

Leon County Schools

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SUPERINTENDENT

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Cyberbullying

What is Bullying?

- The repeated intimidation of others by the real or threatened infliction of physical, verbal, written, electronically transmitted, or emotional abuse, or through attacks on the property of another
- It may include, but not be limited to, actions such as verbal taunts, name-calling, extortion of money or possessions, and put-downs, which could include ethnically-based, gender-based slurs

What is Cyberbullying?

- Cyberbullying is willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text. Cyberbullies use either a computer or a phone to send harassing emails or text messages.
- Cyberbullies are malicious aggressors who seek implicit or explicit pleasure or profit through the mistreatment of another individual.
- To be defined as cyberbullying, mistreatment must involve harmful behavior of a repetitive nature.

Different Forms of Cyberbullying

- Flaming – online fights using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language
- Harassment – repeatedly sending nasty, mean, and insulting messages
- Denigration – “dissing” someone online; sending or posting gossip or rumors about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships
- Impersonation – pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material to get that person in trouble or danger or damage that person’s reputation or friendships
- Outing – sharing someone’s secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- Trickery – tricking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information, then sharing it online
- Exclusion – intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- Cyberstalking – repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear

Nature and Extent of Cyberbullying

- In a survey of 1,500 Internet-using adolescents who reported their experiences with cyberbullying, almost 80% said that cyberbullying occurs online, while 32% of males and 36% of females reported experiencing cyberbullying.
- Almost 40% were disrespected, over 12% were threatened, and about 5% were scared for their safety.
- Negative emotional responses included significant amounts of frustration, anger, and sadness.
- Twenty-eight percent of youth indicated that they had been bullied via email.
- Over 40% of youth who were cyberbullied did not tell anyone about the incident.

Cyberbullying Warning Signs

A child may be a victim of a cyberbully if he or she...

- unexpectedly stops using the computer
- appears nervous or jumpy when an instant message or email appears
- appears uneasy about going to school or outside in general
- appears to be angry, depressed, or frustrated after using the computer
- avoids discussions about what he or she is doing on the computer
- becomes abnormally withdrawn from usual friends and family members

A child may be cyberbullying others if he or she...

- quickly switches screens or closes programs when you walk by
- uses the computer at all hours of the night
- gets unusually upset if he or she cannot use the computer
- laughs excessively while using the computer
- avoids discussions about what he or she is doing on the computer
- is using multiple online accounts, or an account that is not his or her own

What Can Be Done About Cyberbullying?

- Teachers, administrators, and parents should proactively address the potentially negative uses of technology.
- Parents must regularly monitor the online activities in which children are engaged.
- Parents should also encourage an open dialogue with their children regarding issues of safety and responsible internet use.
- Teachers must take care to supervise students as they use computers in the classrooms and should consider incorporating discussions of issues related to cyber safety in their curriculum where appropriate.
- School liaison officers and law enforcement officials must investigate all instances of harassment – including electronic bullying – and hold responsible parties accountable.

Related Online Risky Behavior

- **Disclosing personal information** – young people are disclosing personal contact information and massive amounts of sensitive personal information in profiles, web pages, blogs, and through all forms of internet communications
- **Internet addiction** – this is defined as an excessive amount of time spent using the internet, resulting in lack of healthy engagement in other areas of life
- **Suicide and self-harm communities** – depressed young people are interacting with sites and groups that provide information on suicide and self-harm methods (cutting, anorexia, fainting, etc.) and encouragement for such activities
- **Hate group recruitment and gangs** – sites and groups that foster hatred against “others” are actively recruiting angry, disconnected youth who informally use the internet to coordinate troublesome and dangerous activities
- **Risky sexual behavior** – young people are using internet communities and matching services to make connections with others for sexual activities, ranging from online discussions about sex to “hook-ups,” after which they might post or provide sexually suggestive or explicit pictures or videos
- **Violent gaming** – violent gaming frequently involves sexual or biased-based victims where young people often engage in online stimulation games, which reinforce the perception that all interactions online, including violent ones, are “just a game.”

Tips for Adolescents on Safe and Responsible Networking

- **Assume that EVERYONE has access to your profile** – this includes parents, teachers, and law enforcement even if you have your profile restricted to “friends only.” Don’t discuss things you wouldn’t want them to know about. Don’t use language you wouldn’t use in front of your parents. Even so, make sure you set your profile to “private” so that you can control who has easy access to your information.
- **USE DISCRETION when putting pictures (or any content for that matter) on your profile** – your friends might think that picture of you acting silly at the party last night is hilarious, but how will your parents or a teacher react? Also remember that when our friend takes your picture it may end up on their profile for all to see.
- **Assume people WILL use the information on your profile to cause you harm** – don’t put anything online you wouldn’t want your worst enemy to find out about. Also, don’t add people to your friend or contact network unless you know them in real life. Even if you think you know them, be skeptical. Kids often think it is cool to accumulate and have a million “friends.” Just remember that these people have open access to all of your posted content and information.
- **Assume there are predators out there trying to find you based on the information you provide on your profile** – think like a predator. What information on your profile identifies who you are, where you hang out, or where you live? Never post this kind of information anywhere online. Your friends know how to find you.
- **You may be held responsible for inappropriate content on your profile that is in violation of the terms of service or acceptable use policies of the internet service provider or web site(s) that you use.** Moreover, school districts across the country are revising their policies to allow them to discipline students for online behavior that can be linked to a disruption in the classroom environment-even if you wrote the content from your own computer.
- **NOTE: Be aware that cyberbullying can take place outside of e-mail and chat rooms. Popular internet networking sites such as myspace.com, facebook.com, xanga.com, and personel blogs and web pages are prime places for cyberbullying to occur. Be sure to follow the tips above on safe and responsible networking to prevent this from happening.**

Resources

- 1) Center for Safe and Responsible Use of the Internet

<http://www.cyberbully.org/>

(541) 344-9125

- 2) National Crime Prevention Council

<http://www.ncpc.org/>

(202) 466-6272

- 3) iSAFE

<http://www.isafe.org/>

(760) 603-7911

- 4) The MindOH! Foundation

<http://www.mindohfoundation.org/>

(713) 533-1138

- 5) Netsmartz Workshop

<http://www.netsmartz.org/>

1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)