

WHAT IS CYBER-BULLYING?

Cyber-bullying is the use of electronic forms of communication, such as a cell phone, Facebook, Instant Messaging, to harass and intimidate someone who cannot easily defend himself or herself. The acts of cyber-bullying are deliberate, repeated, and often occur outside of school.

WARNING SIGNS IF CHILD IS THE VICTIM OF CYBER-BULLYING

There are a number of signs that a child may be a victim of cyber-bullying:

- The child abruptly stops use of the computer or cell phone;
- The child becomes visibly upset or angry during or after Internet use;
- The child is visibly upset after reading a text message;
- The child becomes withdrawn from peer groups or social activities;
- The child's grades unexpectedly drop;
- The child has been a target of traditional bullying;
- The child avoids discussion of computer use.

CYBER-BULLYING: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

INTERVENTION TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Be sure to save the evidence. Print copies of the messages or of the Web sites.
- Make sure your child feels safe and secure. Provide unconditional support.
- Encourage your child to inform you of her or his perspective.
- If the first offense is minor in nature, ignore, delete, or block the sender.
- Investigate your child's online presence.
- If the perpetrator is known and the cyberbullying is continuing or severe, contact the child's parents or legal guardians, if you are comfortable doing so.
- If the perpetrator is known, share the evidence with a school official, such as Mr. Roberts. You may also follow the bullying reporting procedures found at the school district's home page.
- Report the cyber-bullying to the police if the cyber-bullying contains threats, intimidation, or sexual exploitation.
- If your child expresses emotional distress or thoughts of self harm, seek help from a school counselor or other mental health professional immediately.

WHY CHILDREN MAY FAIL TO REPORT

- Children are afraid their parents will take their technology away or restrict internet access.
- They worry that their parents will become involved.
- They are concerned parents will over-react.
- Children are more likely to report if this issue has been discussed at home.

WARNING SIGNS IF CHILD IS THE PERPETRATOR

A child may be engaged in cyber-bullying if she or he:

- Quickly switches screens or closes screens when someone walks by;
- Becomes unusually upset if she or he cannot use the computer;
- Laughs excessively while using the computer;
- Avoids discussions of what they are doing on the computer;
- Uses multiple online accounts or is using an account that is not her or his own.

(Source: *Cyberbullying: Bullying in the Digital Age*)

WITNESSES TO CYBER-BULLYING: BYSTANDERS

- The majority of young people will at some point be a witness to bullying.
- As a witness or bystander, the young person may play a variety of roles, from a disengaged onlooker to a possible defender.
- The witness to bullying does not always know what to do.
- Children can let those who cyber-bully know that they believe their actions are wrong and that they need to stop. As the young person may stand back to prevent herself or himself from becoming a target, they often cannot or will not stand up for the victim on their own.
- The witness to bullying is more likely to stand up for the victim if they are speaking with a group.
- Peers should support victims of bullying in all of its forms to prevent them from feeling isolated or friendless.

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COMMON TACTICS USED BY CYBER-BULLIES

- **Harassment:** Harassment is sending hurtful messages to the target child that is worded in a severe, persistent, or pervasive manner, causing the respondent undue concern. These threatening messages are hurtful, frequent, and very serious.
- **Exposure:** Exposure is a cyber bullying tactic that includes the public display, posting, or forwarding of personal communication or images by the cyber bully that are personal to the target child. Exposure becomes even more detrimental to the target child when the communications posted and displayed publicly contains sensitive personal information, or images that are sexual in nature.
- **Exclusion:** Exclusion is a cyber-bully tactic that is highly effective and indirectly sends a provocative message to the target child that they are not included in social activities without the need for verbal disparagement. Children and teens are developmentally fixated on being recognized by their peers, and the process of designating who is a member of the peer group and who is not included can be devastating to the target child.

(Source: "Cyber Bullying Tactics")

RESOURCES

- www.wiredsafety.org
- www.cyberbullyhelp.com
- www.onguardonline.gov
- www.connectsafely.org
- www.stopbullying.gov

To report cyber-bullying, go to the school district's web site (www.eastauroraschools.org) and click on the logo below.

