

PROTECT EVERY CHILD

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INTERNET SAFETY FOR KIDS

SECTION 3

BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION OF NORTH CAROLINA

ACCESS

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INTERNET SAFETY FOR KIDS

GETTING THE WORD OUT

- Copy the participant guide. You will need to make one copy for each participant.
- Copy the bulletin insert. You will need to make one copy for every two bulletins. Cut the inserts in half and place in the church bulletins the week before the meeting.
- Recruit volunteers to hand out the participant guides at the door on the meeting day.
- Preview this session's DVD segment and meeting plan.
- In addition to the bulletin inserts, promote this "Internet Safety" series during announcement times, in the church newsletter, on the church Web site, through Sunday School class e-mails, and at any other opportunity. Use the following information to promote this series of programs:

Remember when your children thought you were so smart? Your influence was without question and your ability to protect your children from "questionable influences" was as easy as grabbing the remote control.

That's not the case anymore. Today's teens are masters of technology in a culture sadly short on restraint. Our children need our guidance and our encouragement when it comes to navigating the minefields of digital media.

Unfortunately, many parents and guardians are a little like dinosaurs when it comes to understanding and appreciating the ways teens communicate. But never has your presence and your input been more needed.

Keeping our children safe on the Internet is a big job, but it is a task well worth the effort.

You don't have to be a technology guru to help your child set healthy and safe limits on the Internet, you just have to be willing to learn and to ask questions. Come find out more!

GETTING STARTED

- Opening – Welcome the group. Say: During the past several sessions we've learned about multi-tasking, instant messaging, and social networking. This week

we'll view session three from Protect Every Child – What Parents Should Know About Internet Safety For Kids. This 5 or 6 minute session focuses on access. We will follow up with a short time of discussion.

- Prayer – Thank God for the way He parents us. Ask Him for the wisdom we need to protect our children and the patience we must show as we establish guidelines and rules for our children as they use technology. Pray for open lines of communication between you and your children. It is said that rules without relationship lead to rebellion.

- Pre-video comments – Say: Most parents understand that teenagers need to stay connected with their friends. Unfortunately, lots of people want to "befriend" unsuspecting teens on the Internet. Parents need to teach their children that wisdom should rule when posting information to profiles. Photos and videos are there forever – what looks good to a 16-year-old could be a bit embarrassing 10 years later.

- Show the "Access" segment on the DVD.

- Allow a few minutes for participants to read through the participant guide.

CHAT IT UP

- Do any of the statistics on the participant's guide surprise you?
- Have you ever talked to your child about how they should respond when someone they don't know approaches them online?
- What do you think is an appropriate time for your child to be online each day (including instant messaging)?
- What are some of your concerns when it comes to Internet safety?

CLOSE

Thank the group for coming. Remind them of your next meeting date and close with prayer.

ACCESS

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INTERNET SAFETY FOR KIDS

When your children were small you probably held their hand when you crossed busy streets or walked through crowded parking lots. Keeping them where you could see them and out of harm's way was your goal.

Now they are older and more independent, and instead of helping them navigate parking lots, now you are concerned with keeping your child safe on the Internet.

Maybe one of the biggest ways to help your child be safe online is by setting a good example. If your kids want to have access, then you need to have access. There are so many invaluable resources at your fingertips. You don't need to be particularly computer savvy from the beginning – just willing to learn.

Some of the most important lessons you can teach your children have little to do with technology and everything to do with being real and just plain wise. A good rule of thumb is that "tmi," or too much information, about your life on the Internet is not a good thing.

"Your direct involvement as a parent in providing supervision and guidance is the best way to protect your children from online threats," said Hon. Roy Cooper, N.C. Attorney General.

Parents may think their child will let them know if they view explicit material or are approached by someone they do not know. Research indicates a different story.

Crimes Against Children Research Center Survey:

- 25 percent of children who encountered a sexual approach or solicitation told a parent or adult.
- 75 percent of children are willing to share personal information obtained about themselves or their family in exchange for goods or services.

HOW YOU CAN PRAY

The battle is real. Listen to part of Ephesians 6 from "The Message" – "God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is no afternoon athletic contest that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels. Be prepared. You're up against

far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words, learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out."

"Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:15 (NIV)

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

In addition to talking with your kids and becoming more tech-savvy, the N.C. Attorney General's office has put together some information that can help parents get started:

Internet Safety Checklist:

- Computer in common area
- Firewalls
- Spam blockers
- Filtering software
- Parental controls – learn how to use them
- Post family rules near the monitor

Check out the N.C. Department of Justice's Web site at www.ncdoj.com for a wealth of helpful information and resources relating to teens and technology.

The bottom line is for parents to trust their instincts. Reassure your children that you will not be quick to "pull the plug" on their technology, but that you must be able to regularly monitor their accounts and provide guidance as needed.