
A Parent's Guide to the Internet



Union County Prosecutor's Office

What Are the Risks?

There are a few risks for children who use on-line services. Teenagers are particularly at risk because they often use the computer unsupervised and because they are more likely than younger children to participate in on-line discussions regarding companionship, relationships, or sexual activity.



Some risks are:

- ♦ Exposure to inappropriate material, including material of a sexual or violent nature.
- ♦ Physical molestation.
- ♦ While on-line, a child might provide information or arrange an encounter that could risk his or her safety or the safety of other family members.
- ♦ In a few cases, pedophiles have used on-line services and bulletin boards to gain a child's confidence and then arrange a face-to-face meeting.
- ♦ Harassment e-mail or bulletin board messages that are harassing, demeaning, or belligerent.

How Parents Can Reduce the Risks

- ♦ To help restrict your child's access to discussions, forums, or bulletin boards that contain inappropriate material, whether textual or graphic, many of the commercial on-line services and some private bulletin boards have systems in place for parents to block out parts of the service they feel are inappropriate for their children.
- ♦ If you are concerned, you should contact the service via telephone or e-mail to find out how you can add these restrictions to any accounts that your children can access.
- ♦ The best way to assure that your children are having positive on-line experiences is to stay in touch with what they are doing.
- ♦ Spend time with your children while they're on-line.
- ♦ Have your children show you what they do and ask them to teach you how to access the services.
- ♦ Open communication with your children, utilization of such computer resources, and getting on-line yourself will help you obtain the full benefits of these systems and alert you to any potential problem that may occur with their use.

Internet Safety Tips



- ♦ **A child should never give personal information to anyone on-line without a parent's permission.**

This includes their name, address, phone number, school name, or anything else that identifies them.

- ♦ **Place the computer in a family area of the house** instead of the child's bedroom.
- ♦ **Remind your child that not everything on-line is what it appears.**

Contests and surveys may be clever ways of obtaining personal information about your child.

- ♦ As a parent, **knowledge about computers will help you guide your child on-line.**
- ♦ **There is no replacement for parental supervision.**
- ♦ **Watch your child for differences in behavior.**

There should not be any secrets about things that occur on-line.

Monitor the amount of time your child is on the computer.

Late nights should be off limits.

- ♦ **A child should never schedule an in-person meeting without a parent's permission and supervision.**
- ♦ **Tell your child not to give out credit card information** or enter sites that require a fee without asking your permission.
- ♦ **Make sure your child feels comfortable coming to you** when finding something on-line that is frightening or confusing.
- ♦ **If you or your child view a site with child pornography, or suspect that a child is being victimized, call the**

**Union County High Tech Task Force
at (908) 527-4508.**

A Message From Union County Prosecutor Theodore J. Romankow



Theodore J. Romankow
Prosecutor

As we embark upon this new century, law enforcement continues to face significant challenges, not the least of which is the investigation and prosecution of individuals responsible for committing crimes through the use of computers. Today, the same electronic marketplace that offers members of the public unprecedented access to a global market also presents the challenge for law enforcement to ensure that this marketplace is safe and secure for our children.

The commitment by Union County law enforcement to this effort is in recognition that computer crime is pervasive, transcends traditional jurisdictional boundaries and, unless effectively deterred, will adversely impact the quality of life of all our citizens. Such a commitment is law enforcement's duty. Anything less would be unacceptable.

Theodore J. Romankow

For further information or to contact the Union County Prosecutor's Office, please visit our website at: www.unioncountynj.org/prosecutor



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