As young people spend more and more time on cell phones and instant messengers, cyber-bullying has become increasingly commonplace. Some teens can be lured into such behavior because it takes place seemingly in a virtual world, with apparent anonymity. Others don't even recognize these hurtful actions as acts of bullying.

Young people say bullying is one of the biggest problems they face. Clearly, we must do a better job helping them stay cyber-safe. As is often the case with challenging adolescent behaviors, parent education, communication and supervision remain key to prevention.

For more information on cyber-bullying, visit the National Crime Prevention Council at ***www.ncpc.org.***

IF YOU SUSPECT THAT YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN SEXUALLY SOLICITED ONLINE...

you may report the incident via the Cyber Tipline at *www.missingkids.com/cybertip/* or the Child Pornography Tipline at 1-800-843-5678.

The following organizations also serve as excellent resources about Internet safety for your children:

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children
www.ncmec.org
1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)

National PTA
www.pta.org
toll-free (800) 307-4PTA (4782)

National Crime Prevention Council
www.ncpc.org
(202) 466-6272

NY State Division of Criminal Justice Services
www.criminaljustice.ny.gov

www.safekids.com

The Children's Partnership's publication, **"The Parents' Guide to the Information Superhighway: Rules and Tools for Families Online"** is available **FREE** at their website: ***www.childrenspartnership.org***

"Great Websites for Kids" is also available **FREE** online at the website of the ***American Library Association*** at: ***www.ala.org/greatsites***

This brochure was compiled with information from the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Children's Partnership Organization, and the www.safekids.com website.

INTERNET SAFETY

What Every Parent Should Know

JOHN J. FLANAGAN • 2ND SENATE DISTRICT

District Office: 260 Middle Country Rd. • Smithtown, NY 11787 • (631) 361-2154
Web: flanagan.nysenate.gov • **Email:** flanagan@nysenate.gov

Dear Friend,

Did you know that one in five children has been sexually solicited online? Criminals who prey on the vulnerability of our children are using online chat rooms and instant messaging to identify and contact potential victims. Sadly, as technology becomes more sophisticated, so do the criminal practices of child predators.

Just as you would not allow your children to wander alone through unfamiliar city streets, neither would you want them interacting on the Internet without parental supervision. In fact, one of the most important things you can teach a child is that the internet is not always a safe playground. Behavior that would make them uncomfortable in person must not be tolerated online.

With this in mind, I have developed a brochure to describe potential dangers that children may encounter online, as well as offer tips on how to ensure that the internet remains a safe place for our children to visit and enjoy.

I hope that you find this information helpful.

Sincerely,

John J. Flanagan
2nd Senate District

#527 Revised: 2/2012

PARENTS
YOU'RE IN CHARGE

Certain people can pose a danger to children online, and certain information online is not appropriate for children. Most parents have strong feelings about what their children should be exposed to, and are concerned with how easy it is to get information online. Parents should and do worry about materials that are sexually explicit, violent, racially biased, or overly commercial.

You can significantly improve your children's online experiences by following these simple rules:

1. **Learn About the Internet Yourself**
   If you are just starting out on the Internet, see what your local library, community center, school or newspaper offers by way of introduction.
2. **Get Involved**
   Your involvement in your child's life, including his or her online experiences, is the best assurance you can have of your child's safety. Learn with your children about fun things to do as well as about the dangers online in a way that makes you a partner in the experience, rather than a resented censor.
3. **Stay Informed**
   Keep yourself informed about parental controls and how they can help you keep your child safe online.
4. **Become an Advocate for Kids**
   If you see material or practices online you do or do not like, contact your Internet Service Provider and the company that created the material. Take advantage of this unique opportunity to make sure that this growing medium develops in positive ways for kids.

SIMPLE RULES FOR ONLINE SAFETY

Instruct your children to —

- Never give out personal information such as their address, telephone number, or the name and location of their school without your permission.
- Tell you immediately if they come across any information that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Never agree to get together with someone they "meet" online without first checking with you.
- Never send a person a picture of themselves or anything else without checking with you.
- Never respond to any messages that are mean or in any way make them feel uncomfortable.
- Never give out their Internet password to anyone (even their best friends) other than you.

PARENTAL CONTROL TOOLS

Parental controls can help you keep your child safe online. The following information explains where to find these tools, and what they can do.

There are three primary places where parents can obtain parental control tools:

- **Your Internet Service Provider (ISP)**
  The best place to start is with the company that provides you with a connection to the Internet, such as America Online, Verizon or Time Warner Cable. Most offer a range of control features, often for free.
- **Your Local Computer Electronics or Retail Store**
  Here you can buy "blocking and filtering" software, such as Cyber Patrol and CYBERsitter, that include features similar to the ones provided by an ISP.
- **Your Web Browser**
  You can also use certain web browsers, such as Microsoft Internet Explorer, to enforce parental control rating systems.

HAVE A TALK WITH YOUR CHILDREN……so that rules can be established for going online. These will include the specific time of day and length of time they are allowed to use the Internet, along with the appropriate areas they are allowed to visit.

Depending on the parental tools you select, many of the features include:

- Routing your child's e-mail first to your account.
- Rejecting e-mail from specific e-mail addresses.
- Limiting e-mail with offensive language and personal information from being sent and received.
- Blocking access to material (text and pictures) identified as inappropriate for kids.
- Permitting access only to materials specifically approved as safe for kids.
- Allowing you to set different restrictions for each family member.
- Limiting results of an Internet search to content appropriate for kids.
- Enforcing time limits set by parents.
- Allowing access only to monitored chat rooms OR blocking access to all chat rooms.
- Blocking private messages between a child and other users.

HELP TEENS STAY CYBER-SAFE

For many young people, social interactions are front and center during critical periods of personal development. Unfortunately, negative social experiences at a young age can lead to lifelong, harmful consequences – whether the interaction takes place in person, via the phone, or online.

What exactly is cyber-bullying? It's when a child, preteen or teen is threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child, preteen or teen using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, or mobile phones.

—continued