, although these initiatives have approval from the public and from policy-makers, there is little evidence to show that these methods are effective (except for incarceration during the period of incarceration). Finkelhor maintains that these justice methods are based on the idea that sexual abusers are strangers and pedophiles (people who prefer pre-pubescent children), whereas the reality is that most offenders are known to the child (only 14% of sexually abused children are abused by a stranger), a third of offenders are other juveniles, half of all victims are ages 12 to 17, and risks to girls rise with age as many offenders are seducing under-age girls (a third of all adult sexual crimes against juveniles are statutory sexual offenses). Finkelhor suggests that offenders are a diverse group and that many offenders have low recidivism rates.

Management policies that may be more effective, according to Finkelhor (2009), are en-

hanced detection and arrest as well as mental health treatment for juveniles who are sexually acting out. Arrest can terminate the abusive relationship and some offenders are deterred through embarrassment and increased vigilance of social networks. Several empirical studies support the efficacy of Multisystemic Therapy, an intensive family intervention and use of cognitive-behavioral therapies for youth with sexual offending and sexual behavioral problems. VCPN reviewed the topic of juvenile sexual offending in volumes 34 and 40 and reviewed the literature concerning treatment for adult sexual offenders in volume 48.

### Trends

There are some indications that sex crimes against youth are declining. According to studies reported by Wolak et al. (2008), from

*continued on page 14*



## Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

*continued from page 11*

1990 to 2005, the number of sex abuse cases substantiated by child protective services declined 51%, along with other related indicators. Finkelhor's analysis (2009) found a 53% decline in substantiated cases from 1992 to 2005. In the National Crime Victimization Survey, the rate of sexual assaults reported by teenagers declined by 52% between 1993 and 2005. Although there is argument about why the declines have occurred, Finkelhor (2009) maintains that the declines are actual and not due to artifacts in data collection. The declines in reports of sexual abuse of children occur in a context of other reductions, including falling rates of teen pregnancy, teen suicide, physical abuse of children, run away behaviors, juvenile delinquency, and crime in general. Thus, recent trends are heartening to those who work in prevention.

### Moving towards a Prevention Perspective

Prevention experts recommend strengthening protective factors and building family and community networks to reinforce the ability of parents to create safe environments for children (Stagner & Lansing, 2009). The multidisciplinary approach combining the expertise of law enforcement, juvenile justice, mental health, educators, child protection, and other specialized professionals continues to be the most effective for prevention efforts. The addition of parents, the general public, and the larger community can enhance and extend successful models.

*References Available Upon Request  
or on the Website*

## Resources

**The Future  
of Children**  
PRINCETON • BROOKINGS



Providing research and analysis  
to promote effective policies and  
programs for children.

### ***Preventing Child Maltreatment, (Fall, 2009), The Future of Children***, volume 19, number 2

Available from: [www.futureofchildren.org](http://www.futureofchildren.org) (download for free) or a limited number of copies are available for \$24.95 from The Future of Children, 267 Wallace Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J. 08544, (609) 258-5894, E-mail: [foc@princeton.edu](mailto:foc@princeton.edu)

Contributors to this volume present the best available research on policies and programs designed to prevent maltreatment. They examine the effectiveness of community-wide interventions, parenting programs, home-visiting, substance abuse treatment, and school-based educational programs on sexual abuse. The volume explores how CPS agencies might take a more active role in prevention.



Promising  
Practices  
Network

on children, families and communities

**Promising Practices Network**  
[www.promisingpractices.net](http://www.promisingpractices.net)

The site uses standardized criteria for selection of programs that have evidence of positive effects. They list child-focused programs and teacher-training programs.



**SAMHSA's National Registry of  
Evidence-based Programs and Practices**

**SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREEP)**- <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov>

NREEP is an online registry of mental health and substance abuse interventions that have been reviewed and rated by independent reviewers. These are programs that have been scientifically tested and can readily be disseminated to the field.



**The California Evidence-Based  
Clearinghouse** for Child Welfare

CEBC

**California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse  
for Child Welfare** –

[www.cachildwelfareclearinghouse.org](http://www.cachildwelfareclearinghouse.org)

Rates treatments, interventions, and child welfare practices on the basis of efficacy as shown by scientific evidence.

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**SPECIAL  
THANKS TO...**

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**Betty Wade Coyle**

**Sameer Hindju, Ph.D.**

**Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D.**

# Prevention of Cyberbullying

*continued from page 7*

themselves. Their responses can range from blocking the bully from communicating with them, to logging off their computer, to changing their address or screen name, or to retaliating back. A few youth harm themselves in response to cyberbullying and there have been cases where victims have committed suicide.

## Prevention Ideas

Authors have proposed some prevention ideas. Shariff & Hoff (2007) suggest that schools establish standards and codes of conduct with respect to Internet use and cell phone use and define acceptable boundaries for their students' social relationships in cyber-space. Clarifying expectations has potential for decreasing cyberbullying.

A review by Lewis et al. (2009) yielded some ideas parents can use for prevention of cyberbullying. Parents have been found to vastly under-estimate their children's exposure to negative material on the Internet (when, in fact, children encounter negative material frequently). The majority of students report that parents provide no supervision of their Internet activities. However, studies suggest that parents can help their offspring avoid cyberbullies by setting expectations for online behavior and monitoring their children's Internet activities. Parents need to be alert that their child may be either the victim or the perpetrator. Parents can: discuss Internet dangers; establish an Internet-use contract with their child; use software tools such as a firewall security barrier; monitor Internet use; and supervise Internet friendships.

Hinduja and Patchin's book (2009) describes the legal complexities that can make it difficult for schools to respond to cyberbullying. There are issues of freedom of speech, especially if the cyberbullying occurs off campus. The authors review rulings in emerging cases. Despite legal complexities, the authors suggest that school administration assess the level of cyberbullying, establish clear policies (in conjunction with legal counsel), and educate students and staff. The use of peer mentoring programs and the establishment of a safe and respectful general school climate are suggested along with specific ideas of technology-based preventive techniques.

Youth and others who experience cyberbullying have some options. Protecting personal information and passwords is one basic tenant to follow. Youth can disconnect and not respond to the bully, but experts stress that simply turning off the computer is an insufficient response. Informing service providers can be helpful, as Internet providers are increasingly



The Cyberbullying Research Center serves as a clearinghouse of information concerning the ways that adolescents use and misuse technology. It is a resource for parents, educators, counselors, mental health professionals, law enforcement, and others who work with youth. The site includes facts, figures, and detailed stories from those who have been directly impacted by online aggression. In addition, the site includes numerous resources for prevention and response to cyberbullying incidents. There is also a frequently updated blog, where current events, research findings, and strategies are posted and discussed.

Sameer Hinduja, Ph.D., associate professor of criminology and criminal justice at Florida Atlantic University and Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D., an associate professor of criminal justice at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire are co-founders and directors of the Center. As graduate students at Michigan State University, the two men realized that rigorous research on cyberbullying was lacking. They began conducting a number of studies and soon realized that the misuse of technology by children and adolescents is a very complex topic. Some of their research is discussed in the article on cyberbullying, this issue.

Future research areas for the Center include sexting, electronic dating violence, online stalking, and picture blackmailing. In addition, the researchers have expressed interest in learning more about the experiences of special populations, such as individuals with Autism spectrum disorders. They are also studying the relationship between cyberbullying and suicide, self-esteem, school climate, juvenile delinquency, and youth violence.

More information is available from:

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Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D., Department of Political Science, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, PO Box 4004, Eau Claire, WI 54702 (715) 836-4058, E-mail: patchin@cyberbullying.us  
Or visit the Web site: <http://cyberbullying.us>

## ***Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying, 2009,***

by Sameer Hinduja & Justin W. Patchin, 254 pages, \$76.95,  
ISBN: 978-1-429-6688 (hardcover); \$36.95, ISBN: 978-1-4129-6689-4 (paper).  
Available from: Corwin Press, A SAGE Company, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320 (800) 233-9936, FAX: (800) 417-2466, Web site: [CorwinPress.com](http://CorwinPress.com) E-mail: [order@corwinpress.com](mailto:order@corwinpress.com)

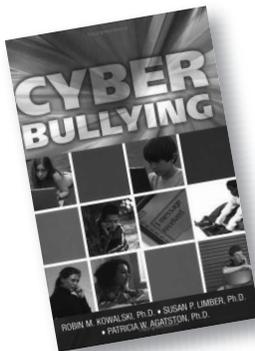
This exceptional volume was named Education Book of the Year by ForeWord Reviews. The book has all the expected information such as examples of types of cyberbullying and a summary of the literature. There are valuable chapters on legal issues and prevention. However, what makes this book special is all the "extras." There is a list of common chat and text acronyms for the uninitiated. The appendices have useful documents such as a sample "Internet Use Contract" and a "Family Cell Phone Use Contract" that a parent can negotiate with a teen. There is a Cyberbullying Assessment Instrument, useful for clinicians, researchers, and others who want to survey youth's experiences with cyberbullying. There is a "Cyberbullying Incident Tracking Form" and a "Cyberbullying Report Card for Schools" designed to check school preparedness for dealing with cyberbullying. There are tools for trainers such as games and staff development questions. Hinduja & Patchin have created a readable and useful volume that will be appreciated by school personnel, mental health professionals, parents, and policymakers alike.

Other resources by Corwin Press:

How to Stop Bullying and Social Aggression (ISBN: 978-1-4129-5811-0)

Bullying from Both Sides (ISBN: 978-1-4129-2580-8)

Working with Parents of Bullies and Victims (ISBN: 978-1-4120-5104-3)

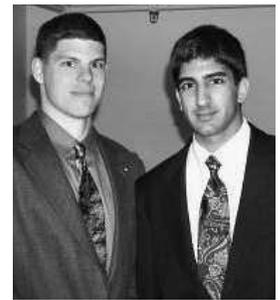


## ***Cyber Bullying: Bullying in the Digital Age,***

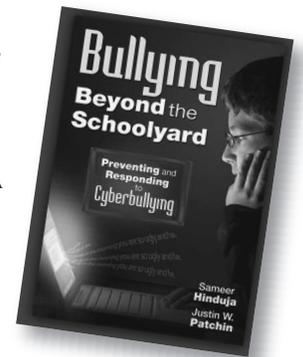
by Robin M. Kowalski, Ph.D., Susan P. Limber, Ph.D., & Patricia W. Agatston, Ph.D., 2008, 218 pages, \$ 30.95

Blackwell Publishing, Ltd. [www.blackwellpublishing.com](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com)

This volume provides an overview of both traditional and cyber bullying. There is a review of current research. There is an informative chapter for what parents can do. Laws and policies are discussed as well as litigation. The book gives parents and schools ideas for prevention. This is a practical book that addresses the spectrum of cyber bullying.



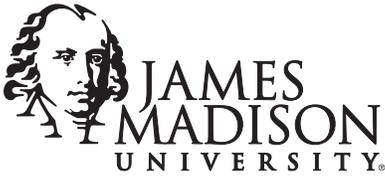
Drs. Patchin & Hinduja



**Bully-Free Virginia**

**Visit the VCPN Website: To read about what Virginia schools are doing to prevent bullying**

*continued on page 16*



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540-124



## Prevention of Cyberbullying

*continued from page 15*

requiring conditions of use and can terminate the cyberbully's account. Very serious cases may violate criminal law and can be reported to law enforcement. The civil courts might offer remedies in terms of monetary damages for defamation, invasion of privacy, and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

### The Challenges to Prevention

In a recent interview with VCPN staff, Dr. Sameer Hinduja of the Cyberbullying Research Center discussed some of the challenges to prevention. He explained, "There are two challenges today that make it difficult to prevent cyberbullying. First, many people don't see the harm associated with it. Some

attempt to dismiss or disregard cyberbullying because there are 'more serious' forms of aggression. While it is true that there are many issues facing adolescents, we first need to accept that cyberbullying is a problem that will only get more serious if ignored."

Dr. Hinduja continued, "The other challenge relates to who is willing to take responsibility for responding to inappropriate online behavior. Parents often say that they don't have the technical skills to monitor youth online behavior, teachers are afraid to intervene in behaviors that often occur off school grounds, and law enforcement is hesitant to get involved unless there is clear evidence of a crime or a significant threat to someone's physical safety." The result of confusion, lack of knowledge and hesitation, according to Dr. Hinduja, is that cyberbullying incidents may not be addressed quickly, allowing the behaviors to continue. "We need to create an environment where youth feel comfortable talking with adults about this problem and where they feel confident that meaningful steps will be

taken to resolve the situation. We need to also get everyone involved - children, teens, parents, educators, counselors, law enforcement, social media companies, and the community at large. It will take a concerted and comprehensive effort from all of these stakeholders to make a difference in reducing cyberbullying," concludes Dr. Hinduja.

### In Conclusion

Cyberbullying represents a new, and evolving, methodology of an old phenomenon. VCPN, volume 75 reviews the literature about traditional bullying, some of which is applicable to bullying in cyberspace. It is likely that cyberbullying will remain an area of change as schools include it in policy manuals, as legislators consider revising laws, and as courts rule on formal cases within a context of changing technology.

*References Available on the Website  
or by Request*

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