COCA

Council On Child Abuse

A TALBERT HOUSE AFFILIATION

Dear Parents and Guardians,

During these unprecedented times, our culture turns to the internet to feel connected to others, as they are isolated due to social distancing. While social media has been an invaluable tool in helping us interact with others, our children are especially vulnerable to online threats to safety and cyberbullying.

COCA seeks to offer some guidance surrounding ways that students and parents can ensure safety while using the internet and apps. Enclosed you will find information and resources for internet safety, metadata, and cyberbullying awareness.

For additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact COCA at (513) 684 -7976 or email Prevention Education Specialist, Kahvah Whittaker at Kahvah.whitaker@cocachild.org.

Tips for Keeping Yourself Safe Online

- **Check your privacy settings** on your mobile apps, computer software, and online accounts. The default is often to share every type of information with the widest audience possible; you have to "opt out" if you don't want to share.
- **Be aware of your location services**, which provide GPS information about your current location to and through the apps you use on a device. Some location-related apps, like maps, do need location information for some functions. You can quickly turn off location services by doing the following:

> 1. Open the **Settings** app, then tap **Privacy**.
> 2. Tap **Location Services**. Here you can view a list of apps that have access to your location information, and a toggle switch to turn off Location Services entirely. If you want to turn off Location Services for all apps, slide the Location Services toggle to the off position.

- **Be aware of metadata** in the photos you send, receive, and post. Metadata can reveal information about photos even after they have been deleted. For more information on metadata and its impact on your privacy online, visit: http://www.teachingprivacy.org/
- **Avoid unsecured Wi-Fi connections**. Generally, you can call a network "unsecure" if there is no password or login credentials needed to access it.
- **Report any cyberbullying,** inappropriate pictures, threats, and other forms of misuse. Ways to report cyberbullying include:
  - **Directly to the app or website**: Most apps and websites have procedures to report abuse. If you are unsure of how to report within an app, you can visit https://cyberbullying.org/report for step-by-step instructions.
  - **To a trusted adult**
  - **To the police**

What is metadata?

The simplest definition of metadata is data that describes other data. Metadata is your fingerprint for everything you do online. Every picture you send, text you write, everything you google, every comment you make, FaceTime you have, etc. all have a set of codes and numbers that tell where that text or picture was taken, on who's device it was taken, at exactly what time it was taken, who it was sent to, who received it, and more. Metadata is constantly tracking everything we do, and selling it to companies so that they can access our social media accounts and advertise. The other thing with Metadata is that there is no way to delete these things. Metadata is still there to show all the information of a text, comment, or picture even after it was deleted.

This is the same with anonymous accounts or messages. If someone creates a fake account or uses an alias online, it is *so* easy for each comment or post to be tracked directly to the device they are using, where they were using it, and which other devices were around at that time. Metadata used to be something that only big places like the FBI could use, but now people just have to be tech-savvy and download a Metadata software, like Cellebrite, to be able to do this stuff. A few years ago, 90,000 pictures were leaked from Snapchat by someone that simply learned about Metadata and downloaded this information. Do you know how many people were impacted or upset when they found out a snapchat picture that they *thought* had disappeared forever was now on the internet for everyone to see?

COCA encourages kids to be cautious in their online activity, however, this does not mean that students need to be afraid! Are the police going to get involved every time someone sends a mean message and deletes it? No. But they can, and it is getting easier and easier for people to gain access to information and trace everything we do online. We just want you to be very careful, and know that nothing is anonymous anymore.

We all make mistakes, and the important thing is to use this information to make smart decisions online. If you ever receive a picture or message that you think is dangerous or could get you in trouble, tell an adult right away. Metadata can already show that you received the message, so deleting it won't help. Telling a trusted adult before you delete it can make sure that you don't get in trouble or wrongly accused of forwarding the picture or showing other students.

What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can happen through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.

Special Concerns

With the prevalence of social media and digital forums, comments, photos, posts, and content shared by individuals can often be viewed by strangers as well as acquaintances. The content an individual shares online – both their personal content as well as any negative, mean, or hurtful content – creates a kind of permanent public record of their views, activities, and behavior. This public record can be thought of as an online reputation, which may be accessible to schools, employers, colleges, clubs, and others who may be researching an individual now or in the future. Cyberbullying can harm the online reputations of everyone involved – not just the person being bullied, but those doing the bullying or participating in it. Cyberbullying has unique concerns in that it can be:

- **Persistent** – Digital devices offer an ability to immediately and continuously communicate 24 hours a day, so it can be difficult for children experiencing cyberbullying to find relief.
- **Permanent** – Most information communicated electronically is permanent and public, if not reported and removed. A negative online reputation, including for those who bully, can impact college admissions, employment, and other areas of life.
- **Hard to Notice** – Because teachers and parents may not overhear or see cyberbullying taking place, it is harder to recognize.

Laws and Sanctions

Although all states have laws requiring schools to respond to bullying, many states do not include cyberbullying under these laws or specify the role schools should play in responding to bullying that takes place outside of school. Schools may take action either as required by law, or with local or school policies that allow them to discipline or take other action. Some states also have provisions to address bullying if it affects school performance. You can learn about the laws and policies in each state, including if they cover cyberbullying.

Frequency of Cyberbullying

There are two sources of federally collected data on youth bullying:

•The 2017 School Crime Supplement (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice) indicates that, among students ages 12-18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year, 15% were bullied online or by text.

•The 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) indicates that an estimated 14.9% of high school students were cyberbullied in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Source: Stopbullying.gov

What Are the Consequences of Cyberbullying?

Sometimes, online bullying, like other kinds of bullying, can lead to serious long-lasting problems. The stress of being in a constant state of upset or fear can lead to problems with mood, energy level, sleep, and appetite. It also can make someone feel jumpy, anxious, or sad. If someone is already depressed or anxious, cyberbullying can make things much worse.

It's not just the person being bullied who gets hurt. The punishment for kids who cyberbully can be serious. More and more schools and after-school programs are creating systems to respond to cyberbullying. Schools may dismiss bullies from sports teams or suspend them from school. Some types of cyberbullying may violate school codes or even break anti-discrimination or sexual harassment laws. Therefore, kids who engage in cyberbullying may face serious legal trouble.

How to Stop Cyberbullying

Recognize Recognize suspicious and cyberbullying behavior and interactions online.

Refuse There are many ways that we can refuse cyberbullying. Most devices have settings that let you block the people who are bullying from sending messages. Password protect your phone and your apps, and change your passwords often. Be sure to share your passwords only with your parent or guardian. As you keep metadata in mind, it is also wise to think twice before sharing personal information or photos/videos that you don't want the world to see. Once you've posted a photo or message, it can be difficult or impossible to delete. So remind yourself to be cautious when posting photos or responding to upsetting messages.

If you see someone else being cyberbullied, though it may seem scary to intervene, offering your support to the person being bullied can make a big difference. This could be as simple as liking or leaving a nice comment on a post that is getting a lot of negative attention, disliking mean comments, or even messaging the person who is being bullied directly and asking how you can help.

Report Sometimes cyberbullying can become too intense or too overwhelming to be handled alone. This is when reporting is a good idea. Social media sites take it seriously when people post cruel or mean content or set up fake accounts. If users report abuse, the site administrator may block the person from using the site in the future. If someone sends mean texts or emails, report it to phone service or email providers (such as Cincinnati Bell, Google, and Verizon). In addition, it is always a good idea to tell a trusted adult about cyberbullying—they want to help!

Resources

281-CARE If you or someone you know is experiencing cyberbullying or any other form of bullying, anxiety, depression self-harm, or other issues and wish to speak to someone about their issue anonymously, Talbert House invites them to contact their 24/7 crisis line 281-CARE. If you text 4HOPE to 281-CARE, it will link you to someone anonymous, who can talk you through what is going on and get you help.

Reporting Cyberbullying Resources

https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/how-to-report

Tyler Clementi Foundation

https://tylerclementi.org/cyberbullying/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIh9fTrNia6QIViobACh1yowX2EAAYASAAEgL_AfD_BwE

Bullying No Way Activities

https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/NationalDay/ForSchools/ClassActivities

Cyberbully Zombies Attack Game

https://www.nsteens.org/Games/CyberbullyZombies

The Meaning of Beep: Cyberbullying Game

https://www.brainpop.com/games/mobcyberbullying/

Cyberbullying Videos for Kids

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ctd75a7_Yw

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=916K8xRxQZw

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qebkVwBa6OU

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4g8w7GV3-iA