

# ChildrenOnline

Devoted to the safety of children and teens online

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A Division of Web Safe Consulting

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## ***What is Cyber-Bullying?***

What follows is the definition as described by the recent Massachusetts law:

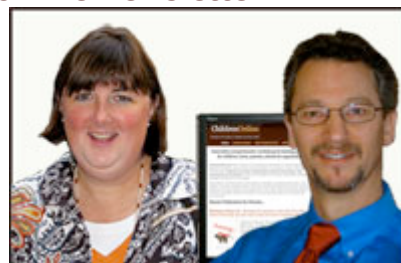
"Bullying" is defined as the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property, (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property, (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a

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## **39th Edition of the Children Online Newsletter.**

Here in the United States we are in the "dog days" of summer but the fall is fast approaching. As parents begin their annual preparation for the school year, many are likely to be thinking about how their children will fit in and the topic of bullying. Or cyber-bullying to be specific, which is the topic of this month's newsletter.



Cyber-bullying has been in the news all across the U.S. and this is the second time we have visited this topic this year. More and more states are passing laws that provide schools with a much wider reach to deal with these issues, even though the bullying may take place online and outside of school. Massachusetts just recently passed a very effective law that will provide our schools with the means for dealing with the many different, and sometimes subtle, forms of cyber-bullying.

Nancy Willard, Executive Director of the [Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use](#), published a paper for parents that describes the many behaviors that constitute cyber-bullying titled "[A Parent's Guide to Cyber-Bullying and Cyber-Threats](#)" that is very helpful.

Best wishes,  
 Marje Monroe and Doug Fodeman

Contact Marje or Doug via email at [marjem@childrenonline.org](mailto:marjem@childrenonline.org) or [dougf@childrenonline.org](mailto:dougf@childrenonline.org) for information about our programs or consulting services.

**Protecting Your Child From Cyber-Bullying**

school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

"Cyber-bullying" is defined as bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimiles communications. Cyber-bullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identify of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of the communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more

On the minds of parents and school officials this fall is the issue of cyber-bullying. Schools are actively working to put prevention and awareness programs in place for the academic year. Parents are increasingly worried about the possibility of cyber-bullying affecting their own child.

Schools and parents must work together to prevent and respond to the very serious issue of cyber-bullying. We have seen the grave consequences of bullying on Facebook and other social networking sites played out in the news after deaths of teens due to extreme online and offline cruelty. What isn't being talked about in the news are the lesser discussed, but still serious, consequences of bullying online such as loss of friendships, lowered self-esteem, feelings of shame, feelings of resentment, anger and lowered grades in school.

Parents can make a difference for their children by helping them to feel empowered online to be safe and make good decisions. Part of any conversation about manners and respect should always include technology. Reminding children and teens to be kind in their online communication, including the use of texting, Facebook, instant messaging, gaming, and emails should happen frequently. Often the screen acts as a barrier to good decision-making and constant reminders help kids keep their behavior more respectful online. Ask children and teens to be responsible in their online communication. Remind them that parent's expectations for their behavior extends to the Internet.

It is critical for parents to ask their children to tell them when they experience any type of bullying or meanness online. Recent studies have found that as few as 20% of cyber-bullying victims ever tell adults about their experiences online. Given the amount of kids who have experienced disrespect, meanness and bullying, this statistic is disconcerting. Keep in mind that the number one fear of most children that prevents them from being honest with their parents is that their parents will "pull the plug" on technology. Having frequent conversations with children about their online activity, parents may begin to chip away at the fears children have of telling their parents about the truth online. It can be very helpful for parents to reassure children that they want to help them and not "punish" them

persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

### ***Related Resources***

1. [When your child \\*is\\* the cyberbully](#). An interview with Dr. Elizabeth Englander, founder and director of the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center. [NY Times article, June, 2010]
2. [Online bullies pull schools into the fray](#). [NY Times article, June, 2010]
3. [A summary of the current state of cyber-bullying research](#) from the [Cyberbullying Research Center](#).
4. [Cyberspace Bullies](#)
5. [StopCyberbullying.org](#)
6. [Dealing with Cyber-bullying](#); a quiz for kids.
7. [Prevent Cyber-bullying](#); a website for teens. This site includes a discussion forum for teens to share their stories.
8. [Dealing with Cyber-bullying](#) from Girlzone.com; a site designed for girls.
9. [PeaceEducation.org](#) is

if they experience bullying or meanness.

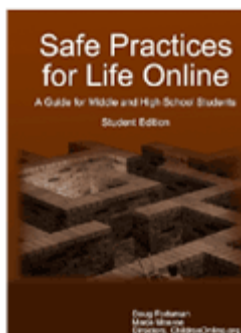
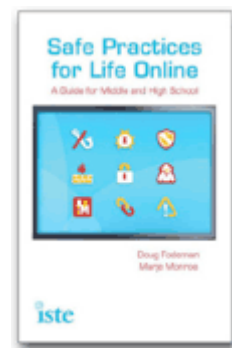
It is always important for parents to have the passwords for their child's online accounts. Having routine access to online accounts can help prevent a prolonged mean and harassing conversation or event. We recommend having the passwords for all accounts of children under the age of 16. Understand that having a password to a young teens Facebook account is different than being "friended."

By tackling the issue of cyber-bullying head on with our children and teens, we can begin to create a climate of trust between adults and kids. That, in turn, will lead to more thoughtful conversations and hopefully better decision-making on the part of young people.

## **INTERNET SAFETY CURRICULUM**

### **Safe Practices for Life Online**

Children Online has a curriculum on Internet Safety that includes nearly 100 student exercises and lots of information on many topics including social networks, instant messaging, cyberbullying, online marketing, scams directed at kids, protecting privacy online, avoiding identity theft and impersonation, creating strong passwords and more.



There is also a student edition which includes cartoons and "Did you know" sections of interesting facts for students.

To learn more or place an order visit our [publications page at ChildrenOnline.org](#) or go directly to our publisher's pages:

[Teacher's Edition at ISTE](#)

[Student Edition at Lulu.com](#)

### **About Children Online**

holding training workshops next January for teachers on conflict resolution and peer mediation.

**1½ Children Online 2010  
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DougF@ChildrenOnline.org**

**Children Online offers innovative and comprehensive workshops on Internet safety and online education to students, parents, faculty and administrators. Our approach, unique in the field of Internet safety, combines a thorough understanding of Internet technologies, child development and counseling, to focus on the impact of the internet on the social, emotional and language development of young people.**

**Doug Fodeman and Marje Monroe, experts in technology, counseling and education, work together to provide invaluable research and tools for parents and schools with practical real-life solutions to the issues faced by young people online. Since 1997, Marje and Doug have spoken to thousands of students, teachers and parents. They have several publications in the area of Internet safety and offer a free online newsletter. More detailed information can be found at ChildrenOnline.org.**

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