Cyber Bullying Quick Reference Guide for Parents
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What is cyber bullying?
Cyber Bullying (sometime referred to as Internet Bullying) is using the Internet or other digital devices to send or post negative messages, images, or video clips about others.

Forms of Cyber Bullying
Cyber Bullying can take many forms, including posting or sending mean or embarrassing comments and or images on chat rooms, message boards, websites, social networking sites, online gaming sites, cell phones, instant messages or e-mail.

Why is cyber bullying a problem?
Cyber Bullying is a form of emotional bullying (sometimes referred to as relational aggression) that causes feelings of fear, isolation, and humiliation among its targets. Research over the last decade confirms that traditional bullying can seriously affect the mental and physical health of children and their academic work. Children who are bullied are more likely than non-bullied children to be anxious, depressed, and to suffer from low self-esteem[1]. They also are more likely than other children to think about taking their own lives[2]. Preliminary research suggests that children who experience cyber bullying may have a similar experience and this may be intensified since cyber bullying can occur 24/7[3].

Prevention of Cyber Bullying
Parents need to discuss cyber bullying with their children as part of their regular discussions about Internet Safety and appropriate use of technologies. Parents can make it clear that using the Internet or cellular phones to embarrass or hurt others' feelings is not part of their family values. Discussing the golden rule as it applies to internet and technology use can be very helpful. Parents should discuss bystander behavior as well, encouraging children to speak out against cyber bullying they witness and to report it to the appropriate person. In addition, parents need to set up guidelines for appropriate use for each new piece of technology that is brought into the home.

Prevention Tips from Students
- **Set age-appropriate guidelines.**
- **Teach us how to deal with conflict.**
- **Monitor our use of the internet.**
- **Supervision, not snoopervision.**
- **Watch for warning signs)**
- **Don't blame the victim.**

(Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2007)

Warning Signs of Cyber Bullying
- **Child is visibly upset or angry during or after internet use or cell phone use.**
- **Withdrawal from friends or activities**
- **Drop in academic performance**
- **School avoidance**
- **Child is a target of traditional bullying at school.**
- **Child appears depressed or sad.**

(Kowalski, et.al. 2007, Willard, 2006)

Intervention Tips for Responding To Cyber Bullying

- Save the evidence. Print copies of messages and websites. Use the save feature on instant messages.
- First Offense (if minor in nature) – ignore, delete, or block the sender.   Instant message programs, e-mail, and cell phones usually have blocking features.
- If a fake or offensive profile targeting your child is set up on a social networking site, report it to the site. The link for reporting cyber bullying and fake profiles can be found under the help sections of many websites. MySpace has a help center on its site that provides a link for reporting offensive profiles. Make sure to copy the link (the website address) to the site for reporting purposes.
- Investigate your child's online presence. Set up an alert on Google, or search your child's name occasionally through a variety of search engines.
- If the perpetrator is another student, share evidence with the school counselor. Check to see if any bullying may be occurring at school.
- If perpetrator is known and cyber bullying is continuing or severe contact the perpetrator's parents and share your evidence (if you are comfortable doing so.) Ask that they ensure that the cyber bullying stops and any posted material be removed.
- If parent of perpetrator is unresponsive and behavior continues, parent of target may contact an attorney or send a certified letter outlining possible civil/legal options if the behavior does not stop or material is not removed.
- Report the cyber bullying to the police or cyber crime unit in your area if the cyber bullying contains threats, intimidation or sexual exploitation.
- If your child expresses emotional distress or thoughts of self-harm seek help immediately.
  (Kowalski, et.al. 2007)

References:

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[3]Ybarra et al (2006). Examining characteristics and associated distress related to internet harrassment: findings from the second youth internet safety survey.' Pediatrics Vol. 118, no.4, pp. 1169-1177.

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