



Keeping Children Safe Online

Preventing and responding to sexual harm over the internet

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Getting started:

- This training includes sensitive information that may be difficult to hear; please reach out if you need support!
- Feel free to ask questions in chat or directly.
- A link/QR code to an evaluation will be provided at the end of today's webinar.

Thank you to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and Thorn! Much of the content of this presentation was adapted from and includes their important prevention work and research.



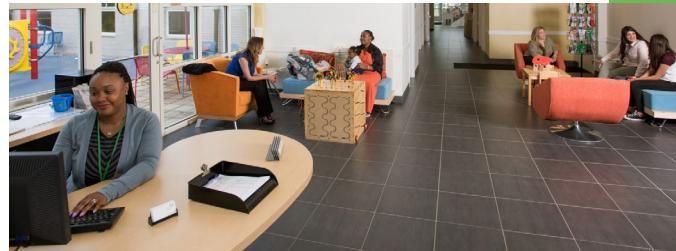
Today's agenda:

- *Framing the issue – prevalence and ChicagoCAC's perspective*
 - Warning signs, kinds of online harm and impact of online abuse
 - Understanding how youth interact online
 - Prevention tips and conversation starters



Who is ChicagoCAC?

- With our partners, we respond to reports of child sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect/maltreatment, and child witnesses to violence in Chicago.
- We provide children with a safe place to share their story in their own words with experts who will listen to them, protect them and help them heal.
- ICAC units onsite – many cases involve technology



Framing the issue



The Size of the Problem

- 2020: 21.7 million reports to NCMEC
- 2023: OVER 36 MILLION reports to NCMEC

And these are just reports....

- 49% of youth report a potentially harmful online experience
- ~1 in 3 report an online sexual interaction

Plus...teen mental health is at a crisis point

- Recent research links increased screen time – gaming, social media – with increased risk of suicide



Spectrum of kids' online behaviors: examples



Cyberbullying, harassment,
exploitation

Concerning relationship with
devices, exploring inappropriate
material

Healthy online boundaries,
interactions with known
same-age peers



Recognize Warning Signs

- Sudden, atypical excessive amount of screen time
- Extreme emotions related to devices or aspects of internet use like messages
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Minimizing screen or turning off monitor when others enter the room
- Communicating with or receiving gifts in mail from unknown persons
- Blank browser history
- Children having new accounts/private passwords



Reporting Online Abuse

- www.cybertipline.org or 1-800-THE-LOST
 - *Take It Down*
- Chicago Police Department's Internet Crimes Against Children Unit: 312-492-3810
- In-app reporting options
- Schools and other authorities



What we know about youth online behavior



What are the ways in which we are online?

- **Personal devices:** Computers, smart phones, tablets
- **Communication:** Apps, email, messaging, texting
- **Activities:** Games and game system consoles, livestreams, AI
- **Images:** Photos, videos, webcams, security systems

We are more online than ever before



Who we want youth to connect with:

- People we know in person
- People of similar age
- People we trust

BUT

- Kids make connections online all the time
- People can pretend to be whoever they want online
- People we know in real life can hurt us online too



Messages and Conversation Starters



Prevention
conversations should
happen early and often.



Conversation starters

- “Block, unfriend or report anyone sending an unwanted sexual request”
- “Tell me about the game you are playing from beginning to end. Is there anyone else playing it with you? How do you earn points?”
- “You won’t get in trouble for coming to me with your concerns about things that happen online”
- “Sexting when you are under 18 is problematic - it’s important to understand that taking nude photos of yourself or sending nude photos of friends can have big consequences”
- “You have the right to say ‘NO’ to anyone who asks you to do something online that makes you uncomfortable, even if it’s someone you know”
- “Someone who pressures you to talk about or do something sexual online is not someone you should trust”



General recommendations for professionals and caregivers)

- Highlight importance of “unplugged” and social time
- Use small doses of open and direct communication about online safety over many months
- Be aware that restriction will increase curiosity
- Be mindful of youth privacy when sharing images



Online Safety Messages for Youth: What to Do

- Identify a trusted adult that you can talk to about online safety
- If a friend tells you about online harm, help them with what to do next
- Report anything that makes you uncomfortable
- Don't respond to threatening emails or messages; tell a trusted adult what's happening
- Use a screen name; not gender specific (or use initials)



Messages to share with Grades K - 2

- Strangers are strangers; we're only friends online with people we know in person
- Don't open messages when you don't know senders
- Tell a trusted adult if something happens
- No personal information
- No meeting in person
- You can say "NO" to things online that make you uncomfortable



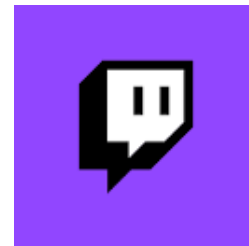
Messages to share with grades 3-5

- All of K-2 knowledge
- Never send mean messages
- Don't download things without permission
- Passwords are like keys to your house – don't lose or share them
- Create a strong password



Messages to share with middle grades and beyond

- Discuss how difficult is it to tell if someone is misrepresenting themselves online
- Things online linger or can be reshared
- Cyberbullying is just as bad or worse than regular bullying
- How to speak up if you're a bystander or if you know of online abuse
- Danger of computer viruses



Ask yourself

Do I like what this says about me?

How could this impact my future?

Could this get me in trouble?

Who might I hurt?

Would the adults in my life think this is appropriate?

How would it feel if someone did it to me or someone I love?



Source: Netsmartz Online Middle School Safety Presentation, NCMEC, 2023

Online Safety Messages for Youth: What NOT to do

- Don't send (or limit sending) personal photographs
- Don't move conversations to a private platform
- Don't share your passwords or device
- Don't share or use your real address
- Do not open links/files from unknown sources
- Do not respond to inappropriate messages or advertisements
- Don't delete threatening or inappropriate messages
- NEVER reshare explicit content
- NEVER offer to meet someone you have met online in person
- NEVER try to handle abuse or extortion by yourself



Recommendations to share with caregivers: *internet use by age*

- **Under 5** – limit screen time, be present and engaged with internet use, monitor access
- **5 – 10** - Be present and engaged with internet use, such as “let’s work on your homework assignment together” or “let me show you how to use Google to search.”
- **10+** - Stay engaged even when screen time becomes independent, including reviewing browser history and visiting youth’s social media pages



Recommendations to share:

communication

- Create open communication
- Avoid shaming or blaming, say something like “if you see something upsetting online, come to me so I can help you... you won’t get in trouble”
- Talk about relationships and what is okay to share, such as “online friends are people we actually know in person”
- Talk directly about issues and consequences around cyberbullying, sexting, consent, pornography, privacy, boundaries, strangers
- Understand that curiosity about bodies and human reproduction are normal– this can creep into online searches. Be prepared to address curiosity as normal but discuss safety issues with exploring curiosity online.



Recommendations to share with caregivers: boundaries

- Create rules for internet usage and keep them consistent and enforced
 - *No internet during bedtime or sleeping hours*
 - *Use screens in public areas/no screens in bedrooms*
- Model boundaries with devices
- Create unplugged family and social time



Recommendations to share with caregivers:

safety and privacy

- Privacy is **not** a right when it comes to devices/internet
- Regularly review browser history and messages
 - *You can openly talk about it and kids can be aware you do this*
- Monitor youth internet use
- Maintain a good internet filter/parental controls
- Bookmark appropriate sites that you feel comfortable with your family visiting.



Recommendations to share with caregivers:

safety and privacy

- Create strong passwords for accounts
- Never share personal information online
- Do not post nude or partially nude pictures of any children online, including your own.
- Keep your social media accounts set to private
- Learn how you can report concerns or inappropriate content to companies and authorities



Tips from Teens Themselves

- Find the sweet spot where you take the positive and leave the negative
- Be conscious of how you spend your time
- Add “friction” to make it harder to access
- They WANT caregivers involved

"I would tell young people ... the internet is far off from reality and the more time you spend on it, the more you forget what real life is actually like."

"Don't let social media control your life or your self-esteem."



Disclosures



Why It May Be Hard To Talk to An Adult

- You're afraid to lose online access
- You may not think an adult can help
- You can't find a safe adult
- It may be awkward to have a conversation
- You're worried about blame or anger
- You feel guilty, like it was your fault – **it's not**
- You don't know how to ask for help



After a disclosure, what should you do?

- Stay calm
- Consider your body language
- Listen, listen, listen
- Avoid saying things that imply blame
- Validate feelings
- Never promise to keep it a secret
- Provide support and follow up to the child



After disclosure, what can you say?

- “I believe you.”
- “I’m sorry this happened.”
- “It’s not your fault.”
- “Telling me about this was very brave.”
- “I will do what I can to help.”
- “Thank you for telling me.”



Online Harm and Safety Measures



Cyberbullying

45% of kids report cyberbullying

- Creating a hate group about someone.
 - Posting mean comments online.
 - Photoshopping someone's photo to embarrass them.
 - Recording and posting fight videos.
 - Spreading rumors and gossip through text messages.
 - Stealing someone's identity to create a fake profile.
-
- No escape from cyberbullying
 - Can often be occurring on multiple platforms
 - May involve people who don't know the target
 - May not be taken seriously



Other Kinds of Online Harm

- Online Violence
- Inappropriate Relationships/Images
 - CSAM
 - SG/CSAM
 - Sextortion
 - AI



Abuse often starts with manipulative behaviors that escalate over time.

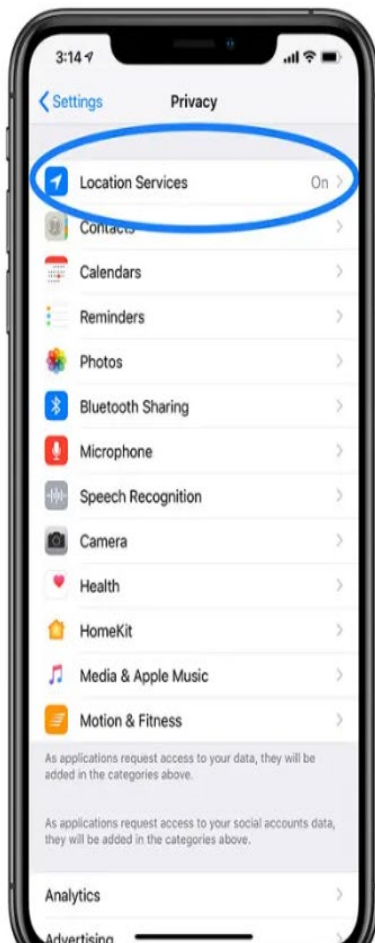
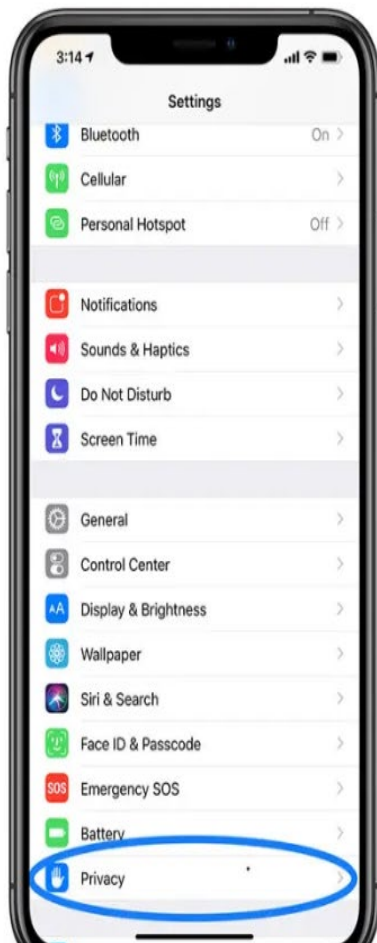
- ❏ Sends inappropriate pictures
- ❏ Wants to talk to you about sex
- ❏ Asks for pictures of you
- ❏ Tries to meet in real life
- ❏ Wants to follow **all** your profiles
- ❏ Wants to send you gifts through the mail
- ❏ Asks lots of personal questions
- ❏ Gets mad at you if you're not online
- ❏ You start feeling like this new online friend is the only person who cares about you



How to respond to sextortion

- Do not comply with demands
- Stop responding
- Report it to the App
- Do not delete the account
- Take screenshots
- Take it Down (NCMEC)
- Report a Cybertip to NCMEC





Additional Resources referenced

- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children - Netsmartz: www.netsmartz.org
- Thorn.org; nofiltr
- Chatting with Kids booklet from CISA
- Family Online Safety Institute: www.fosi.org
- www.webwise.ie
- Common Sense Media



Check ins and support

- Who are you going to talk to about this after today?
- What's an action step you thought about during the training that you plan to follow up on in the next week or month?
- Check in with neighbors and colleagues
- Use and model the importance of unplugged time
- Speak up if you are struggling



Stop Sextortion - Thorn



OK.
SO YOU DID
A THING...

Please complete a 3-minute multiple choice evaluation of today's training. You have 24 hours to complete this form, but we recommend doing it now.

Trainer: Liz Baudler

Session: Keeping Children Safe Online

chicagocac.org/eval

