

# CYBERBULLYING

## Warning Signs, Prevention and How to Help Your Child

### What is cyberbullying?

People using their words or pictures to bully others. They send e-mails, pictures, text, voice or Instant Messages (IM) to embarrass, humiliate, threaten or intimidate people.

### What do cyberbullies do?

- Post mean messages or unflattering pictures on websites
- Act tough and/or threaten others in their messages
- Intentionally exclude someone from an online group
- Create fear by sending offensive messages and engaging in threatening activities
- Pretend to be someone else and post material to hurt a person's reputation and feelings
- "Dissing" someone online by spreading rumors or posting false information

### Examples of Cyberbullying:

1. Juan got a cell phone for his 10th birthday. After a couple of weeks he started getting mean text messages from a boy at school named Kent. At first he ignored it, but he kept getting them and he started to get worried. Kent demanded that Juan meet him after lunch each day and pay him money. That's when Juan decided to delete the messages without telling anyone. Kent threatened to tell a teacher that Juan was bullying him.
2. A man created a blog entry making fun of his 8-year-old neighbor and his behaviors. The blog was discovered and the website address was passed around to others.
3. A 13-year-old girl named Carla was being bullied by 2 boys who set up a website to attack her. Carla was embarrassed and did not tell her parents.

## **WARNING SIGNS: Your child may be a victim of cyberbullying if he or she...**

- Unexpectedly stops using the computer
- Appears nervous or jumpy when an instant message or email appears
- Avoids discussions about what they are doing on the computer
- Becomes abnormally withdrawn from friends and family
- Appears uneasy about going to school or outside
- Appears to be angry, depressed or frustrated after using the computer

## **WARNING SIGNS: Your child may be cyberbullying others if he or she...**

- Quickly switches screens or closes programs when you walk by
- Uses the computer at all hours of the night
- Gets very upset if he/she cannot use the computer
- Laughing excessively while using the computer
- Avoids discussions about what they are doing on the computer
- Using multiple online accounts or using an account that is not theirs

## **How can I help my child prevent being bullied?**

- Monitor what they are posting on their websites and cell phones. Check if they are using them appropriately.
- Remind your child:
  - ✓ Do not write messages or post pictures when they're angry.
  - ✓ If they can't say something face-to-face, **DON'T** post it online.
  - ✓ **DO NOT** post rumors about other people.
  - ✓ Treat others online the way you want to be treated.
  - ✓ Don't give out private information.
  - ✓ To ask their friends not to give out their private information.

## **What should I do if my child is being bullied?**

- Tell your child it's okay to tell you if bullying is happening.
- Ask to see the messages or pictures being posted.
- Don't delete the messages. They may be needed to take action.
- Tell your child not to respond to messages from bullies.
- Tell your child to not try to get even with the bully.
- If your child is being bullied in chats or IM, help your child block the bully.
- Contact the website or cell phone provider if you have problems stopping the harassment.
- **Contact the police if the cyberbullying involves threats of violence, coercion, intimidation based on hate or bias, or any form of sexual exploitation.**