

September 2009



SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

INTERNET SAFETY

(PART 2)

Recognizing Grooming

Internet use has become a way to gain educational information, keep up with hobbies and to social network with friends and family. Many youth often “meet new friends” as they surf internet sites. It is not always easy for youth or adults to discern when some of these “friends” may have bad intentions.

Grooming is the process a sexual predator uses to get a child they target online to meet with them offline. A predator may use chat rooms and e-mail to prey upon the emotional vulnerabilities of a young person. They may use flattery, offers of gifts, guilt, sympathy, money or modeling jobs to lure the child.

Predators tend to work through the grooming process in 6 Stages:

1. They collect information about the child from the child's on-line profile or chat, disguise their own identity and pretend to have a common interest.
2. They support the child or child's point of view in conflicts with others, and lead the child to believe that only the predator understands them.



REMEMBER: Predators use flattery, appeals for sympathy, offer gifts and/or money, even job offers to attract victims.

3. They ask the child to keep the friendship secret, exchange e-mail addresses or phone numbers and start using more adult language.
4. They start to talk about adult experiences and sexual topics, may gradually introduce sexualized photos, and encourage sexual curiosity.
5. They typically use threats of violence or public humiliation if child stops communicating or refuses to meet in person.
6. Finally, they achieve their goal of meeting in person.

You can protect yourself and your children by learning the 4R's:

1. **Recognize** techniques used by internet predators;

2. **Refuse** all requests for personal information;
3. **Respond** assertively by exiting the program, logging off or turning off the computer; and
4. **Report** any suspicious or dangerous contact that makes you feel uncomfortable.

It may not be easy to tell your child that their new friend could have bad intentions. However, statistics show that over 20% of children who spend time on the internet have received an unwanted sexual advance. The fact is the predators are waiting.

Additional Information

- Chat Acronyms listing can be found at: <http://www.sharpened.net/glossary/acronyms.php>
- Tips for Safe Surfing Brochure http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/Resources/pubdocs/InternetSafety_English.pdf
- How to recognize grooming: <http://www.safetens.com/how-to-recognize-grooming/>
- Internet Safety for Kids – Grooming <http://www.lawrencefine.com/internet-safety/2009/05/grooming/>