

# KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE ONLINE DURING COVID-19

Due to school closings and stay-at-home orders resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, children's increased online presence may put them at greater risk of child exploitation. Parents, guardians, caregivers, and teachers can take the following measures to help protect children from becoming victims of online child predators:

- **DISCUSS INTERNET SAFETY AND DEVELOP AN ONLINE SAFETY PLAN** with children before they engage in online activity. Establish clear guidelines, teach children to spot red flags, and encourage children to have open communication with you.
- **SUPERVISE YOUNG CHILDREN'S USE OF THE INTERNET**, including periodically checking their profiles and posts. Keep electronic devices in open, common areas of the home and consider setting time limits for their use.
- **REVIEW GAMES, APPS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA SITES** before they are downloaded or used by children. Pay particular attention to apps and sites that feature end-to-end encryption, direct messaging, video chats, file uploads, and user anonymity, which are frequently relied upon by online child predators.
- **ADJUST PRIVACY SETTINGS AND USE PARENTAL CONTROLS** for online games, apps, social media sites, and electronic devices.
- **TELL CHILDREN TO AVOID SHARING PERSONAL INFORMATION, PHOTOS, AND VIDEOS ONLINE** in public forums or with people they do not know in real life. Explain to your children that images posted online will be permanently on the internet.
- **TEACH CHILDREN ABOUT BODY SAFETY AND BOUNDARIES**, including the importance of saying 'no' to inappropriate requests both in the physical world and the virtual world.
- **BE ALERT TO POTENTIAL SIGNS OF ABUSE**, including changes in children's use of electronic devices, attempts to conceal online activity, withdrawn behavior, angry outbursts, anxiety, and depression.
- **ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO TELL A PARENT, GUARDIAN, OR OTHER TRUSTED ADULT** if anyone asks them to engage in sexual activity or other inappropriate behavior.
- **IMMEDIATELY REPORT SUSPECTED ONLINE ENTICEMENT OR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF A CHILD** by calling **911**, contacting the FBI at [tips.fbi.gov](https://tips.fbi.gov), or filing a report with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) at **1-800-843-5678** or [report.cybertip.org](https://report.cybertip.org).

For additional resources on online child safety, visit NCMEC's website at [missingkids.org/netsmartz/home](https://missingkids.org/netsmartz/home).  
For more information about the Department of Justice's response to COVID-19, visit [justice.gov/coronavirus](https://justice.gov/coronavirus).

