

INTERNET SAFETY TIPS

FOR EDUCATORS AND YOUTH-SERVING PROFESSIONALS

BEAU BIDEN



FOUNDATION

Educators, school counselors, and other youth-serving professionals are often the first adults to learn when a child is facing an issue of online abuse or bullying. With more electronic devices at home and in the classroom, it is important that educators know their power and responsibility to prevent and address Internet safety issues.

KNOW THE BASICS

- 1. Talk with students about online safety** before granting access to devices and the Internet in the classroom. Continue the discussion throughout the year. Start early – for younger students, talk about the importance of privacy and not meeting strangers from the Internet. As students get older, consider topics like unhealthy digital relationships and the consequences for different online behaviors. Know your state’s laws on sexting and bullying. Share this information with students.
- 2. Ensure that school-owned devices are monitored** by a program that can alert school administration to anything concerning such as signs of cyberbullying, suicidal ideation, sexual content or threats of violence.
- 3. Set and communicate clear ground rules for electronic device use** in your school/organization. If your school doesn’t already have one, consider having students sign a device and Internet use agreement. For an example, please visit BeauBidenFoundation.org/Resources.
- 4. Know the websites and apps** students use. Students may feel more comfortable discussing a safety issue with someone who understands the platform or app. Look to school/organization digital codes of conduct when setting classroom website restrictions.
- 5. Be aware of account and device settings.** Teach students to keep profiles private, to turn off location settings on social apps, and not to share or ask for passwords. Teach them how to set strong passwords on school accounts and to update them regularly. Remind them to log out of accounts they use on a shared school device.
- 6. Teach good digital citizenship.** Educators hold a captive audience and have tremendous impact. Teach students not to send mean messages, not to ask for or send inappropriate photos, and to respect everyone’s in-person and online boundaries. Remind students that the Internet is both **PUBLIC** and **PERMANENT**. **Send is forever.**
- 7. Know the warning signs.** A child who is experiencing online enticement may spend increasing time online, grow upset when not able to use their device, take extra steps to conceal what they are doing online, or receive gifts from strangers.
- 8. Report potential online enticement and more serious forms of cyberbullying**, especially those involving violence, extortion, and/or sexually explicit materials, to the appropriate website or app, cell phone provider, law enforcement, or www.cybertipline.org. Review with your students how they can report this as well. Know your school’s or district’s bullying reporting system and/or ombudsman, and for cases of abuse, know your mandatory reporting responsibilities and your state’s child abuse reporting number.
- 9. Partner with your parent-teacher organization** to review your school’s Internet safety and cyberbullying policies and to raise awareness in your school.
- 10. Encourage dialogue and peer-led projects.** Give students space and time to share feelings and ideas. Building empathy and letting students lead change can shift school culture to one of kindness and safety.

DIGITAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EDUCATORS

- **Model good online behavior.** Ensure you have strong passwords in place, and do not put anything online that you would not want seen by students or parents.
- **Follow the rule of no personal, non-organization related online interaction between youth and staff.** Do not request or accept students as friends on any social media. All interactions between staff and students must be observable by parents and/or other adults, including those online and on the phone. Communicate these policies clearly to students and explain why they are important.
- **Intervene** if you see or learn of a colleague or another adult crossing a boundary online or offline with a child. This includes interacting with students on personal social media.

PREVENT AND REACT RESPONSIBLY TO CYBERBULLYING

- **Create safe environments** where inclusion and acceptance of all students is the norm. Cyberbullying is only one form of bullying – it often echoes or reinforces what is happening off the screen.
- **Let children know that reporting bullying or abuse is not being a “tattletale” and that the safety of everyone in the classroom comes first.** Children may not ask for help because they want to control the situation on their own, feel humiliated, or fear backlash from those who bullied them. Follow through and keep an eye on the safety and well-being of students even after an incident seems resolved.
- **Take immediate action when bullying occurs.** By taking immediate action you show students that you care. By addressing signs of bullying early, you can help stop an issue before it accelerates into a full-blown problem.
- **Give students tools to stand up to cyberbullying, and support them.** Discuss prevention and intervention. Talk to students about being *upstanders* instead of just *bystanders*. Ask them why they think people bully others. Help students with phrases and practices to reject bullying in-person and online.



Educators are often the first trusted adults students think of when they need help.

Let students know you will listen with an open mind, and help them brainstorm other trusted adults who they can go to as well. If they come to you with any alarming issues, respond calmly, listen attentively, tell them it's not their fault, answer questions, and help them report it if necessary.

- » Thank you for telling me.
- » I'm sorry that happened to you.
- » How can I support you?
- » I believe you.
- » You are not alone.

PREVENTION OPPORTUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR:

- **October:** National Bullying Prevention Month (United States), National Cybersecurity Awareness Month (U.S.)
- **October (First Monday):** World Day of Bullying Prevention
- **November 13:** World Kindness Day
- **February:** Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (U.S.)
- **April:** National Child Abuse Prevention Month (U.S.)
- **April (Date varies):** National Day of Silence to raise awareness of bullying and harassment of LGBTQ students (U.S.)
- **May:** Mental Health Awareness Month (U.S.)
- **June:** National Internet Safety Month (U.S.)

Most social media platforms include help centers to assist in adjusting settings and reporting inappropriate content and requests. For links to these, our Electronic Device Agreement, and other resources you can share with students and families, please visit www.BeauBidenFoundation.org/Resources.

To bring Internet Safety training to the youth, families, or staff at your school or organization, please contact us at www.BeauBidenFoundation.org/Contact.