

# Preparedness Alert

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**COLORADO**  
Division of Homeland Security  
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Department of Public Safety

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**Mission**  
Provide leadership and  
support to Colorado  
communities to prevent,  
protect, mitigate,  
respond and recover  
from all-hazard events  
including acts of  
terrorism.

## Protecting youth on the internet

The internet has become an amazing tool. The ability to communicate instantly with others, access countless pages of information, and complete purchases online has made daily life easier. We all would like for our children to be able to use and leverage the power of



the internet as well. Internet usage, however, comes with many risks, especially for youth. Below is an overview of risks and tips to keep children safe online.

### Risks to Your Children Online

While there are countless threats the internet poses to your children, they can be broadly categorized into three areas:

**Strangers / Criminals:** These individuals often attempt to befriend their victims online, perhaps even pretending to be another child. Once they gain the trust of a child, they use that to their advantage, perhaps asking for pictures, information or even to meet in person.

**Friends:** Some schoolmates can be dangerous, especially through cyber bullying. Cyber bullying can be in the form of Facebook posts, text messages or emails. Cyber bullying can be far more abusive than physical attacks, since you may not know who the bully is and attacks can be both more aggressive and very public.



**Themselves:** In today's age, your children can be their own greatest risk. Dangers include posting personal information or images of themselves and frequently trusting anyone. Universities and hiring departments often now do background checks on the Internet, including Facebook.

## Five Steps to Protecting Your Children Online

While the internet can be a scary place for youth, below are five steps parents can take to ensure their children have a safe online experience.

**Education:** Talk to your kids about the risks of being online. Make sure they feel comfortable talking to you about anything they do not understand or of which they are afraid. Education is the best security measure you can take; technology is changing too fast for a program to solve you and your children's problems.

**Dedicated Computer:** Have a dedicated computer just for your kids and keep it in a public area. Ensure each child has their own, non-privileged account so you can track their activity.

**Computer Rules:** Have a set of agreed upon rules and post those rules next to the kids' computer.

**Filtering:** When kids are younger, filter their activities. This helps prevent them from accidentally visiting unwanted content. As they get older, filtering becomes less effective.

**Monitoring:** Track your kids' activities, including the websites they visit, the terms they search for and the people they talk to. Some software supports weekly or monthly email reports.

### Additional Resources:

- Microsoft on Protecting Your Family Computer - [http://bit.ly/microsoft\\_sec](http://bit.ly/microsoft_sec)
- Facebook on Protecting Your Kids - [http://bit.ly/facebook\\_sec](http://bit.ly/facebook_sec)
- SANS Security Awareness Resources [http://bit.ly/sans\\_sec](http://bit.ly/sans_sec)
- A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety – Federal Bureau of Investigation [http://bit.ly/FBI\\_sec](http://bit.ly/FBI_sec)

## Tips for protecting children

- Talk to your children often about online risks.
- Let children know they can come to you with questions or concerns.
- Be alert for cyber bullying, and prepared to notify authorities if necessary.
- Monitor internet use and activities regularly.
- Set and enforce age-appropriate limits for internet use.
- Know with whom your children are communicating on the internet.
- Beware of "friends" your children only know through internet contact.