



# INTERNET SAFETY FOR FAMILIES

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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

# A MESSAGE FROM



**Attorney General  
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## Cyber Safety Matters

As Attorney General, my top priority is the safety and well-being of our community, especially our children. The digital world offers incredible opportunities but also significant risks, particularly for our young people. From cyberbullying to online enticement, children are increasingly vulnerable to various forms of digital exploitation. This comprehensive guide is designed to equip parents, guardians, and educators with the knowledge and tools necessary to protect children online. By understanding the dangers, recognizing warning signs, and implementing effective safety strategies, we can create a safer digital environment. Let's work together to ensure our children can navigate the online world securely and responsibly.

## WHAT ARE KIDS DOING ONLINE?

- 30% have used the internet in ways their parents wouldn't approve of
- 21% have visited sites where they can chat with strangers
- 17% have visited porn sites
- 11% have visited sites that offer ways to cheat on homework
- 4% have visited online gambling sites

Our children need guidance to navigate the everchanging digital age we all live in. Children can fall victim to predators, cyberbullies, and scammers on the web. We aim to provide you with the tools necessary to protect and support the young people in your life so they can reap the benefits of internet usage while avoiding the threats.



# QUICK DEFINITIONS

## **CYBERBULLYING:**

Willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices.

## **DIGITAL REPUTATION:**

The digital footprint created by all the things you say and do online, as well as what others post about you.

## **DM, OR DIRECT MESSAGE:**

Send or receive messages that are (for the sake of argument) private

## **FILE-SHARING PROGRAM:**

Enables the direct share of a file, like a movie, photograph, or audio file

## **GEOLOCATION SERVICES:**

Shares your location with friends or even the public

## **GROOMING:**

When adults manipulate minors into sexual relationships

## **LIVE STREAM:**

Interactive video created and viewed in real-time

**ONLINE ENTICEMENT:**

When adults pretend to be kids with intent to abduct or forge a sexual bond

**PREDATORY OFFENDER:**

Someone who uses the Internet to connect with minors for sex

**SG-CSAM:**

Self-Generating Child Sexual Abuse Material, or explicit material of a child taken by the child

**SEXTING:**

Use of text or instant message to send sexual messages, images, and videos

**SEXTORTION:**

When children are threatened or blackmailed, often with possibility of sharing nude or sexual images of them, by a person who demands sexual content/activity or money

# DID YOU KNOW?

## FAST FACTS

- While the majority of sexual solicitations occur among older teens, kids as young as 9 have received inappropriate solicitations online
- A groomer might take months to solicit your child for sexual content, or they might be able to acquire explicit material within minutes of meeting online
- Recent studies suggest that less than 20% of teens have sexted, while more than 30% have received a sext
- Sextortion is a trend mainly targeting male children and can happen over the course of a few minutes
- Nearly 50% of teens have been cyberbullied, while roughly 14.4% have admitted to cyberbullying others
- Most teens who died by suicide due to cyberbullying were bullied both at school and online; however, suicide is rare and is often the result of a combination of factors, including mental illness and depression

## HAVE HONEST CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR CHILD THAT:

- Provide accurate information they can trust
- Set boundaries on what to post and not post
- Help them understand the risks involved
- Establishes what's appropriate vs. inappropriate behavior
- Empowers them to say no, block accounts, and tell the truth

*Fear is not an effective tactic.*

## WHAT IS APPROPRIATE ONLINE?

**Rule of Thumb:** If it's not okay to do offline, it's not okay to do online.

### **Inappropriate Content:**

- Bullying someone online
- Offensive language
- Hate speech
- Threats of violence
- Underage drinking or drug use
- Geolocation of school, home address, or favorite places
- Passwords or information related to passwords
- Private family information
- Live streams from their bedroom or secluded places

# WHAT'S INAPPROPRIATE?

## CHILDREN ENGAGE IN SEXTING BECAUSE THEY MIGHT...

- Think it's funny to share with friends
- Be trying to impress a crush
- Be responding to peer pressure/threats
- Be experimenting with relationships or sexual behavior
- Believe it's a sign of growing up
- Feel pressured to make snap decisions
- Perceive a benefit, or a rush of adrenaline
- Believe this something all teens do (even though roughly 80% of teens do not engage in sexting)

## POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF POSTING INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT:

- Damage to relationships, reputation, and standing with your school
- Can result in suspension from school, sports, or clubs
- If it's illegal, it can result in being charged with a crime
- Can come back to haunt you, whether it's related to college, scholarships, or future employment
- Increases risk of identity theft, online scams, and hacking
- Can be a major source of embarrassment, shame, guilt, rumors, gossip and humiliation



# CYBERBULLYING

## WHAT DOES CYBERBULLYING LOOK LIKE?

- Sending mean texts to a fellow child, which can be threatening or even harassing
- Altering a picture in some way with the goal of embarrassing or shaming someone
- Creating a fake social media profile with altered images meant to shame someone
- Posting videos or images meant to embarrass someone
- Spreading rumors or gossip online
- Resharing images to humiliate someone
- Forcing someone to humiliate or harm themselves

## THE DANGERS OF CYBERBULLYING:

- This content can spread far and wide thanks to social media, and much faster than in-person bullying, causing significant damage to the individual being bullied
- Can involve a wider audience with unlimited shares, meaning that it can follow a person online indefinitely
- Children cannot escape digital bullying as it follows them home as well as through time, occurring 24/7 online
- Can cause depression, anxiety, loneliness, suicidal ideation, low self-esteem, social isolation, substance use, insomnia, and more



## SIGNS YOUR CHILD IS BEING CYBERBULLIED:

- They suddenly stop using their computer or cellphone
- They are nervous when receiving an email, message, or text
- They don't want to go to school, or get anxious when they must attend
- They've isolated themselves from others, including family and friends
- You've noticed significant mood changes

## SIGNS YOUR CHILD IS A CYBERBULLY:

- Using the computer at all hours of the night
- Laugh excessively while online
- Avoid discussions about that they're doing
- Makes harmful or belittling jokes about others
- Complete lack of empathy
- Shows problems with authority figures

## HELP YOUR CHILD AGAINST CYBERBULLYING:

- **Be supportive.** Be the safe adult that your child can turn to if they find themselves in this situation, or worse. If your child comes to you, take them seriously but also stay calm.
- **Save the evidence.** Take screenshots, print messages, and collect proof for the school or even law enforcement.
- **Block bullies.** Tell your child not to respond to messages from a cyberbully and help them block the accounts involved.
- **Set up new accounts.** Help your child create new accounts online with stronger privacy features. Tell them to only share this information with friends they trust.
- **Talk to the school.** Most cyberbullying involves fellow classmates, which is why you should discuss these exchanges with teachers and administrators for further support.
- **Report it.** You can report cyberbullying to the website, app, or social media platform, as well as the CyberTipline.

# GENERAL RULES

## GENERAL RULES & GUIDELINES:

- **Keep conversations public** on mainstream platforms, not private ones like **Signal**. Explain that someone suggesting a move to a more private space to continue a conversation may not have the best intentions.
- **Have open discussions** about online friend lists and what they discuss on digital platforms. Keep in mind that friendships may be forged worldwide, focused around common interests. Transparency is necessary to weed out predators who may ask increasingly personal and potentially inappropriate questions.
- **Create safety parameters** for your child's digital life. This can include monitoring the privacy settings on their devices, learning about reporting options for various websites and platforms, helping them create strong passwords, and finding ways to monitor their activity without making them feel as if they have no privacy. You should also have a discussion about images they can share online or even in private messages.

## GENERAL RULES & GUIDELINES:

- **Teach your children** how to identify if someone who has bad intentions or is not why they say they are, how to say no to them, and tell an adult they trust so the experience can be reported to NCMEC immediately, which will then alert law enforcement.
- **Set a code of conduct** for your children, which includes:
  - Never giving out personal information, such as their name, address, or phone number online.
  - Never chatting with strangers or meeting someone in-person that you've only met online.
  - Never opening emails from people that you do not know
  - Never posting something online that they would not want their friends, family members or teachers to see.
  - Always complying with time limits for being online.
  - Always being respectful to others online.
- **Support your child** and reaffirm that it is not their fault if they get extorted or if images they shared are publicly released, even if they made the mistake of sharing compromising images.

## GENERAL RULES & GUIDELINES:

- **Discuss resharing content** which may harm others, such as sexual content another child has shared. Make it clear that this action can cause significant harm to another person, but also that it is a major violation of trust that exposes another person to bullying, ridicule, shame, or worse.
- **Teach your child** that they have a digital reputation. Explain that, once a photo or statement is posted online, they have no control over how it might be shared or posted. Help them understand that there is always someone behind the screen, and that their behavior online has real-world consequences. Inappropriate content can lead to trouble at school and even with the law.



## SEE THE SIGNS?

If you see these signs, talk to your children. Learn what they're doing online, who they are talking to, and get help if you suspect something is wrong. If you discover that your child is having inappropriate conversations or relationships online, file a report with the website or app on which these conversations have taken place, contact the [www.CyberTipline.org](http://www.CyberTipline.org), and engage with law enforcement.

## WHAT TO DO IN CASES OF SEXTORTION:

- Do not comply with demands.
- Do not delete your account (that destroys important evidence).
- Contact the social media platform, app or website to inform them.
- Report it to CyberTipline, even if you're already reported it to the app in question. This will ensure law enforcement in your area gets involved.
- If sexual content has been posted online, go to <https://takeitdown.ncmec.org> to get help removing it from the Internet.
- NOTE: Even if your child does not engage in sextortion attempts, still report the attempt.

# RED FLAGS

## RED FLAGS:

- Someone sends a friend request then immediately starts asking for photographs and selfies
- Excessive flattery followed by making the child feel guilty or ashamed
- Sending your child gift cards, cellphones, and other gifts related to their interests
- Asking your child to keep secrets
- Manipulating the child to turn against family and friends: “they don’t understand you like I do”
- Talking about adult subjects like dating, sex, and pleasure
- Blackmailing the child with their own content, secrets, or choices
- Asking to meet face-to-face

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

- Gifts sent to them through the mail
- Unknown numbers calling
- Your child minimizing or hiding their screen as you approach
- Your child rejecting family and friends, preferring to be online
- Your child getting upset when they can’t access the Internet



## PROS AND CONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

### PROS:

- Allows your teen to express themselves creatively.
- Helps teens connect with their peers, both locally and globally, creating a sense of belonging and community.
- Promotes healthy socialization, especially for those experiencing social isolation in real-life settings.

### CONS:

- Can distract from homework, exercise and family activities. Can disrupt sleep.
- Can expose teens to cyberbullying, predators, scammers, and misinformation.
- Can damage mental health by helping teens form views about people's lives and bodies that are not true. Comparison is the thief of joy.

### HOW TO HELP:

- Set healthy rules and limits. Keep social media off-limits at certain times, such as before bedtime and during family meals.
- Turn on privacy settings.
- Monitor your teen's accounts by following or "friending" them.
- Talk about social media regularly. Clearly explain what is okay and not okay to post.

# TIKTOK

## TIKTOK TIPS:

TikTok is a platform for creating, sharing and watching short videos and live streams. It has become extremely popular, but the app also poses certain dangers to young people such as social media addiction, issues with self-esteem and body image, cyberbullying, and exploitation. Consider these tips to protect your teen:

- Enable Family Pairing and parental controls. If your child is under the age of 13, block the app from their phone. TikTok's family pairing feature allows you to link your account to your teen's to enable content and privacy settings.
- Users who are over age 16 automatically have public accounts. Encourage your child to set their account to private.
- Limit your child's content. TikTok's "Restricted Mode" limits content that may not be appropriate for all audiences.
- Limit screen time. TikTok offers a feature called "Digital Well-being" which allows you or your teen to set time limits for scrolling. This will prevent over-scrolling and addiction.
- Consider disabling messaging. Messaging is allowed for users over age 16. This feature can be disabled in privacy settings.



## CONSIDER THESE STRATEGIES:

- Keep your child's computer or internet capable device in a common area of the home to monitor internet activity
- Make computer time a part of family time to have the opportunity to teach safe internet habits
- Check your child's browser history frequently.
- Use security software and tools
- Activate privacy features through your browser or internet service provider
- Know what other computers or devices your child is using (e.g. school-issued devices, public devices)
- Help your child create unique and strong passwords and know their passwords
- Be a good digital role model by knowing when to unplug and by modeling kind and ethical online behavior

## REPORT IT!

NCMEC's CyberTipline is the nation's centralized reporting system for the online exploitation of children. The public and electronic service providers can make reports of suspected online enticement of children for sexual acts, child sexual molestation, child sexual abuse material, child sex tourism, child sex trafficking, unsolicited obscene materials sent to a child, misleading domain names, and misleading words or digital images on the Internet. Children, family members, friends, and professionals can report to our CyberTipline at [www.CyberTipline.org](http://www.CyberTipline.org).



## LINKS:

### **Is Your Explicit Content Out There?**

<https://www.NCMEC.org/gethelpnow/isyoudropexplicitcontentoutthere>

### **Take It Down**

<https://www.NCMEC.org/takeitdown>

### **Sextortion - Learn More**

<https://www.NCMEC.org/theissues/sextortion>

### **Get Help/Victim & Family Support**

<https://www.NCMEC.org/gethelpnow/support>

### **Resources for Survivors of Sexual Abuse Material**

<https://www.NCMEC.org/gethelpnow/csam-resources>

### **No Filter**

<https://nofiltr.org>

### **Amaze**

<https://amaze.org>

# RESOURCES

## ABOUT THE LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

If you are seeking justice for yourself in a personal, corporate, or family matter, you try to get the best legal representation. But if an entire State or its political subdivisions are injured or victimized by the federal government, a multinational corporation, or even another State -- that requires an Attorney General.

The Office of the Attorney General *is* the Louisiana Department of Justice, and we work to protect the people of Louisiana as whole. We fight for Louisiana's natural resources, investigate fraud, secure justice for our most vulnerable, and so much more.

We also provide educational content meant to help you make wise choices based on guidance you can trust. With that in mind, we hope this guide to Fair Housing has been enlightening and instructive; but should you need more information, please feel free to reach out to our office or your local parish representative.

ABOUT  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
LIZ MURRILL



AG Liz Murrill is committed to defending the rule of law and protecting the people of our State. She has argued multiple cases before the U.S. Supreme Court and served as lead counsel in many cases challenging federal overreach, ranging from open border policies and attacks on religious liberty to COVID-19 mandates and First Amendment violations. With more than 30 years experience working in state and federal government, including eight as Louisiana's first Solicitor General, Liz Murrill has been a champion for women, children, and victims demanding justice. Now she is leading the fight to preserve our rights, our industries, and Louisiana's unique way of life. You can learn more at [www.AGLizMurrill.com](http://www.AGLizMurrill.com).



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