Tips from Elgin Police Department's School Resource Officers (SRO) on...

Cyber Bullying

Prevention Ideas: Communication, Monitoring, Education

- Position your computer and other electronic devices out in the open at home; pay attention to what your kids are doing on them. Learn what sites they like and try out the devices they use.
- Consider installing parental control filtering or monitoring technologies.
- Talk with your child. Make him aware that while you respect his (or her) privacy, safety is your main concern. Tell your child that as part of being a responsible parent, if you suspect something is wrong, you will review his text messages, emails or social networking sites.
- Have conversations about technology with your child. Review your house rules about its use. Be clear that there will be consequences if you discover your child has been treating people poorly using technology. Encourage him to report ANY improper treatment of others through technology.
- Talk specifically with your child about cyber bullying and encourage him to come to you if he receives threatening or otherwise alarming/disturbing messages via the internet or cell phone. Tell your child that you will not take the technology away if he confides in you about being bullied. Tell your child NOT to respond to or forward the messages, but keep evidence of the bullying to use when you report it. Be sure to block communication with the bully.
- Get computer savvy. While your kids may know more than you about the computer, make an effort to educate yourself and attempt to stay well-informed about safe use of technology. Check out : http://www.netsmartz.org/Cyberbullying
- Ask your child for his passwords, but tell him you'll only use them in case of emergency. Emphasize he should keep his passwords safe and NOT share them with anyone else.
- Ask to "friend" or "follow" your kids on social media sites or ask another trusted adult to do so.
- Help your child make smart choices about what he posts or says. Tell him not to share anything that could hurt or embarrass himself or others. Once something is posted, it is out of his control whether someone else will forward it.
- Encourage your child to think about who he wants to see the information and pictures he posts online — a friend, his friend's friends and beyond.
- Review your child's friends list or followers in social media. See who your child is receiving regular information from. Check your child's friends' friend lists too.

Cyber Bullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. This technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites. The bullying includes harassment, threats and humiliation.

Examples of Cyber Bullying include sending mean emails or text messages, spreading rumors or private information via texts or the internet, using social networking sites to make fun of others, and posting embarrassing pictures or videos of others online.

- Be aware that kids do create secondary accounts/alternate profiles that they have not told their parents about. They may do all of their interaction with friends on an alternate account using a nick name that will not appear if you search their name. Kids can have multiple social media accounts, one for mom and dad to see and others just for "friends."
- Remember, you can check the computer's browser history to see what sites your child has been to recently.

Know your child's school policy on bullying

All Illinois schools must have a policy for preventing, reporting and responding to bullying. Many of Elgin's U-46 schools follow the EXPECT RESPECT bullying prevention program.. EXPECT RESPECT teaches students to report bullying incidents to adults and to stand up for themselves and others in a socially acceptable manner. Students are instructed to report bullying to a teacher or through an online form, such as the one available by clicking here. Find out the policy at your child's school. Make sure your child knows what it is and use it as an opportunity to discuss how you would handle any bullying situation together.

EPD SRO'S ESTIMATE THAT ABOUT 50% OF THEIR PEER MEDIATIONS ARE DUE TO BULLYING.

Are there warning signs of Cyber Bullying?

If your child is acting differently, it can be hard to tell why, but consider the following worth looking into:

- Child appears angry, depressed or frustrated after using the computer or other electronic devices.
- Either unexpectedly stops using the computer or other electronic devices or displays an acute increase in use.
- Seems nervous or upset after receiving emails, texts or other messages.
- Appears uneasy about going to school or to social events.
- Avoids discussions about what he is doing on the computer or other electronic devices.
- Becomes abnormally withdrawn from usual friends and family members.

The best thing you can do is to talk with your child about your concerns; keep the lines of communication open!

According to the National Crime Prevention Council, Cyber Bullying is a problem that affects almost half of all American teens. It can happen 24/7 and usually is received by your child when he is alone. Be sure your child knows he can come to you immediately with any concerns, fears or questions about electronic bullying!

The SRO Program of Elgin Police Department places an Elgin officer in each middle and high school in District U-46. They are a community resource. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact one of them. Contact information is available on their webpage at http://www.cityofelgin.org/sro.

For some ideas on how to introduce a cell phone to your child… check out this website: http://cyberbullying.us/parents-and-cell-phone-rules-for-children-and-teens/

Take the Quiz: http://stopcyberbullying.org/teens/are_you_a_cyberbully.html

This quiz can get you and your child thinking about the issue of cyber bullying. Check it out!

A different kind of bullying….
If you are concerned about your child being involved with a gang, whether they are being badgered to join or they are posting gang-related pictures and info on their Facebook page — you can get connected to the EPD Gang Officers. Their program, Operation Home Front, may be the intervention you are looking for. Learn more about this program at by clicking here. You can also talk to your child's SRO about these concerns.

Do you know what your kids are doing online? Take steps to find out. It's not being nosey or invading their privacy, **it's being SAFE!**

It can be as simple as starting the conversation.

Be proactive!