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Dear D-Y Families:

Recently we were fortunate to have a presentation on Internet safety and cyber bullying by Assistant District Attorney Jenn McNulty. We are grateful for the support we receive from the District Attorney's Office and the opportunity to have this program for parents, teachers, and students in our district.

Below you will find the information that was shared in a handout on the evening of the presentation. We hope that if you were unable to attend, you will find this information helpful.

Sincerely,

Carol A. Woodbury

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Superintendent of Schools

INTERNET SAFETY:

The Internet allows us to communicate, shop, research, and bank more easily, but it also provides ready access to drugs, weapons, pornography, hateful information and predators. The way to stay safe is to understand the dangers and follow some simple rules to help you stay out of trouble.

As a parent, it is your responsibility to know what your children are doing online and guard them against the dangers that prey on unsuspecting minors.

Recent studies have found:

- **More than two-thirds of children and teens posted personal information**
- **A third to almost half of teens have been victimized online**
- **Many have issued threats electronically, but fully 60% have not told an adult**
- **48% of teens have received sexually suggestive messages**
- **40% of teen boys and 37% of teen girls say they have sent sexually suggestive messages**

The good news is that most dangers can be avoided if children and their parents learn about smart Internet use.

Since most computer use takes place in the home, parents must be actively involved in educating their children about appropriate and safe Internet use and in monitoring their child's activity.

Bear in mind, the single biggest reason why children don't tell their parents when something goes wrong online is that they are afraid they'll lose their computer privileges.

<u>SAFETY CHECKLIST:</u>

- **Set parameters: Hours per day, sites allowed to visit, chat rooms. OK? Interactive games? Set rules and enforce them.**

- **Keep the computer in a busy area.**

- **Passwords are private information. Children should not give their passwords to their friends and they must be careful when using someone else's computer that their password isn't saved by the computer. Know your child's passwords and screen names.**

- **If your child has a profile, delete it.**

- **Obtain a list of your child's "e-friends' " screen names and real names. Explain to your child that knowing someone on the computer does not mean they know who they really are.**

- **Use Parental Controls from your Internet Service Provider and learn how to block Instant Messages, E-mail, and chat rooms from people you or your child do not know.**

- **Learn how to check the history on your computer and check it at regular intervals. If it has been cleared, there is a chance your child is trying to cover up on-line activity. Ask them about it.**

- **There's a lot of inappropriate material online. Install blocking and filtering software to limit your child's exposure to such material.**

- **Develop an Internet safety plan for your family. With your children, agree on rules of what they can and cannot do online, when they can go on the Internet, and how long they can stay.**

- **Learn about the Internet. Sit with your child and visit sites together and take a class at a local community college or ask a friend who is knowledgeable. Visit the sites listed in the resources section of this brochure to learn more as well as to find activities to do with your child to promote a safety discussion with your child.**

- **Pay attention to your children's behavior on and off line. If you notice a big change, chances are there is something wrong that may be computer-related. Check into it.**

Because of the Internet's anonymity, some individuals are not who they pretend to be. Perhaps one of the biggest fears that parents have about the Internet is their child will go missing or is molested as a result of an online contact. Predators use the Internet to lure young people away from their homes. They spend time

"grooming" their potential victims to gain their trust and convince them to meet in person. Parents can protect children by explaining that the same rules apply to Internet "strangers" as they do for in person "strangers." Never enter any information about yourself that could help someone determine your identity.

Luring is illegal, and if your child meets someone online whom you perceive to be a threat, contact law enforcement.

RESOURCES:

www.Netsmartz.org
www.netfamilynews.org
www.missingkids.com
www.isafe.org
www.safekids.com and **www.safeteens.com**
www.wiredkids.org and **www.wiredsafety.org**
www.cybercitizenship.org
www.fbi.gov
www.getnetwise.org