

TIPS FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

Keep Kids Safe on the Internet

The safety of our children is a top priority. Keeping kids safe on the Internet is an especially important challenge. We want our children to benefit from the vast educational power of the World Wide Web, but the fact is a new kind of predator has surfaced, ready to take advantage of a child's natural curiosity and trusting nature. As law enforcement officers, as public servants and as parents, we must be on guard.

A new Kids' Page at www.oag.state.tx.us/kids, and a major focus of the games and activities on the Kids' Page is Internet safety. The online safety information, the Kids' Page Web site contains a video question-and-answer session with Attorney General Abbott, games and coloring pages about Texas history and the Office of the Attorney General, and other helpful links for students. Students can also participate in interactive "investigations" and can even become a Junior AG. "Kyle Coyote" is the animated tour guide for the Web site, which includes information in English and Spanish.

Children must be taught that people they chat with on the Internet may not be who or what they say they are. Parents must be aware of the fact that predators are actively targeting their children in chat rooms. We try to teach children and parents:

CHILDREN

- Never give out your name, address, telephone number, password, school name, parents' names, pictures of yourself, credit card numbers, social security number, or any other personal information to others online.
- Never agree to meet face to face with someone you've met online without discussing it with your parents and getting their permission. Only if your parents decide that it's okay to meet your "cyber-friend," arrange to meet in a familiar public place and take an adult with you.
- Delete or block messages from unfamiliar persons.

PARENTS

- Set aside time to explore the Internet with your child. If your child has some computer experience, let them take the lead.
- Choose a commercial online service that offers parental control features. These features can block contact that is not clearly marked as appropriate for children.
- Monitor your child when they are online. If they become uneasy or defensive when you walk into the room, this could be a sign that your child is visiting sites that are forbidden or that are making them feel uncomfortable. Encourage your child to talk to you. If your child has had an upsetting experience while online, don't blame them because that will discourage further communication.
- Remind your child of the tips listed above. Explain that people met online may not be who they say they are.

<http://www.oag.state.tx.us/listserv/login.php> Call (800) 252-8011