



A Program of



NetSmartz Workshop
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NetSmartz Workshop: A Partnership Between Boys & Girls Clubs of America and National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

Since the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) was first established in 1984, it has worked with Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) to help make youth safer. In the 1980s NCMEC worked closely with BGCA in the creation of their standards on selecting and screening staff to work in their 2,800 Clubs nationwide. In 1994, long before we realized that the Internet might pose a threat to the safety of its youngest users, NCMEC published *Child Safety on the Information Highway*, a brochure providing families with guidelines about how to stay safer while in cyberspace. Later, when cases of online child enticement garnered front-page news nationwide, this brochure became the first publication of its kind to help prepare youth for the risks they face online.

In the late 1990s BGCA launched Operation Connect, a multi-faceted and comprehensive effort to bridge the digital divide, between children who have access to the Internet and those who do not, and bring the latest technologies to BGCA members nationwide.

It was natural then, in 1999, when BGCA sought to develop state-of-the-art educational content about online safety that they should turn to NCMEC.

NetSmartz® was created to meet that growing need in an unprecedented way. The NetSmartz Workshop provides BGCA with original, animated characters and age-appropriate, interactive activities on CD-ROM that use the latest 3-D and web technologies to entertain while they educate. Boys & Girls Clubs leaders and children played vital roles in the appearance of the program content and characters, ensuring that the NetSmartz messages were on target and characters appealed to the respective age groups. In September 2001 the NetSmartz Workshop content was pilot-tested. The Internet safety program was released to all Clubs nationwide in August 2002.