

What To Do If You Suspect Your Child Is Communicating With An Offender Through the Internet

Talk with your child if you are concerned about what they are doing on the Internet. Ask for advice and help from teachers, librarians, and other Internet providers in your community. Opening communication with your children, asking for help from community members, and going online yourself will help you gain more awareness about potential danger your child may be encountering. If your child tells you about an upsetting experience online or that they have met someone, don't blame your child. Instead help him or her with the current situation and how to avoid problems in the future. Remember — how you respond will determine whether they confide in you the next time they encounter a problem and how they learn to deal with problems on their own.

- Talk with your child about the importance of safety on the Internet just as you would talk with them about safety in other areas of their lives such as swimming or fire safety.
- Communicate with your child that you are concerned about their safety; that they are not in trouble; and that you need their help and cooperation to ensure their safety.
- Review what is on your child's computer with them if possible. If you don't know how to do this, ask a friend, coworker, relative, or other knowledgeable person to help you.
- Monitor your child's access to all types of live electronic communications like chat rooms, instant messages, Internet Relay Chat, etc, and monitor your child's e-mail. Computer-sex offenders almost always meet potential victims via chat rooms. After meeting a child on-line, they will continue to communicate electronically often via e-mail.

Should any of the following situations arise in your home, via the Internet or on-line service, you should immediately contact your local or state law enforcement agency and the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#):

1. Your child or anyone in the home has received child pornography
2. Your child has been sexually solicited by someone who knows that your child is under 18 years of age
3. Your child has received sexually explicit images from someone who knows your child is under the age of 18

If one of these scenarios occurs, keep the computer turned on in order to preserve any evidence for future law enforcement use. Unless directed to do so by law enforcement agency, you should not attempt to copy any of the images and/or text found on the computer.

On-line Resources: www.theinternetandyourchild.org
www.getnetwise.org
www.netsmartz.org

Information Adapted from "Safety of the Information Highway" from the National Center For Missing and Exploited Youth & from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention