

Cyberbullying: Not in Coeur d'Alene

Today's children are connected to others unlike any other generation before us. Today's youth can talk, text, send photographs, share video, broadcast their immediate location, share intimate feelings, and so much more at the click of a button. What used to take a computer can now be done on a tablet, smartphone, and gaming consoles.

What is Cyberbullying?

Their connected world can also be frightening and intimidating one, however. Children can be victims of rumors and harassment at the speed of a posting, shared embarrassing photo or video, or even a fake profile. This is known as cyberbullying; the act of bullying a person through electronic technology.

Cyberbullying can happen at any time of the day or night. Cyberbullying can happen anonymously and distributed quickly. And embarrassing pictures or video can last a lifetime. Victims of cyberbullying are more likely to use alcohol and drugs, skip school, receive poor grades, have lower self-esteem, and in some cases become suicidal all due to the acts of others. According to the National Crime Prevention Council, nearly 43% of children under the age of 18 have been bullied online. 1 in 4 has had it happen more than once.

Is it illegal in Idaho?

Idaho code 18-917A (student harassment) prohibits the act of cyberbullying. This includes using a "...land line, car phone wireless telephone, or through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network."

How do we prevent cyberbullying?

Even if a child is prohibited from using devices, they could still be a victim of cyberbullying. One of the best things we can do is talk to our children about bullying and check in with them often. When you explain what bullying is, they can better identify it and report it to you if the need arises. Ask them about their friends and school, and listen to their concerns. Keep them active in things they love to do and stay engaged in those activities with them. Know their online presence and install parental control filtering software. Learn and use the social media they like. Ask to "friend" or "follow" them so you be part of their online life.

What do I do if my child(ren) is being cyberbullied?

First and foremost, create an atmosphere where your child will want to tell you when something is wrong. Tell them you will not take away their media devices and work with them on the problem.

We would encourage you to report cyberbullying to someone. Too often the first symptoms are ignored and the incidents can grow. Immediately do the following:

- DO NOT respond to and forward cyberbullying messages / posts / video / photographs. This may antagonize the bully into doing more.
- Keep evidence of cyberbullying. Record the dates, times, and incident types. Often you can print a screen shot using your computer's built in software. Block the bully's profile / e-mail, or phone.

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- Inform someone at the school about the incident(s). There is a potential that it could (or already has progressed) to in-person bullying.

Should I report it to law enforcement?

When in doubt, report it! But there are times that law enforcement should definitely be contacted:

- Any threat of violence. All children deserve a safe place to go to school and learn. We want to help ensure that.
- Child pornography or other sexually explicit messages / photos (sexting).
- Stalking and hate crimes.

There are school resource officers available throughout the school district that are there to listen to your concerns. Contact your school about who the officer is assigned and how to contact them.

For more information about cyberbullying check out The National Crime Prevention Council.

<http://www.ncpc.org/topics/cyberbullying>

Also, contact us via Facebook or e-mail us at policetips@cdaid.org for any questions / comments / reporting.

