INOBTR Missouri's Coalition to Delete Online Predators

5 Things You Need to Know About Online Predators

1. **The Internet is the playground of the 21st century**
   - To an online predator, the Internet is a great device to connect with children, whether through chat rooms, virtual game rooms or blogs.
   - The Internet provides a way for online predators to gain access to your home through the computer. You would never let your child walk down the street alone in the middle of the night, but many parents don't think twice about giving their children unrestricted and unsupervised access to the computer. Online predators know this and use that information to their advantage.
2. **Stranger danger is very real online**
   - The fact that they don't really know someone just because they meet online is a tough concept for kids, and even teenagers, to understand.
   - Kids know that they're not supposed to talk to people they don't know when they go outside, but they need to understand that just because they're "talking" to someone in their own homes on the computer, that does not mean they really know that person.
3. **The Internet is a mask for online predators**
   - On the Internet, people can be anyone you want them to be …and anyone they want you to believe they are.
   - Online predators believe they are anonymous, and therefore do things they might otherwise not do.
4. **The Internet makes private lives public**
   - Blogs are virtual billboards of personal information.
   - You would never put up posters with your picture, name, phone number, where you go to work/school and what you do in your free time. But putting that type of material onto a blog or chat room (or allowing your children to do so) provides that information to tens of thousands, if not millions of people.
5. **Online predators and child pornographers are sex abusers…and they're in your neighborhood[1]**
   - The majority of child sex abuse cases in the U.S. are perpetrated by a family member or acquaintance. Some of these sex offenders use the Internet to commit their crimes.
   - The average child molester will abuse hundreds of kids in his lifetime:
     - 83% possessed images of children between the ages of 6 and 12.
     - 39% possessed images of children between the ages of 3 and 5.
     - 19% possessed images of children under the age of 3.

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[1] Janis Wolak, David Finkelhor and Kimberly Mitchell. Child-Pornography Possessors Arrested in Internet-Related Crimes: *findings from the National Juvenile Online Victimization Study*. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005, page 18.

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