P&C Bridge
A Keenan Solution

Protecting Kids From Cyberbullying

Source: Microsoft

Bullies are notorious for tormenting their victims face to face—at school, on the playground, in sports. But now, cyberbullying (or online bullying) opens the door to 24-hour harassment through computers, cell phones, gaming consoles, or other Internet-enabled means.

- Talk with your kids about cyberbullying. Ask your kids what they're doing online and encourage them to report bullying to you. Promise that you will take action on their behalf and explain what you will do. Reassure them that you won't curtail their phone or computer privileges.

- Keep the family computer in a central location. If your kids play video games, keep Internet-connected game consoles in a central location also. Teenagers have so many ways to access the Internet that putting the computer in a central spot isn't always effective. With older kids, it's especially important to have frank discussions.

- Look for signs of online bullying-for example, getting upset when online or reluctance to go to school.

- Don't tolerate cyberbullying at home. Let your children know they should never, under any circumstances, bully someone. Make the consequences clear.

- Keep passwords secret. Urge your kids not to share passwords or other information that could be used to bully them, or to loan their cell phones or laptops.

- Encourage your children to make friends and to help friends look out for each other. Cyberbullies are less likely to target those whom they perceive have strong friendships. If a victim has friends who rally around him or her, the bullying usually stops.

- Get help from technology. Turn on the safety features available in most programs and services such as those in Windows 7, Windows Vista, Xbox LIVE, and the Zune digital media player.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE IS CYBERBULLYING YOUR CHILD

The best support for a child being cyberbullied is positive, active, knowledgeable, and predictable support.

- Act immediately. Your child needs to know that you can and will help. Don't wait to see if the abuse will stop. If you feel that your child is physically at risk, call the police at once.

- Every effort should be made to find the cyberbully and hold him or her accountable. If the bully is a student consider reporting it to the school. Report bullying to the website where the bullying is happening. Many services have moderators and places to report abuse—for example, abuse@microsoft.com. Ask cell phone companies to track calls and take action.

- Tell your kids not to respond to the cyberbully or retaliate because bullies are looking for a reaction. Don't answer phone calls, or reply to (or even read) text messages or comments.

- Block cyberbullies. Most web services will allow you to block anyone whose behavior is inappropriate or threatening in any way. Check with the service— social networking, IM, cell phone—to find out how.

- Save the evidence. Save text messages, emails, and other evidence of cyberbullying in case the authorities need it.

http://www.microsoft.com/about/corporatecitizenship/enus/youthspark/youthsparkhub/programs/onlinesafety/