

Parent Handout

A guardian's guide
to teen safety on social media

This packet contains information to take with you to help your family plan for your teen and pre-teen's safety as they enter the world of social media and the internet.

Inside you will find:

- A detailed layout of the grooming process predators use to initiate the process of abusing children online. The guide elaborates on the different steps in the process, helping you to recognize the behaviors and put a stop to them before your child becomes a victim.
- A list of red flags to watch for in your child's behavior that may indicate they are being abused online. While not always the signs of victimization, they provide a frame of reference if you sense a difference in your child's demeanor, but can't identify specific behaviors.
- Examples of different rules, guidelines and management strategies for your child's devices and online lifestyle. This includes an example of a family technology contract.
- A list of online resources you can use as a parent to continue your education regarding your child's "netiquitte", and also references for what to do if you believe your child may be a victim of online predators.

**Keep
Kids
Safe
Online**



Developed by the Prescott,
AZ Police Department

The Grooming Process

Tactics used by predators
to lure children into abuse

1. Friendship

Targeting

The predator combs through social media websites, sporting events, school functions, etc. to locate *vulnerable children* within their virtual reach.

Vulnerability Factors include:

- Absentee parents/guardians
- Familial instability
- Drug use/alcohol use by the teen or within the teen's family
- Mental health disorders of the teen or within the teen's family
- Extreme poverty
- Chronic illness of the teen or within the teen's family
- Lack of education
- Abuse at home

Trust Building

Once contact has been made, the predator begins frequent virtual conversations via text or messenger apps. The predator tries to establish themselves as a trusted adult by promising not to disclose any information to the teen's guardians and appears as generous, kind and attentive.

2. Filling a Need

Predator establishes what the child wants

This is typically attention, affection, emotional support, compliments, presents, freedom or money.

Idolization

The predator provides these wants to the point they become almost idolized in the teen's life.

The Grooming Process

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3. Gauges Threat

Identifies threats

Predator determines how many guardians or parents are present in the child's life, and then determines how present each of them are. The more present the guardian, the more risky the contact and abuse.

"Caring Questions"

This is usually not established through direct questioning, but rather through "caring questions" such as:

- How is your mom feeling this morning?
- I bet your grandma is tired from working all day, what time does she usually go to bed?
- Do your parents usually leave you home alone on weekends or do you get to go with them where they are?
- Doesn't your dad ever take you out for ice cream?

4. Isolation

Encourages distrust

The predator begins to demand the victim's time and begins to teach them to distrust other adult influences in their life.

The predator encourages the child to only come to them with problems or questions because other adults, "might judge them," or punish them.

The predator convinces the child the other adults cannot understand them and encourages secrecy.

Filling Need Continues

Secrecy is rewarded directly or indirectly through a continued provision of wants by the predator.

The Grooming Process

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5. Desensitize

Sexuality

The predator begins to introduce sexual language into the conversation.

Teaching

If the child shows hesitation or shyness, the predator reassures them by saying they only want to, “teach,” the child about their sexuality and newfound sexual maturity. They may encourage the child to ask them sexual questions to break the ice or may question the child about their dating life.

Image Exchange

Eventually the predator may ask for nude images or videos. These requests are not always direct and the photographs are usually not obtained via threat. They may use flattery to convince the child to “show off” for them or ask flirtatiously.

6. Control

Final Stage

Once the predator has established trust, isolation or collateral, they begin to control the child.

Threats

The predator may stray from the flirtatious, gifting methods used previously and now employ threats. If the predator obtained nude images they may threaten to use them to extort the child.

Shame

Typically by this point the child is too ashamed of their situation to ask for help, or they are unaware they need help.

Physical Control

If the predator convinced the child to physically meet them somewhere, they may now exercise physical control of the child. This does not always mean kidnapping, but may mean forcing them to sneak out at night or skip school.

Red Flags

Signs your child may be
a victim of online abuse

- 1 **You locate evidence your child has been victimized online on their devices. *Do not delete the material, contact your local police department immediately.***

- 2 Your child becomes extremely secretive or evasive regarding who they are talking to online or via text. If they do tell you, the content of the text messages does not match up to the subject they are purportedly speaking with. *ie your child says they are texting a girl from class but when you read the text messages they include language such as, "baby girl," or, "what are you wearing?"*

- 3 **You notice your child quickly shutting off their screens, closing programs or swiping windows away on their devices when you approach. They insist on sitting with their screen facing away from you when you're nearby, or constantly check to see if you're looking at their screen.**

- 4 Your child is suddenly extremely distant or preoccupied with no understandable explanation. They appear to be constantly "zoning out", but report eating and sleeping normally.

- 5 **Your child shows a sudden disinterest in hobbies. Any activity that takes them away from their devices for an extended period of time becomes undesired. Their performance in school or hobbies suddenly deteriorates.**

- 6 Your child has odd wake and sleep hours. *This doesn't always mean they are awake late and up late, it can mean they suddenly become an early riser when they used to sleep in. Predators are awake and demanding content 24 hours/day*

- 7 **Your child has sudden, intense mood swings for reasons they can't explain. They may blame guardians for not being able to provide for their wants and desires or lash out when their privacy is infringed.**

Red Flags

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- 8 Your child suddenly begins pushing boundaries to test your limits. *This is normal as children grow and mature, but if there is a sudden increase and frequency it may be cause for concern.*
- 9 Your child is obsessed with their devices. They will not let guardians look at them, play with them or hold them without the teen's supervision. They are quick to grab the device out of your hand if a notification comes in while you are looking at it.
- 10 **Your teen shows abnormal worry, fear or extreme anger when devices are taken away, looked through, borrowed or turned off for the night. They begin to bargain to keep the devices longer than their agreed upon time limit, especially when it involves using them behind closed doors or overnight. They request time with the device before sharing it (typically enough time to delete conversations or photographs.)**
- 11 Your teen suddenly has new devices, such as smart watches, mp3 players, handheld gaming devices or text-now phones. They cannot provide a feasible explanation where they came from and refuse to allow you to look at them because you did not buy them.

Examples

Templates and Examples
to jumpstart your family plan

The following are rules and management examples for certain devices, as well as an example online behavior contract. They are being provided to you to assist in your own family brainstorming.

Keep in mind, these rules, solutions and contracts may not be suitable for every family. Use them as guidelines to develop the rules that best suit your specific situation.

House Rules (various devices, adapt to age group):

- All devices are to be turned off or DND and plugged into chargers during shared meal times and after 9:00 pm. Devices are not to be kept in bedrooms overnight.
- The gaming system is a shared device. It is to be used only in the shared family area plugged into the family room television.
- No applications shall be downloaded onto phones without prior permission from mom or dad.
- Phones are not to be used at school unless to contact mom or dad or in an emergency.
- Device histories are not to be cleared. If your phone needs memory freed up, come to mom or dad so they can reset the cache.
- If playing an online multiplayer game the chat must be turned off or minimized and no headset chat is permitted. You may use emotes in game.
- If a stranger asks you for something in a game or via message that makes you uncomfortable, bring the message to mom or dad right away. You will not get in trouble.
- If you make a bad decision using your phone or gaming system and need help fixing it, come to mom or dad right away. There may be consequences later, but your safety and wellbeing comes first.
- If you have questions about something you find online, ask mom or dad or another trusted adult. Do not reach out to strangers for explanations. If your parents don't have the answer, we can help you find someone reliable who does.
- Cyber bullying has a zero-tolerance policy in this household. If it happens to you, come to mom or dad for help. If you bully someone else, there will be consequences.

Contract

Example Contract A Template for Success

Family Online Safety Contract

This contract helps us stay safe when it comes to what we SEE, SAY and DO online.

I _____, will:
(Child)

- Tell my parents or carer if I see something that makes me feel upset, uncomfortable or scares me.
- Be aware that people online are not always who they say they are, and do not always tell the truth.
- Let my parents supervise where I go online as I understand they do this to help keep me safe.
- Tell my parents or carer if someone sends me rude or naked pictures, or links that I did not ask for.
- Not give out personal information about myself, my family, my friends, or others online, including full names, addresses, phone numbers or schools.
- Not share my passwords or usernames with anyone but a parent or carer and I understand they will only use it if they are worried about me or my safety.
- Treat others the way I want to be treated online and with the same respect as I would offline.
- Never use the internet or a mobile device to cyberbully someone.
- Make sure all of my accounts are always set to private.
- Not talk to anyone online, or add anyone on my social networks, if I don't know them offline.
- Never agree to meet someone in person that I have only met online, and I will tell my parents if someone asks to meet me.
- Accept my parents or carer as a 'Friend' on social media providing they ask for my permission before posting or commenting on my content, and they speak to me first if they see something they don't agree with on my profiles.
- Not respond to emails, instant messages, messages or friend requests from people I don't know.
- Never send someone a photo of myself online without checking with my parents or carer first.
- Learn how to block and report people online and tell my parents or carer immediately if doing this.
- Ask for permission before downloading any apps, games or software, so my parents or carer can check these are appropriate for my age and won't harm the device.
- Teach my parents or carer about the internet, apps, games and websites I enjoy.
- **Agree to the online time limits set by my parents or carer and put my devices to bed at night to help me get a restful sleep.**

Signed:
(Child)

Signed:
(Parent/carer)

Resources

Websites and Applications
For your safety net

The following list is comprised of websites and applications available to parents and guardians of pre-teens and teens. These resources can help you develop a “safety net”, or a plan to help your children make safe and healthy choices online. There are also resources you can use if you suspect your child or another child in your life is subject to online sexual abuse or at risk for human trafficking.

Local Police Departments



If you find evidence your child is being abused or victimized, or was about to be, contact your local police department. If there is evidence of the abuse on your child's electronics, do not delete the messages, screen shots, accounts or photographs, but instead turn them in to the investigating officer. Digital evidence is a valuable tool in prosecution.

Local Advocacy Centers



If your child is the victim of a crime, your local advocacy centers can be a valuable resource. They may provide services at low or no cost including counseling, courtroom support, medical services, advocacy and legal services.

Common Sense Media – www.commonsensemedia.org



Reviews games, movies, applications, etc. and assigns a star rating, age rating and written review to each. Quick reference guide when downloading or purchasing new media you are not familiar with. More in-depth reviews than the ESRB.

Connect Safely – www.connectsafely.org



Research based tips, guidebooks, advice, news and commentary on technology use. Quick to review new technology as it is released. Provides parents with information and guides so they can create their own use policies with their children.

Cyberwise – www.cyberwise.org



Parental partner to “Cyber Civics”, a digital literacy program taught in many schools. Summaries of applications and social media websites. All content is brief and tailored to “busy parents.”

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Enough is Enough – <https://enough.org>

Resource center has guides for parents including Internet Dangers 101, Internet Safety Tools, Technology solutions, Cybercrime reporting, Recovery resources and websites for kids.



Family Online Safety Institute – www.fosi.org

International non-profit committed to discussing the dangers and rewards of our online lives. Good Digital Parenting Guide is available on their website along with toolkits and scholarly articles.



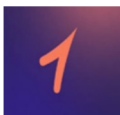
Meta Safety Center – about.meta.com/actions/safety

Tools parents can use across Meta associated technologies (Facebook, Instagram, messenger and Oculus Quest). Family education hub provides specific strategies to use with their specific platforms.



National Center for Missing & Exploited Children – www.missingkids.org

Advice for what to do after victimization as well as information regarding what NCMEC is doing to help victims across the country and abroad.



THORN for Parents – parents.thorn.org

Discussion guides to help parents start talking with their children about internet safety. Templates for internet safety contracts as well as conversation starters and tips for what to do when breaching difficult topics with your child.

**Thank you for
doing your part
to keep kids safe
online**