



U.S. Department of Justice

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Idaho Educators and Parents

Re: Safety for Idaho's Children

Dear educators and parents of Idaho's children,

We hope that the start of the school year has proved to be full of potential. At the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Idaho we are working hand-in-hand with our law enforcement partners to keep Idaho's children safe. But we cannot succeed alone. We would like to ask for your assistance in educating your children about online safety.

Sadly, the prevalence of smartphones and other electronic devices has been associated with criminal activity targeted at young people. Predators seek to exploit and abuse children through online communication and through "sextortion" and other schemes. In 2022, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received 32 million reports related to online sexual exploitation, an increase of 82 percent from 2021.

Unfortunately, this problem extends to Idaho. In 2022, the Idaho Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force received 2,304 reports of child exploitation. Law enforcement is committed to investigating these matters, and the United States Attorney's Office, along with our state and local counterparts, is committed to seeking justice.

Awareness and prevention, however, are key. Enclosed are two Internet Safety Tips sheets, one for parents and one for children. There are also excellent internet safety resources available for parents and students at <https://www.missingkids.org/NetSmartz/home>.

We hope that you will talk about internet safety with your children and students so that Idaho's youth can be better protected from online threats. Please contact our office at (208) 334-1211 if we can assist you in safeguarding our most precious resource—our children.

Sincerely,

Josh Hurwit
United States Attorney

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.

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.