Consider limitations on electronic communication.

You can limit the time your kids spend online and on the phone. Consider requiring your teen to leave the phone on the kitchen counter when they’re at home and to take the laptop out of their bedroom before they go to bed, so they won’t be tempted to log on or talk to friends at 2 a.m.

Be aware of what your teens are posting on social networking sites.

Check out your teen’s Facebook and other public online profiles from time to time. This isn’t snooping. This is information your kids are making public. If everyone else can look at it, why shouldn’t you? Talk with them about their own ideas of what is public and what is private. You won’t know what they think and understand until you ask them.

Set expectations for your children.

Make sure you are clear with your teen about what you consider appropriate “electronic behavior.” You put limits on certain language or clothing. Make sure you let your kids know what is and is not allowed online too. Give reminders of those expectations. It doesn’t mean you don’t trust your kids. It means that you care about them enough to be paying attention.

Understanding the Law

Understanding the legal consequences for sexting in the State of Colorado can help you make safer, better and informed choices.

It is against the law for anyone to send or receive naked pictures of anyone under the age of 18. That includes sending naked pictures of themselves.

If you send or receive naked pictures of someone under 18 you can be charged with Sexual Exploitation of a Child, a class 3 felony, which could result in having to register as a sex offender.

Sexting

What you and your teen need to know about sexting

NOTHING you send or post can ever be completely deleted or removed

Resources

www.safekids.com
www.connectsafely.org
www.netsmartz.org
Sexting

Sexting is the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photos through text messaging on cell phones.

Middle school and high school teens often talk sexually by text messaging. They also send naked pictures of themselves.

Not only can this be illegal, it can expose the teen to sexual predators.

**What Teens Should Know**

**Don’t assume that anything you send or post is going to remain private.**

Your messages and posts will get passed around even if you think they won’t. Before hitting send, remember that you can’t control where your image will go. What you send to a boyfriend or girlfriend could easily end up with their friends and their friends, and their friends.

Nearly half of teens and young adults say they have had a sexually suggestive message (originally meant to be private) shown to them, and 20 percent say they have shared such a message with someone other than the person for whom it was originally intended.

**You can’t change your mind once you send or post a photo in cyberspace. Those photos may never go away.**

Never take images of yourself that you wouldn’t want everyone — your classmates, your teachers, your family, your employers — to see. Posting a message or photo that seems fun at the moment may not seem so later when you realize that the post is in cyberspace forever.

Think about the consequences of taking, sending or forwarding a sexual picture of someone underage, even if it’s of you. You could get kicked off sports teams, face humiliation, lose educational or employment opportunities and even get in trouble with the law.

Potential employers, college recruiters, teachers, coaches, parents, friends, enemies and strangers all may be able to find your past posts, even after you delete them.

**Don’t give in to the pressure to do something that makes you uncomfortable.**

More than 40% of all teens and young adults say that pressure from guys is one reason that girls and young women send and post sexually suggestive messages and images. More than 20% say pressure from friends is one reason that guys send and post sexually suggestive messages and images.

**Consider the recipient’s reaction.**

Just because a message is meant to be fun doesn’t mean the person who receives it will view it that way. Four in 10 teen girls who have sent sexually suggestive content say they did so as a joke, but many teen boys (29%) agree that girls who send such content are expected to date or hook up in real life. It’s easier to be more provocative or outgoing online. It may seem impersonal but whatever you write, post or send does contribute to the real life impression you’re making.

**Nothing is truly anonymous.**

One in five young people who send sexually suggestive messages and images send them to people that they only know online. Remember that even if someone only knows you by screen name or email address, they can find you if they try hard enough.

**Tips for Parents**

**Talk to your kids about what they are doing in cyberspace.**

You need to talk with your kids openly and honestly about online and cell phone activity, just as you would about real life sex and relationships.

Make sure they understand that messages or pictures they send over the Internet or their phones are not truly private. Make sure they know that other people, even their friends, might forward their photos or messages to people they don’t know or people they would not want to see them.

**It’s essential that you help your kids understand the potential short-term and long-term consequences of their actions.**

They need to be aware that employers and school administrators often look at online profiles to make judgments about potential employees or students.

**Know who your kids communicate with online, both on the computer and their cell phone.**

You want to know who your children are spending time with when they leave the house. It’s just as important to keep track of who your kids are spending time with online and on the phone. Supervising and monitoring your kids in real life and in cyberspace is part of your job as a parent.

**Many young people consider someone to be a friend even if they’ve only met online. What about your kids?**