

Risks
Recommended Strategies

- 1** Sexual offenders targeting online games that have chat rooms including interactive web games, computer and console games.



- Stay involved and know the games your child is playing.
- Pay particular attention to games that incorporate a chat component – caution should be used before permitting your child to engage in chat with their opponent(s).
- Teach your child to create a username that does not give out information about their real identity and reinforce the concept of keeping personal information private.
- Some gaming consoles come with built in parental controls – activate this feature if available.
- Pay attention to what features come with your gaming console. For example, you may have the ability to block or restrict individuals who can interact with your child or you may not want to give your child the ability to voice chat with others.

- 2** Sexual offenders hijacking instant messaging accounts and coercing children to send nude or partially clothed images /videos of themselves and/or coercing children/adolescents to send images/videos of themselves engaged in sexual acts.



- Follow computer best practices such as installing anti-virus, firewalls, and keeping your software up to date.
- Stress the importance of using unique usernames and passwords for instant messaging accounts. Usernames should not reveal information about their true identity and obvious passwords are an easy way for others to gain access and control over accounts.
- Never enter your password into anything other than your IM program. Teach your child to check with you if unsure about the login area they are being asked to sign into.
- As the parent/guardian, you should be the only ones that knows your child's password.

- 3** Sexual offenders using 3D animated characters, referred to as Avatars, to engage youth in online conversations.

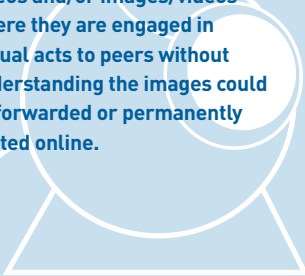


- Be aware of the IM/game program your child uses and any associated characters they have adopted to represent themselves (avatar).
- Ensure your child's avatar is age appropriate and non-descriptive. Recognize that avatars don't have to represent a person and can be used to mislead children/youth.
- Ensure they always get your permission before sharing personal information or accepting anything. Teach them what is meant by personal information and where on the Internet they may be asked for it.
- Be aware of all the contact names on your child's IM list and set the expectation that you must approve any new contacts added.

- 4** Sexual offenders targeting social networking sites where children and youth are encouraged to connect with new people. On social networking sites, children/adolescents are encouraged to post personal information and photos/videos which offenders may use to target children/adolescents. Children/adolescents often accept "friend" requests from people they have not had prior contact with.

- Assist with the creation of online profiles. Only fill in what is necessary, leaving out identifying or revealing information.
- Regularly review the social networking sites that your child visits and ensure that their online profiles, photos or videos do not contain identifying information.
- Learn how to adjust and/or increase privacy settings.
- Be aware that your child can be exposed to inappropriate content as there is little or no moderation of content on social networking sites.
- Teach children about adding friends/contacts only if they have already met them in person.
- Most social networking sites are designed for age 13 and up but do not require age verification to become a member. It is therefore very easy for young children to join.

- 5** Youth sending nude images/ videos and/or images/videos where they are engaged in sexual acts to peers without understanding the images could be forwarded or permanently posted online.



- Reinforce the public nature of the Internet and make sure your child understands that you will monitor their online activity.
- Explain where it is appropriate for them to have privacy: confiding in close friends face-to-face, writing in a journal, private space in their bedroom (there is no privacy on the Internet).
- Monitor use of webcams, cell phones, and the posting and exchanging of pictures online.
- Teach youth that it is illegal for people to manufacture, possess or distribute naked or sexually explicit pictures of children under 18 years of age. Explain that once a picture is sent online they lose control of what is done with it (it may never be completely removed from the Internet).
- Monitor increased independence. Even though adolescents can appear as though they can "handle" things, they actually require and unconsciously seek adult guidance and supervision.