



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
District of Minnesota*

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(612) 664-5600

September 14, 2012

Dear Principal/Administrator/Parent:

With the 2012-2013 school year now underway, the United States Attorney's Office would like your help in protecting Minnesota students from a variety of hazards they face online.

Unfortunately, it is not just middle-school or high-school children at risk, but children in elementary school as well. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's publication "Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later," 13 percent of elementary-aged children have received some type of sexual solicitation or approach through the Internet. In Minnesota, 13 percent amounts to more than 57,000 of the 438,000 elementary-aged children.

Because we cannot speak to every child, we are hoping you will copy and send the enclosed Online Safety Tips as well as this letter home with your elementary and middle-school students. As you can see, some of the tips are for parents, while others are for the students themselves. You can also find an electronic copy of the Online Safety Tips on our website: <http://www.justice.gov/usao/mn>

We hope parents, guardians, and care givers in your school district will talk about Internet safety with their children, so every child in Minnesota will be better protected from online predators. We appreciate your assistance in this endeavor. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Laura Provinzino, our Project Safe Childhood Coordinator, at 612-664-5781 or laura.provinzino@usdoj.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Todd Jones".

B. TODD JONES
United States Attorney
District of Minnesota

Enclosure.

Internet, Mobile Phones, and Texting Safety Tips for Kids

- Do not post personal information online (name, age, birth date, address, telephone number, or school name). This information can be used by others to find out where you and your family live.
- Do not post your picture or pictures of your family online – they can be copied or changed or used to find you.
- Do not send any inappropriate photo or message by email or text.
- Do not post your plans and activities in a chat room or on your personal website. Do not post entries that make it clear that no one is at your home.
- Do not communicate with someone who has made you uncomfortable or afraid. Tell your parents or a trusted adult if someone does.
- Do not join online groups or games without talking to your parents.
- Do not meet with someone you met online without first telling your parents or guardian.
- Do not post hurtful or inappropriate messages. If someone else posts hurtful or inappropriate messages -- do not respond, but do tell a teacher, parent or other adult.
- Do not click on any link that you do not know, and you are not sure is legitimate.
- Do not buy any “apps” or “in app” purchases without talking to your parents or guardian.
- Do not enable any location services without talking to your parents or guardian.
- Do remember that people can lie online and say they are something they are not. Someone who says they are a 12-year-old girl could really be an older man looking to harm you.
- Do save messages that upset you and show them to your parents.
- Do share your password with your parents.
- Do visit www.netsmartz.org to learn more about Internet safety.

Internet, Mobile Phones, and Texting Safety Tips for Parents

- Do teach your child not to post identifying information on the Internet.
- Do set a limit for how much time your child can spend online.
- Do keep the computer in a public room in the house. Do not have an Internet-connected computer in your child's bedroom.
- Do utilize parental controls provided by your Internet Service Provider and/or blocking software. (Contact your Internet ISP if you have questions).
- Do talk to your children about purchasing "in app" products.
- Do talk to your child about using any location services on their device.
- Do periodically review your child's computer, emails and messages. You should have all of your children's passwords.
- Do spend time with your child online. Have them show you their favorite online destinations. Get to know your child's online friends as you would their real-life friends. Learn to navigate the web.
- Do know who they text and email. Most providers have online ways to identify frequent contacts so you can see if someone new appears as a contact.
- Do monitor your child's access to the Internet and texting.
- Do talk to your child about the danger of Internet predators.
- Do watch for unexplained changes in your child's behavior.
- Do NOT hesitate to seek help from law enforcement if you think a predator may be targeting your child.

For more helpful Internet safety information, please visit www.netismartz.org. Netismartz.org has age appropriate videos, activities, and information for students in elementary school, middle school, and high school.