

CELL PHONES

When you think about your children's online activities, do you consider their cell phones? Children can send and receive images, e-mails, texts, and instant messages from their phones, which many parents and guardians do not monitor. However, you should consider cell phones an extension of the Internet and employ the same safeguards. A cell phone can potentially lead to some of the below listed problems:

Enabling Cyberbullies: Cell phones make it easy for children to talk with their friends, but they also make them vulnerable to cyber bullying. Cell phones can be used at anytime and anywhere, giving cyberbullies unlimited access to their victims. Children may send and receive mean-spirited phone calls, texts, and picture messages at any hour.

Enabling Predators: Predators also know and take advantage of the fact that cell phones let them talk with their victims at any time. They are also aware that parents and guardians often forget to monitor children's cell phones. While some predators ask children for their cell phone numbers after meeting them online, there have been some cases where predators try to connect with willing children by sending texts to random numbers.

Enable Sexting : "Sexting" is a term used to describe the sending of sexually explicit text or picture messages of minors by minors. What most young people do not realize is that the production, possession, and distribution of explicit photos of minors, even if they are self-produced, is illegal in most cases. Furthermore, if these explicit photos end up on the Internet, children risk embarrassment and could jeopardize scholastic, athletic, and employment opportunities.

A few tips that can help:

- Review cell phone records for any unknown numbers and late night phone calls and texts
- Remind your child that texting is viral—anything sent in a text can be easily forwarded and shared.
- Teach your child never to reveal cell phone numbers or passwords online. Talk to your child about the possible consequences of sending sexually explicit or provocative images or text messages.