



# S UMMERTIME....

With summer rapidly approaching, children will likely spend more time on computers or in the care of some adult. It is a good time for our churches to remind parents of the dangers of the internet and of the need to be vigilant when selecting a daycare provider. My hope is, in the interest of keeping children safe, that you will share the following with parents.

Please feel free to reproduce the information about social networks and gaming for parents.

## FOR PARENTS:

There are over two billion people online today! So here is the question...Would you allow your child to roam around a city of two billion people unsupervised? Of course not, however, if your child has unrestricted and unmonitored access to the internet, that is exactly what is happening!

### **Here are some tips to help keep your child's online experience safer:**

- Do not allow your child to have a computer with internet access in their bedroom or any area that is private. Move it into the family room or someplace where you can easily see the activity.
- Set time restraints. Do not allow your child to spend hour after hour online.
- Check history and consider installing tracking software as well as parental controls. If your child is “wiping” the history every time, then you should find out why.
- Spend time with your child online. This does so many things including giving you quality time with your child. Explore together!
- Teach your children that when they come across any material that makes them feel uncomfortable, scared, or confused to immediately tell you or another trusted adult.
- Teach your children to never open emails (or anything else) from people they do not know in person.
- Teach children to never reveal any personal information and to immediately tell you or a trusted adult if someone ever makes them feel uncomfortable or starts communicating in a sexually explicit manner.
- On social networks like Facebook, make sure the privacy settings are on to limit contact to only those on your child's “friends” list and these should be people the child actually knows in person. By the way, to have a facebook account, the child must be at least 13 years of age.
- Make sure that your child understands that anything that gets posted online will always be out there and can NEVER be completely deleted. A suggestive picture could end up anywhere and everywhere. All pictures should be cleared by parents before posting.
- Make sure your child understands that he or she should, under no circumstances, never meet in person someone they have met online.

*(Adapted from: ChildRescueNetwork.org)*



## What do I need to know about online gaming?

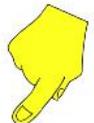
Online gaming means you can play in real time with people across the world through a PC, games console, tablet or smartphone connected to the internet. Games can offer children a world of

adventure to immerse themselves in but it's important to understand how children can stay safe and what games are appropriate for their age.

### TIPS FOR PARENTS TO PROTECT KIDS ONLINE:

**As technology continues to evolve, it is easy to feel left behind. Follow these nontechnical measures to help you become a cyber savy virtual parent (if you are not already!):**

- ◆ Establish an ongoing dialogue with your child and keep lines of communication open.
- ◆ Supervise the use of all internet enabled devices.
- ◆ Know your child's online activities and friends.
- ◆ Regularly check the online communities your children use, such as social networking and gaming sites, to see what information they are posting.
- ◆ Supervise the photos and videos kids post and send online.
- ◆ Discourage the use of webcams and mobile video devices.
- ◆ Teach your children how to protect personal information posted online and to follow the same rules with respect to the personal information of others.
- ◆ Be sure your children use privacy settings.
- ◆ Instruct your children to avoid meeting face-to-face with someone they only know online or through their mobile device.
- ◆ Teach your children how to respond to cyberbullies.
- ◆ Establish an agreement with your children about internet use at home and outside of the home.
- ◆ Teach your teens by words and example not to read or write texts or emails while driving. (This will soon be against the law in OK!)



If you, as a parent, are not familiar with any of the above, there are numerous websites that you can consult for assistance and education on the topic. Most social network sites, such as Facebook, have safety guidelines published on their websites.