

# Parenting to Prevent Abuse

A Child Assault Prevention (CAP) booklet  
for families in the



## **DIOCESE OF METUCHEN**

Office of Religious Education

NJ Child Assault Prevention is a program of the NJ CAP Regional Training  
Center at the EIRC & the NJ Task Force on Child Abuse & Neglect

[www.njcap.org](http://www.njcap.org)

and

## A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety

U.S. Department of Justice  
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# Parenting to Prevent Abuse

## ***Why do I need this?***

This book is intended to help you as a parent or guardian to keep the child you care about SAFE, STRONG & FREE. The CAP program has been working in community programs since 1978 and in New Jersey, as the prevention program for the NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, since 1986. CAP programs teach children and caring adults to respond as early as possible to feeling unsafe and the strategies that will be most effective in any potentially dangerous situation. These may include bullying, stranger assault, as well as uncomfortable and possibly sexual touches and situations. This is all done in a way that empowers, rather than frightens and is appropriate for all ages of children.

This booklet is intended to give you information and resources which will help you to review the information with your child. Your child will be participating in lessons to reinforce the material, but you will be the most important source of support for your child, so we hope we can give you the tools to feel prepared.

It's often said that parenting is the toughest job you'll ever do. You may dread tackling these topics with your child. There are ways to help keep your child safe that will actually be comfortable for you and your child. There are strategies that make your child feel stronger rather than more anxious.

## ***What do I need?***

Today's parents have many fears for their children. To help children prevent abuse, parents must turn that fear into action, and the needed action is *communication*.

Talking to a child about abuse, particularly sexual abuse is a frightening proposition for many parents. Moms and Dads are worried that they will frighten their children, corrupt their innocence and trust, and actually harm them, instead of helping children cope.

The good news is that while this fear is understandable, it doesn't have to be true. There are a number of ways parents can talk to children, even very young children, that will help them feel safer and more confident rather than fearful and distrusting. CAP materials are focused on positive, rather than negative conceptions of prevention education for children. You don't have to, and shouldn't tell children about your worst fears for them.

### ***Where and When?***

It is important to find the right time and place to talk with children about abuse and its prevention. Sometimes parents hear a frightening report on the news and fueled by their own fear, put on their most serious faces and call a meeting with their children. While this method isn't always harmful, it certainly isn't the best way to help children learn abuse prevention strategies.

Talking about abuse prevention can be incorporated into everyday life situations. Educators call these "teachable moments." Your child's booklet is meant to help provide those teachable moments. But there are other items you can use.

You can begin short and promising discussions with your child by using cartoons and other children's television programs to talk about abuse. When a character is hit in a cartoon or a child is hurt on another program, you can discuss what happened during the commercial. Point out to your child that hitting isn't right, that children have a right to be safe and not to be hurt by anyone – other children or adults. This is the first lesson children must learn.

Bullying situations at school or in the neighborhood, or stories read with your child also present opportunities to discuss prevention. As children grow, they begin to take on independent activities that provide times you can reinforce their safety skills. When your child is old enough to ride a bike or walk alone to the library or a store, you have the perfect opportunity to review prevention strategies.

### ***Finding the Words***

You may be concerned that you will have to use big words or ones that will frighten your child to teach prevention skills. Actually the opposite is true. The 'right' words are actually those with a "low fear quotient". The CAP language in the booklet uses just those kinds of words. Talking about being "Safe, Strong and Free" is positive and reinforces for your child the understanding of how he or she is supposed to feel – in ANY situation and with ALL people.

For example, talking about staying 'safe' around people you don't know is much less frightening and confusing to children than talking about 'stranger danger'. Using words like "safe and unsafe touching" instead of rape or sexual assault is more comfortable for you and your child and also covers a whole range of abusive actions rather than just one.

Before talking with your child, sit down and talk together as adults who are parenting. It's important to reach agreement about what language you will use. In two-parent families, consistency will eliminate confusion and make the messages more powerful. You will need to become comfortable with anatomically correct language, if you are not already. If your child senses your discomfort with words like "penis", "vagina", "buttocks" or "anus", then he or she won't use those words to talk with you. Children

may need these words to describe abuse. Many children are confused by pet names for these parts of their bodies. Sexual offenders may use this confusion to accomplish their goals of abusing a child. Many abused children report that they didn't tell their parents because they didn't want to talk about 'dirty' stuff like that to them.

### ***The Focus***

The best way to increase your child's confidence and reduce their anxieties is to focus the conversation on what he or she *can do* if faced with a dangerous or uncomfortable situation. You can approach abuse prevention skills in the same way you teach your child to cross a street safely. When you teach skills you focus on what your child needs to learn NOT what the car will do to them.

Applying this logic to prevention education is easy. Unfortunately, many adults tell children to avoid strangers and say, "Don't talk to them!" Then the same adults deal familiarly with strangers themselves and certainly talk with them! Children are very confused by this kind of information. In addition, strangers are not all bad people and may, in fact, help your child someday. So it is better to focus on how to be safe around all people the child doesn't know. If they don't know them, they don't know which ones are bad and which ones are okay.

CAP suggests you talk with children about people they don't know and practice strategies on staying 'safe' around them. We want your child to remember the prevention lesson more than the fear of strangers, don't we?

So, remember, in all cases of potentially dangerous situations; focus on the skills your child can learn, not on the danger.

### ***Self-Confidence***

Feeling good about ourselves and confident plays a big role in our ability to do anything. If we believe we can do it – we are more likely to be able to do it and we are on our way to success in any endeavor. The opposite is also true. When we believe we can't do something, then we are not even likely to try.

Children, like adults, must believe in their abilities – mental, physical and spiritual to succeed. Adults who are about children can do so much to help build this self-esteem in many ways. In addition to the booklet reviewed with your child, his or her teacher has been provided with follow-up activities which focus on the language of being 'safe, strong & free' as well as the strategies of self-assertion, peer support and telling a trusted adult. This booklet is intended to provide some of those same ways to encourage your child's self-confidence. When you work with your child, be sure to show in your tone of voice, words and actions that you think they can do it, that their achievements are meaningful – not empty words of praise, but real recognition.

“WHAT IF...GAME” - This is a game you can play with children to help them brainstorm about what they would do in dangerous situations. Having a plan ahead of

time is important in reducing your child's vulnerability to assault. Dinnertime, bedtime, or riding in the car are good times to play this game.

The game is played by asking your child, "what would you do if..." and then letting the child respond. The key is to let *the child* come up with ideas, then reinforce good ideas with praise and approval.

For example, you could ask your child, "what would you do if you fell off your bike and a stranger offered to drive you home?" or "what would you do if someone like your babysitter asked you to keep a secret?"

### ***LEARNING TO SAY "NO" – a 'safe, strong & free word'***

One of the reasons that "NO" isn't said more often is that children quickly learn that they aren't supposed to talk back to adults or refuse to do what they say. When we tell children to do what adults say without the right to say "NO!", we are giving other adults absolute authority over our children. It is better to say, "You should do what you are told, unless it makes you feel like you are not 'safe or strong or free'. If you feel that way, then you have the right to say "No", then get away and tell me about it."

Practice with your child situations when this important word can be used appropriately. If your child uses it inappropriately and says, "No!" to cleaning his or her room, ask if cleaning a room really takes away the right to be 'safe, strong or free'. This will help to clarify not just the correct use of "No!" but your acceptance of it by your child in potentially dangerous situations.

### ***Practice***

Effective safety skills don't just happen overnight. Skills and information need to be reviewed. Your child has had a chance to read CAP's information at school (public schools and Catholic schools), had it covered and reinforced by teachers, and now he or she has the chance to read and talk about it with you.

Your child will learn and retain information based on age and developmental ability. At each stage, you will want to revisit these discussions with your child. He or she will hear it differently and have new concerns and questions unique to their social and emotional development.

All children should have a variety of options available to them if they are faced with an uncomfortable or dangerous situation.

Some ideas to cover and reinforce are:

1. Run AWAY from danger. Run to a 'safe place', school, home, neighbors, to a store. Think about more places together.
2. Tell your child to yell loudly and not to stop until it is 'safe'. Children are often told not to yell or make noise. You will need to encourage them to understand they can yell if they don't feel 'safe'. Teens are especially reluctant – they feel

- embarrassed or 'stupid'. Tell them adult's lives have been saved by yelling to attract attention and startling their attackers. Yelling is not just for 'little kids'!
3. Work on the concept of 'safe' and 'unsafe' secrets. Surprise parties and gifts are 'safe' secrets; they don't make children feel worried or scared. Unsafe secrets should always be told to you or another adult your child trusts. Be sure you don't ask your child to keep an unsafe secret yourself. Explain the concept of privacy, but give your child permission to talk to someone if what they know makes him or her uncomfortable.
  4. Brainstorm with your child the names of 'safe' adults to go to when he or she doesn't feel 'safe'. Safe adults are people who will *listen* and *believe* your child. Remember your child needs more people than just you. Other family members, teachers, counselors, friends, neighbors; all might be 'safe' adults for your child. Teens are more likely to go to other people – the important thing is for them to go to someone you trust – not just one of their peers or friends.
  5. Give your child permission to say, "No!" As suggested before, it's a key concept to keeping rights. Don't you sometimes need practice – even as an adult? It will take time and practice for your child to understand an assertive "No!" as opposed to a disobedient one. But a child who has these strategies and understands appropriate boundaries is a safer child and more likely to prevent exploitation of all kinds.
  6. Teach your child this concept. "Your body is your own: you have my permission and you will have my help for you to take care of it!" Demonstrate it in the way you touch and allow others to touch your child. It might make a relative feel kind or loving to pinch your child's cheek or demand a kiss, but how does it make your child feel? Help your child to handle difficult situations like this.
  7. Talk with your child about the difference between tattling and telling. Tattling is telling on someone just to get them in trouble. Telling when you need help is never tattling.
  8. Tell your child that you are always willing to help them, "Whenever you have a problem, no matter how scary or embarrassing, I will listen and believe you. I will always be more angry with someone who hurts you than I am with you – even if you make a mistake."

This may be the most important concept of all. Children often think they will get in trouble or no one will believe them – so they don't tell. Not only may the abuse go on happening, but the child is revictimized by feeling that the assault was his or her fault. No one deserves to be abused, even if they do something wrong. You want your child to know your love will transcend anything and you will always protect them.

### ***Safe Touching***

You don't even want your child to think that all touching is a problem. Some parents worry so much, particularly fathers that their touch will be misinterpreted that they stop touching their children. All of us need to be touched.

If your child experiences 'safe' touching, he or she is more likely to understand the difference when the touching isn't 'safe'. If your child does not like they way you are

touching them, like ruffling hair or patting a cheek – encourage him or her to tell you and respond by respecting those preferences. Remind your child that ‘safe’ touches would never have to be kept a secret.

### ***Danger from Strangers***

When you grew up, your parents probably told you not to take candy from strangers or to talk to them. That may have been the end of the prevention lesson. Today the research clearly tells us that the great majority of children (85% of them) are abused by adults they know and trust. Often these adults are family members or other adults who can develop relationships with children over time.

Adults have often told the CAP program that they feel much more comfortable talking about the stranger danger than other kinds of assault. As a result, children often are least prepared for the very situations and people that are most likely to present themselves in dangerous ways. The CAP information in this booklet and gives you an easier way to handle these formerly difficult topics.

Now you can say to your child, “Anytime there is a person or situation that makes you feel like you are not ‘safe, strong and free’ is a time when you have the right to take care of yourself, get a friend to help and tell an adult you trust”.

Children need adults to tell them that abuse from anyone, no matter who, is an unsafe secret. Children need to know sometimes, not often, an adult the family knows and trusts, might try to touch them inappropriately. When your child hears you say he or she has the right to a body that is respected, your child is prepared to keep that body ‘safe’ throughout his or her growth and development.

### ***Age Appropriate***

At different ages children need different information. Elementary school age children need information about their independent activities. Preschoolers don’t because they will always be supervised. Teens need information about peer pressure and boy-girl relationships. It is important for you to use and add information that is based on his or her age and independence.

The children’s booklet (that is given in Catholic or public school) was written for all ages so it could be shared with the whole family. You will interpret it in age-appropriate ways for your child or children.

For the **youngest child**, read only a page or so at each sitting. Talk about the concept and use concrete examples to illustrate. For example, “Remember last week when you told me about a stranger talking to you at the grocery store? You didn’t feel ‘safe’ then, did you?” Young children need lots of practice to learn the strategies. You could have your child show you a ‘safe’ distance to stay away from people they don’t know – about 5-6 feet. Congratulate them for what they do correctly, not for any mistakes, and then do it

over again. You can also practice with young children the things they can do to get away from someone who is trying to take them: yell, wiggle, kick and run. Make sure your child knows it is okay to resist someone trying to take them. There are some wonderful books to read to this age child that are not scary – but focus on high self-esteem and a sense of competence.

For children in **elementary (grades 2-5)** you will be able to cover more material in each sitting. Let your child's interest be your guide. Take turns reading the booklet with your child to encourage interest and involvement. Stop frequently and ask your child what he or she thinks about what is read. This will convey respect for their ideas and ability to use the strategies. It will also encourage your child to use problem-solving skills and come up with other strategies. Children at these ages may have more experiences of their own or their friends that worry or confuse them. They might have heard about stranger or sexual assaults without understanding what has happened. They understand enough to know that these might be topics adults don't feel comfortable discussing. Assure your child that any situation that worries or scares them is okay to talk about with you. Try to leave the door open as much as possible for your child by using the language in your child's booklet: "How about that situation? Did you ever have a time when you didn't feel 'safe' like that?" You are much more likely to elicit a valid response than by asking, "Did you ever break our rule and talk to strangers?" or "Did anyone ever touch you like that?"

This age is an especially good one to use children's literature to engage your child and spark discussion. You can read together and talk about stories as examples of concepts. You will find ideas in our bibliography or at your school or community library.

For your **pre-teen or teen**, you will want to read the booklet yourself as they read it and then discuss it with your child. Ask for his or her reactions: "Have you ever wondered about these situations and what to do about them?" "Have your friends?" Offer to listen any time your child might want to talk about being 'safe'. If you've had a habit of reading together, you can still use literature with this age group. Otherwise, 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade children will often read a book if you will read it at the same time. There are suggestions for this age group in the bibliography.

The same thing can be done when you watch a movie or television program together. Sometimes parents think older children don't need supervision in the same way as younger children during these activities – but in fact, it's still important to be there to know what is 'going in and going on' in their lives.

**Teens** are dealing with much more complex situations than younger children. They are likely to see things as very "black and white" and make judgments in that way. We find they are even more likely to blame themselves and others for mistakes made in assault situations. The message needs to be repeated over and over for them that an assault is never the fault of the person who is abused. A mistake doesn't mean you deserve to be hurt – there should be consequences – but not abuse.

For example, bullying takes a whole new dimension for this age group. At a time when they are desperate for peer approval, it is often difficult for them to unravel the secrets of social success while maintaining the values you've taught them of kindness, friendship and personal responsibility. Bullying is more complicated today by the use of the internet to spread rumors and information intended to harm others. There is no more vital time in your relationship with your child to keep the channels of communication open. Try to listen more yourself and judge less.

## ***SAFE, STRONG and FREE***

All families want to keep children 'safe, strong and free'. If you want more information, contact your child's school or religious education program, or ask them for the CAP Coordinator in your area.

A few selections from CAP for children and the people who care about them –

### **FOR THE YOUNGER CHILD**

***The Brand New Kid*** by Katie Couric: Doubleday. (2000).

**The Hating Book** by Charlotte Zolotow: Harper Collins. (1969).

**Who is a Stranger and What Should I Do?** By Linda W. Girard: Albert Whitman and Co. (1993).

**Your Body Belongs to You** by Cornelia Spelman: Albert Whitman and Co. (2000).

**Stand Tall Molly Lou Melon** by Patty Lovell: Putnam Publishing (2001).

### **FOR THE OLDER CHILD**

**Stick up for Yourself: Every Kid's Guide to Personal Power and Positive Self-Esteem** by Gershen Kaufman: Free Spirit Publishing (1990).

**Danger on Midnight River** by Gary Paulsen: Yearling Books. (1995).

**Eaglebait** by S. Coryell: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovitch (1989).

**One Thing for Sure** by D. Gifaldi: Houghton Mifflin. (1986).

**Olive's Ocean** by Kevin Henkes: Greenwillow. (2003).

**Reluctantly Alice** by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor: Aladdin. (2000).

### **FOR ADULTS OR TEENS**

**Protecting the Gift: Keeping Children and Teens Safe (and Parents Sane)** by Gavin deBecker: Dial Press (1999).

**Silent to the Bone** by E.L. Lonigsburg: Aladdin Press. (2002).

**Charlie's Story** by Maeve Friel: Peachtree Publishing Ltd. (1997).

**Lord of the Flies** by William Golding: Berkley Publishing Group. (1959).

**The Girls' Guide to Life: How to Take Charge of the Issues That Affect You** by Catherine Dee: Megan Tingley. (1997).

**Keep Your Kids Safe on the Internet** by Simon Johnson: McGraw-Hill (2004).

**Parent-Teen Breakthrough: The Relationship Approach** by Mira Kirshenbaum: Plume Books. (1995).

**What To Do When Kids are Mean to Your Child** by Elin McCoy; Readers' Digest. (1997).

**And Words Can Hurt Forever: How to Protect Adolescents from Bullying, Harassment, and Emotional Violence** by James Garbarino: Free Press. (2002).

**Websites of Interest to Adults:**

The National PTA: <http://www.pta.org//parentinvolvement/parenttalk/index.asp>

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: <http://www.missingkids.com>

New Jersey Child Assault Prevention: <http://www.njcap.org>

Many other books on these topics are available from your school or library.

# **A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety**

adapted from U.S. Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation Publication

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## *Introduction*

While on-line computer exploration opens a world of possibilities for children, expanding their horizons and exposing them to different cultures and ways of life, they can be exposed to dangers as they hit the road exploring the information highway. There are individuals who attempt to sexually exploit children through the use of on-line services and the Internet. Some of these individuals gradually seduce their targets through the use of attention, affection, kindness and even gifts. These individuals are often willing to devote considerable amounts of time, money and energy in this process. They listen to and empathize with the problems of children. They will be aware of the latest music, hobbies and interests of children. These individuals attempt to gradually lower children's inhibitions by slowly introducing sexual context and content into their conversations.

There are other individuals, however, who immediately engage in sexually explicit conversation with children. Some offenders primarily collect and trade child-pornographic images, while others seek face-to-face meetings with children via on-line contacts.

It is important for parents to understand that children can be indirectly victimized thorough conversation i.e. 'chat' as well as the transfer of sexually explicit information and material. Computer-sex offenders may also be evaluating children they come in contact with on-line for future face-to-face contact and direct victimization. Parents and children should remember that a computer-sex offender can be any age or sex. The person does not have to fit the caricature of a dirty, unkempt, older man wearing a raincoat to be someone who could harm a child.

Children, especially adolescents, are sometimes interested in and curious about sexuality and sexually explicit material. They may be moving away from the total control of parents and seeking to establish new relationships outside their family. Because they may be curious, children/adolescents sometimes use their on-line access to actively seek out such materials and individuals. Sex offenders targeting children will use and exploit these characteristics and needs. Some adolescent children may also be attracted to and lured by on-line offenders closer to their age who, although not technically child molesters, may be dangerous. Nevertheless, they have been seduced and manipulated by a clever offender and do not fully understand or recognize the potential danger of these contacts.

This guide was prepared from actual investigations involving child victims, as well as investigations where law enforcement officers posed as children. Further information on protecting your child on-line may be found in the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's Child Safety on the Information Highway and Teen Safety on the Information Highway pamphlets.

### ***What Are Signs That Your Child Might Be At Risk On-line?***

*Your child spends large amounts of time on-line, especially at night.*

Most children that fall victim to computer-sex offenders spend large amounts of time on-line, particularly in chat rooms. They may go on-line after dinner and on the weekends. They may be latchkey kids whose parents have told them to stay at home after school. They go on-line to chat with friends, make new friends, pass time, and sometimes look for sexually explicit information. While much of the knowledge and experience gained may be valuable, parents should consider monitoring the amount of time spent on-line.

Children on-line are at the greatest risk during the evening hours. While offenders are on-line around the clock, most work during the day and spend their evenings on-line trying to locate and lure children or seeking pornography.

*You find pornography on your child's computer.*

Pornography is often used in the sexual victimization of children. Sex offenders often supply their potential victims with pornography as a means of opening sexual discussions and for seduction. Child pornography may be used to show the child victim that sex between children and adults is 'normal'. Parents should be conscious of the fact that a child may hide the pornographic files on diskettes from them. This may be especially true if the computer is used by other family members.

*Your child receives phone calls from men you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize.*

While talking to a child victim on-line is a thrill for a computer-sex offender, it can be very cumbersome. Most want to talk to the children on the telephone. They often engage in 'phone sex' with the children and often seek to set up an actual meeting for real sex.

While a child may be hesitant to give out his/her home phone number, the computer-sex offenders will give out theirs. With Caller ID, they can readily find out the child's phone number. Some computer-sex offenders have even obtained toll-free 800 numbers, so that their potential victims can call them without their parents finding out. Others will tell the child to call collect. Both of these methods result in the computer-sex offender being able to find out the child's phone number.

*Your child receives mail, gifts or packages from someone you don't know.*

As part of the seduction process, it is common for offenders to send letters, photographs, and all manner of gifts to their potential victims. Computer-sex offenders have even sent plane tickets in order for the child to travel across the country to meet them.

***Your child turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room.***

A child looking at pornographic images or having sexually explicit conversations does not want you to see it on the screen.

***Your child becomes withdrawn from the family.***

Computer-sex offenders will work very hard at driving a wedge between a child and their family or at exploiting their relationship. They will accentuate any minor problems at home that the child might have. Children may also become withdrawn after sexual victimization.

***Your child is using an on-line account belonging to someone else.***

Even if you don't subscribe to an on-line service or Internet service, your child may meet an offender while on-line at a friend's house or the library. Most computers come preloaded with on-line and/or Internet software. Computer-sex offenders will sometimes provide potential victims with a computer account for communications with them.

***What Should You Do If You Suspect Your Child is Communicating With a Sexual Predator On-line?***

- Consider talking openly with your child about your suspicions. Tell them about the dangers of computer-sex offenders.
- Review what is on your child's computer. If you don't know how, ask a friend, coworker, relative, or other knowledgeable person. Pornography or any kind of sexual communication can be a warning sign.
- Use the Caller ID service to determine who is calling your child. Most telephone companies that offer Caller ID also offer a service that allows you to block your number from appearing on someone else's Caller ID. Telephone companies also offer an additional service feature that rejects incoming calls that you block. This rejection feature prevents computer-sex offenders or anyone else from calling your home anonymously.
- Devices can be purchased that show telephone numbers that have been dialed from your home phone. Additionally, the last number called from your home phone can be retrieved provided that the telephone is equipped with a redial feature. You will also need a telephone pager to complete this retrieval.
- This is done using a numeric-display pager and another phone that is on the same line as the first phone with the redial feature. Using the two phones and the pager, a call is placed from the second phone to the pager. When the paging terminal beeps for you to enter a telephone number, you press the redial button on the first (or suspect) phone. The last number called from that phone will then be displayed on the pager.

- Monitor your child's access to all types of live electronic communications (i.e. 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 household, via the Internet or on-line service, you should immediately contact your local or state law enforcement agency, the FBI and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:

1. Your child or anyone in the household 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 that knows your child is under the age of 18.

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

***What Can You Do To Minimize The Changes Of An On-line Exploiter Victimized Your Child?***

- Communicate, and talk to your child about sexual victimization and potential on-line danger.
- Spend time with your children on-line. Have them teach you about their favorite on-line destinations.
- Keep the computer in a common room in the house, not in your child's bedroom. It is much more difficult for a computer –sex offender to communicate with a child when the computer screen is visible to a parent or another member of the household.
- Utilize parental controls provided by your service provider and/or blocking software. While electronic chat can be a great place for children to make new friends and discuss various topics of interest, it is also prowled by computer-sex offenders. Use of chat rooms, in particular, should be heavily monitored. While parents should utilize these mechanisms, they should not totally rely on them.
- Always maintain access to your child's on-line account and randomly check his/her e-mail. Be aware that your child could be contacted through the US mail. Be up front with your child about your access and reasons why.
- Teach your child the responsible use of the resources on-line. There is much more to the on-line experience than chat rooms.
- Find out what computer safeguards are utilized by your child's school, the public library, and at the homes of your child's friends. These are all places, outside your normal supervision, where your child could encounter an on-line predator.

- Understand, even if your child was a willing participant in any form of sexual exploitation, that he/she is not at fault and is the victim. The offender always bears the complete responsibility for his/her actions.
- Instruct your children:
  - To never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they met on-line;
  - To never upload (post) pictures of themselves onto the Internet or on-line service to people they do not personally know;
  - To never give out identifying information such as their name, home address, school name, or telephone number;
  - To never download pictures from an unknown source, as there is a good chance there could be sexually explicit images;
  - To never respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, or harassing;
  - That whatever they are told on-line may or may not be true.

***Frequently Asked Questions:***

**My child has received an e-mail advertising for a pornographic website, what should I do?**

Generally, advertising for an adult, pornographic website that is sent to an e-mail address does not violate federal law or the current laws of most states. In some states it may be a violation of law if the sender knows the recipient is under the age of 18. Such advertising can be reported to your service provider and, if known, the service provider of the originator. It can also be reported to your state and federal legislators, so they can be made aware of the extent of the problem.

**Is any service safer than the others?**

Sex offenders have contacted children via most of the major on-line services and the Internet. The most important factors in keeping your child safe on-line are the utilization of appropriate blocking software and/or parental controls, along with open, honest discussions with your child, monitoring his/her on-line activity, and following the tips in this pamphlet.

**Should I just forbid my child from going on-line?**

There are dangers in every part of our society. By educating your children to these dangers and taking appropriate steps to protect them, they can benefit from the wealth of information now available on-line.

***Helpful Definitions:***

**Internet** – an immense, global network that connects computers via telephone lines and fiber networks to storehouses of electronic information. With only a computer, a modem

telephone line and a service provider, people from all over the world can communicate and share information with little more than a few keystrokes.

**Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs)** – Electronic networks of computers that are connected by a central computer setup and operated by a system administrator or operator and are distinguishable from the Internet by their ‘dial-up’ accessibility. BBS users link their individual computers to the central BBS computer by a modem which allows them to post messages and read messages left by others, trade information, or hold direct conversations. Access to BBS can, and often is, privileged and limited to those users who have access privileges granted by the systems operator.

**Commercial On-Line Service (COS)** – examples of COSs are America Online, Prodigy CompuServe and Microsoft Network, which provide access to their service for a fee. COS generally offer limited access to the Internet as part of their total service package.

**Internet Service Provider (ISP)** – examples of ISPs are Erols, Concentric and Netcom. These services offer direct, full access to the Internet at a flat, monthly rate and often provide electronic-mail service for their customers; ISPs often provide space on their servers for customers to maintain World Wide Web (WWW) sites. Not all ISPs are commercial enterprises. Educational, governmental and nonprofit organizations also provide Internet access to their members.

**Public Chat Rooms** – created, maintained, listed and monitored by the COS and other public domain systems such as Internet Relay Chat. A number of customers can be in public chat rooms at any given time, which are monitored for illegal activity and even appropriate language by systems operators (SYSOP). Some public chat rooms are monitored more frequently than others, depending on the COS and the type of chat room. Violators can be reported to the administrators of the system (at America On-line they are referred to as terms of service (TOS) which can revoke user privileges). The public chat rooms usually cover a broad range of topics such as entertainment, sports, game room, children only, etc.

**Electronic Mail (E-Mail)** – a function of BBSs, COSs and ISPs which provides for the transmission of messages and files between computers over a communications network similar to mailing a letter via the postal service. E-mail is stored on a server, where it will remain until the addressee retrieves it.

Anonymity can be maintained by the sender by predetermining what the receiver will see as the “from” address.

Another way to conceal one’s identity is to use an ‘anonymous remailer’, which is a service that allows the user to send an e-mail message repackaged under the remailer’s own header, stripping off the originator’s name completely.

**Chat** – real-time text conversation between users in a chat room with no expectation of privacy. All chat conversation is accessible by all individuals in the chat room while the conversation is taking place.

**Instant Messages** – private, real-time text conversation between two users in a chat room

**Internet Relay Chat (IRC)** – real-time text conversation similar to public and/or private rooms on COS.

**Usenet (Newsgroups)** – like a giant cork bulletin board where users post messages and information. Each posting is like an open letter and is capable of having attachments, sending graphic image files (GIFs). Anyone accessing the newsgroup can read the postings, take copies of posted items, or post responses. Each newsgroup can hold thousands of posts. Currently, there are over 29,000 public newsgroups and that number is growing daily. Newsgroups are both public and/or private. There is not listing of private newsgroups. A user of private newsgroups has to be invited to the newsgroup and be provided with the newsgroup's address.

# Reporting Suspected Abuse

**Reporting Numbers for Diocese of Metuchen Diocesan Response Officer,  
Lawrence Nagle  
732-562-2413 Office (Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)  
908-930-4558 Cellular (24 hours/7 days a week) or e-mail:  
lnagle@diometuchen.org**

## **DIVISION OF YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES**

If you suspect or know of an allegation that the victim is a minor (less than 18 years old), you have a legal responsibility to immediately report the suspected crime to the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services (“DYFS”).

### **Reporting Numbers for the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services**

**Child Abuse Hotline  
1-877-NJ ABUSE (652-2873)  
24 hours a day – 7 days a week  
1-800-835-5510 (TTY/TDD for the deaf)**

### **LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT**

*In all cases, you are also encouraged to contact the police department of the locality in which the suspected or alleged crime occurred.*



732-565-KIDS (5437)

[www.childrenshospitalspuh.com](http://www.childrenshospitalspuh.com)

Admitting	Patient Information
732-745-8540	732-745-8515

Pediatric Emergency Department  
732-937-6009



*Catholic hospital sponsored by the Diocese of Metuchen  
State-designated children's hospital and regional perinatal center  
Affiliate of The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia  
Affiliate of Drexel University College of Medicine*