

Cyber Bullying: An Overview

As the Internet's influence grows, the potential for danger also escalates. One of these dangers is from cyber bullying. This problem is growing even in Hawaii and is very different from the schoolyard bullying of which most of us are familiar.

Cyber bullying consists of sending or posting cruel messages, photos, or videos on the Internet or other electronic media with the intent of damaging the reputation of the target. Types of cyber bullying include but are not limited to:

- Flaming (sending angry or vulgar messages).
- Harassing victims with repeated offensive or cruel messages.
- Creating web sites that have stories, cartoons, or pictures that mock others. They may ask peers to rate their physical attractiveness or other things.
- Impersonating another by breaking into his or her online account and sending vicious or embarrassing material to others.
- Tricking someone into revealing sensitive personal information, and electronically forwarding that information to others.

Cyber bullying has the unique ability to circulate through the schoolyard, the neighborhood and the entire world with a click of a button to quickly create severe and irrevocable harm.

Cyber Threats

A cyber threat is a message that creates concern about the writer using violence against himself/herself or others, including suicide. Messages can be either explicit threats or clues as to the emotional stress of the individual and his or her willingness to commit these acts.

Prevent Your Child From Becoming A Cyber Bully Or A Target

- Educate your family on the opportunities for education and for danger on the Internet in order to take advantage of its beneficial uses and protect your family from its dangers.
- Keep the computer in a family room of your home, where there is lots of traffic, rather than in a private room.
- Create clear and simple rules for Internet usage. A good example may be found at www.netsmartz.org.
- Advise children that if they ever become a victim of cyber bullying, to not respond, save the material and report it.
- Try to remain as anonymous as possible by withholding last names, contact information and financial information.
- Remember that online not everyone is who they say they are.
- Be aware that Internet service providers (ISP) such as AOL or RoadRunner do have rules of conduct. Violations may result in the temporary or permanent cancellation of service among other consequences.
- Consider volunteering at your local library, school, or other organization to help young children online.
- Discuss with your family the value of treating others how they would like to be treated both in person and online.
- Point out that misconduct online can lead to grave consequences for others. You may explain to your children stories in the news of cyber bullies harming others in violent attacks or even suicide.
- Cyber bullies may face criminal arrest, costly civil lawsuits, and/or severe long-term consequences for future education and career opportunities.
- Ask your child to think of how their actions reflect on them.
- Remind your child of the dangers of revealing personal information to others, especially online.
- Remind your children that electronic postings are permanent. Each posting could continue to cause harm to others and potentially to their own future.

What To Do If Your Child Is A Target Of Cyber Bullying

- Advise your child not to retaliate because it will likely make the situation worse.
- Save the evidence and try to identify the cyber bully.
- Tell the cyber bully to stop. Use a non-emotional, but assertive message.
- Ignore the cyber bully. Block or filter all further communication, avoid the websites where he/she has been attacked, and change e-mail addresses, screen-names and passwords.
- Contact the websites used for attack, your ISP or your cell-phone company, and file a complaint.
- Report the attacks to school administration. They can watch for additional bullying at school, check the cyber bully's school Internet records, and contact the cyber bully's parents.
- Contact the police if the cyber bullying contains any of the following: threats of violence, coercion, obscene or harassing messages, stalking, hate crimes, creating or sending a sexually explicit picture, sexual exploitation, or taking a picture of someone in a private place.

The Effects Of Cyber Bullying On Children

Victims of cyber bullying may experience depression, low self-esteem, change of interests, or a drop in grades. These effects are similar to those felt by children who have been bullied in person, but with a click of a button cyber bullying can be farther reaching and more dangerous because it often occurs at home, violating the place where a child feels safest, and it may be harsher because cyber bullies believe that they are anonymous.



Who We Are

Hawaii's Attorney General has created a statewide Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force with the help of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The Hawaii ICAC Task Force is part of a cooperative nationwide network of ICAC Task Forces that are dedicated to protecting children in the online environment. In order to accomplish this goal, Hawaii's ICAC Task Force makes Internet education and information available to Hawaii's children, teachers and parents. If prevention efforts fail, Hawaii's ICAC Task Force is ready to vigorously investigate and prosecute persons who victimize children through the use of computers and the Internet.

Parents: A False Sense Of Security

Parents often feel that if their children are at home, and if they have Internet filtering software, their children are safe from online dangers. But this thinking is dangerously false.

Parents must understand that as the Internet grows, the potential for harm increases just as the educational benefits do. Furthermore, children need to learn to use and live with the Internet, but need to learn to do so safely. With this understanding parents should strive to become and remain informed of websites that their children frequent and aware of the potential dangers that accompany Internet use.

The solution is not to ban children from Internet activity. Children need the Internet and should be encouraged and taught to use it safely.

Parents must put themselves in their child's position and understand the social stigma of sharing information of what occurs online with adults. Parents need to dispel their child's fears that knowledge of their child's Internet activity would put a stop to all online activity. Instead parents should let their children know that they need to be informed to protect and support them in case they need help.

How You Can Help

Hawaii's ICAC Task Force asks that you inform us of Internet activity that you consider dangerous to children. Our relationship with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and other ICAC task forces around the country enables us to use information provided to address problems regardless of where in the United States they originate.

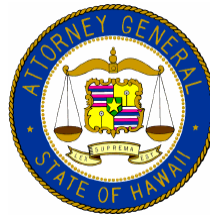
The Hawaii ICAC Task Force is especially interested in keeping children and parents informed about how to stay safe on the Internet. If you or your organization would like to learn more about our outreach programs or schedule a presentation, please contact us.

RESOURCES

National Center for
Missing & Exploited Children
www.missingkids.com

Netsmartz Workshop
www.netsmartz.org

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
CRIMINAL JUSTICE DIVISION**

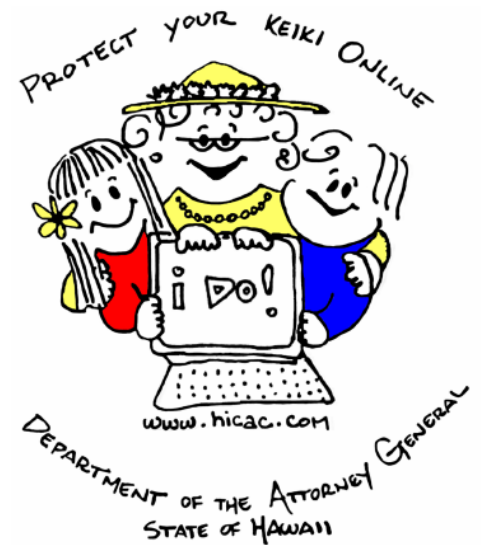


Visit us online at: www.hicac.com

This project was supported by Award No. 2005-MC-CX-K005 by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice.

CYBER BULLYING:

**A STATEWIDE AND
WORLDWIDE ISSUE**



**Hawaii Internet Crimes
Against Children
Task Force**

235 South Beretania Street
16th Floor
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Phone: 808-587-4111
Fax: 808-587-4118
Website: www.hicac.com
E-mail: ATG@hawaii.gov