

FACT SHEET

Prevention of Cyberbullying In Scouting

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intensive and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Usually it is repeated over time. Traditionally, bullying has involved actions such as hitting or punching, teasing or name calling (verbal bullying), or intimidation through gestures, or social exclusion.

In recent years, technology has given rise to children and youth in a new form of bullying referred to as “cyberbullying.” Cyberbullying is also referred to as “online social cruelty” or “electronic bullying.”

Cyberbullying is just what it sounds like – using Internet technology such as instant messaging (IM), text, social network sites (such as Twitter, Facebook, Google+, Pinterest, Instagram, etc.), or simply texting via cell phone for the purpose of teasing, humiliating, harassing, threatening, or coercing another person, herein referred to as a ‘target.’ It may mean text messages sent at all times of day or night, with degrading comments about someone or fictitious posts. Children and youth can cyberbully each other through e-mails, instant messaging, texts or digital imaging messages sent on cell phones, social network sites, Web pages, blogs, chat rooms or discussion groups, and other cyber technologies.

Cyberbullying can have devastating effects on the victim or target, whether a lone cyberbully or other friends watching/monitoring/or witnessing the attack. The target may lose sleep, lose desire to participate in family and social activities, obsess over what is going to be posted next, become depressed, become angry, avoid school or social activities, and have suicidal ideations. In extreme circumstances, unfortunately, there have been incidences where cyberbullying has lead to teen suicide.

Common forms of cyberbullying include:

- Flaming or trolling - the sending or posting of hostile messages intended to “inflame” the emotions of others
- Happy slapping - recording someone being harassed or bullied in a way that usually involves physical abuse, then posting the video online for public viewing.
- Identify theft/Impersonation - stealing someone’s password and/or hijacking their online account to send or post incriminating or humiliating pictures, videos, or information
- Photoshopping - doctoring digital images so that the main subject is placed in a compromising, embarrassing position and or situation
- Physical threats - sending messages that involve threats to a person’s physical safety
- Rumor spreading - spreading gossip through e-mail text messaging or social network sites

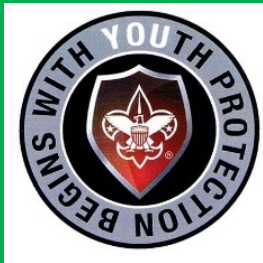
Signs your child may be a victim of cyberbullying;

- Avoids computer, cell phone, and other technological devices or appears stressed when receiving an e-mail, instant message, or text
- Withdraws from family and friends or acts reluctant to attend school or social events
- Avoids conversations about computer use
- Exhibits signs of low self-esteem, including depression and/or fear
- Has declining grades
- Has poor eating or sleeping habits

If your child or Scout is being cyberbullied

- Strongly encourage your child not to respond to the cyberbullying.
- Do not erase the messages or pictures. Save them as evidence.
- Try to identify the individual doing the cyberbullying, even if the cyberbully is anonymous, i.e. using a fake name or someone else’s identity, there may be a way to track them





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through your Internet Service Provider (ISP). If the cyberbullying is criminal, or if you suspect that it may be, contact the police and ask them to do the tracking for you. Areas that fall under law enforcement or police jurisdiction include threats of violence, extortion, obscene or harassing phone calls or text messages, harassment via stalking or hate crimes, child pornography, sexual exploitation, taking a photo image of someone in a place where he or she would expect privacy.

As parents, you should ask your child:

- Has anyone ever been mean to you online and how did you handle it or respond?
- Have you ever been mean to anyone else on line, and why?
- Is it okay to forward a text message making fun of someone? Why?/Why not?
- Do you know your school's policy on bullying and cyberbullying?
- Which teacher or Scout leader would you talk to if you were being bullied?

What parents can do to prevent and address cyberbullying:

Adults may not always be present in the online environment of their children and youth; therefore, it is extremely important that a parent or caring adult play close attention to cyberbullying and the activities of the children and youth when using these newer technologies.

Suggestions for Scouters and parents dealing with cyberbullying:

- Review the Boy Scouts of America online safety policies and implement them.
- Make an agreement with youth to keep all Internet capable devices out of children's bedrooms.
- Talk regularly with youth about online activities that he or she may be involved in.
- Talk specifically about cyberbullying and encourage youth to tell immediately if he or she is the victim of cyberbullying, cyber stalking, or any other illegal or troublesome online behavior.
- Explain that you will not take away their technology if they confide in you about the problem they are hearing. (Having?)
- Evaluate the StopBullying.gov Webisode or NetSmartz® online safety episode for educational materials provided to use.
- Encourage your child to tell you if someone he or she is aware of – whether a friend or other family member – is being cyberbullied.
- Explain that cyberbullying is harmful and unacceptable behavior.
- Outline clearly your expectations for responsible online behavior and make it clear that there will be consequences for inappropriate behavior.
- Explain that treating others well online may also protect them from being harassed or cyber-bullied.
- Although parents must respect the privacy of children and youth, concerns for a child's safety supersede these privacy concerns.
- Tell your child that as a responsible parent, you may review his or her online communications if you think there is a reason for concern.
- Consider installing parental control filtering software and/or monitoring programs, but do not rely solely upon these child safety measures.

Resources:

Hinduja, Sameer, PhD
Justin W. Patchkin, PhD - Cyberbullying Research Center
NetSmartz® Workshop, online fact sheet
StopBullying.gov fact sheets

You can find the contact information for your local council Scout executive at
www.Scouting.org/YouthProtection