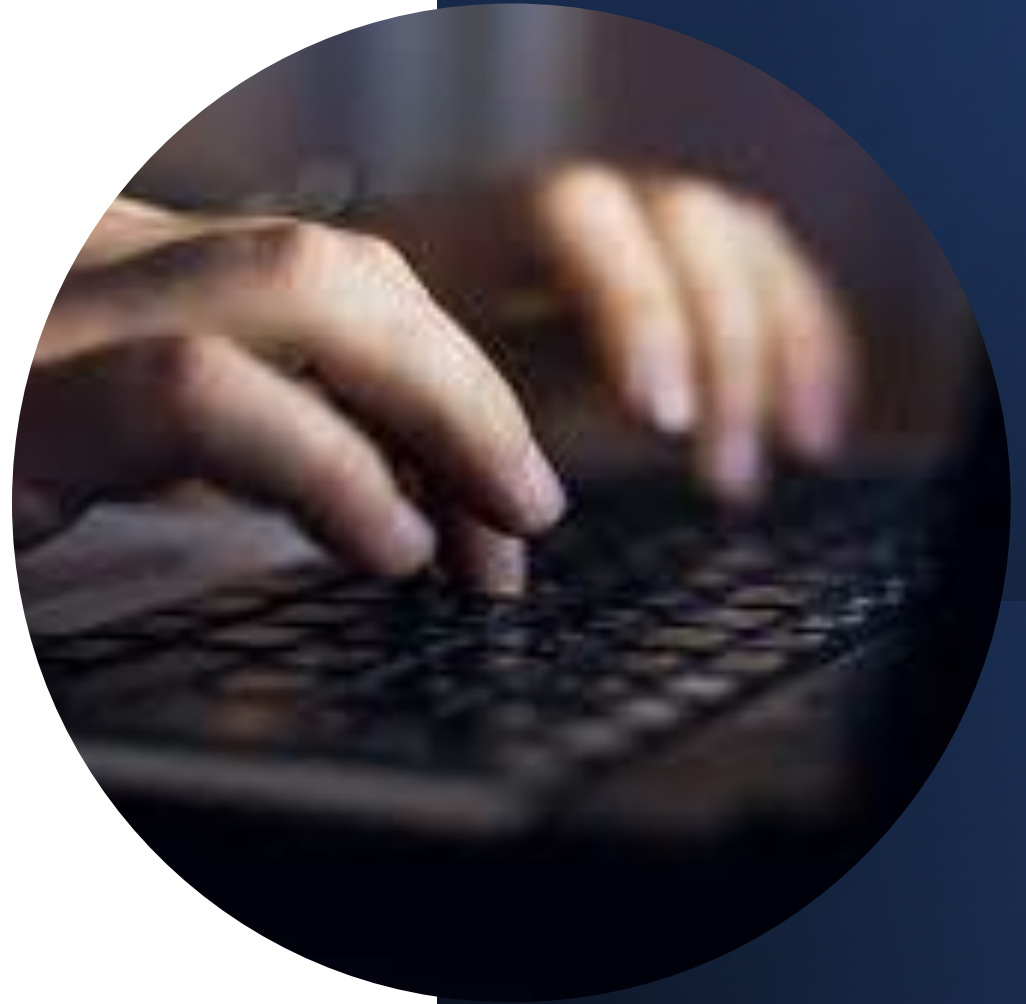


Sexual Grooming: What Parents and Teachers Need to Know

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Agenda

The Problem

Definitions

Detection

Prevention

The Problem

ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE



1 in 3 internet users worldwide are **children**



750,000 individuals at any point in time are estimated to be looking to **connect** with children for sexual purposes



Child sexual abuse is captured through images and videos that are being shared online. There are currently more than **46 million unique images or videos of CSAM*** in EUROPOL's repository alone



Detecting and reporting this material helps rescue children from ongoing sexual abuse and prevents further trauma from their images being shared online

**70
M**

In 2019, the NCMEC CyberTipline received **16.9 million reports** related to suspected child sexual exploitation. These reports contained **69.1 million** videos, images and files

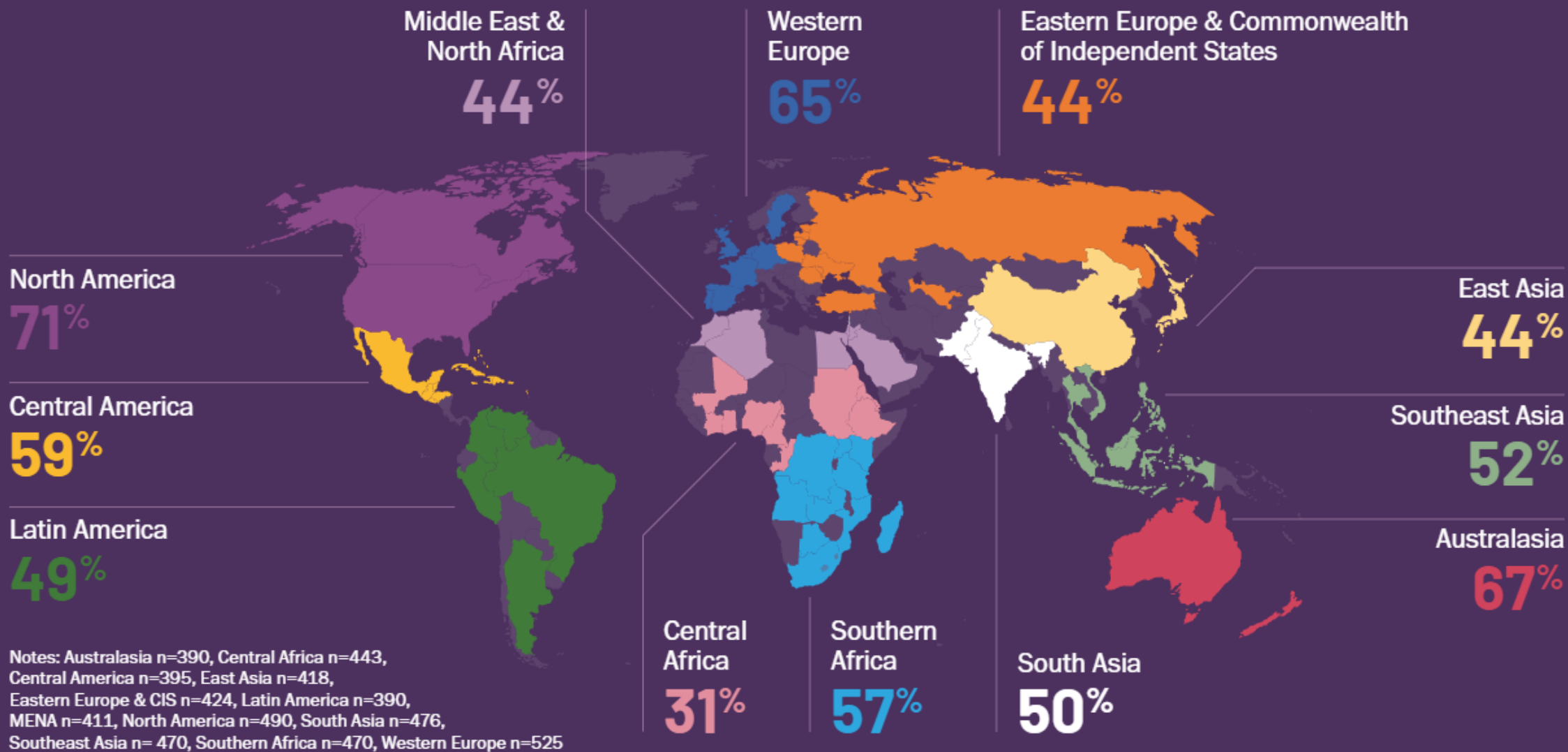


Data from 2019 shows that **92% of the CSAM** assessed by INHOPE depicted children **under 13 years of age**

*CSAM: Child Sexual Abuse Material



Percentage of respondents who experienced at least one online sexual harm during childhood by sub-region



Through a survey of over 5,300 18-20-year-olds who had regular access to the internet as children, WeProtect found that 57 per cent of girls and 48 per cent of boys had experienced at least one online sexual harm, with some regions – like North America, Australasia, and Western Europe – being even higher.

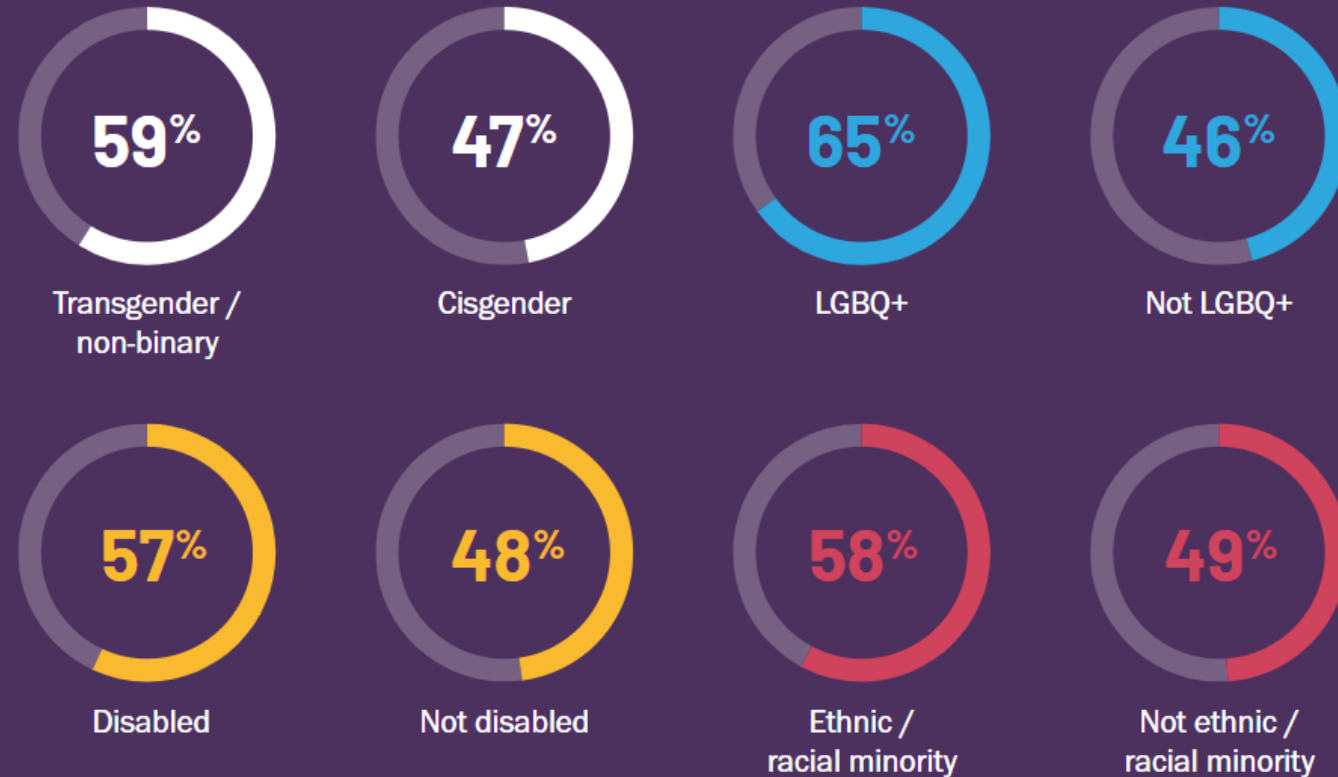
Minorities are more at risk.

Respondents who self-identified as transgender or non-binary⁹, disabled¹⁰, LGBTQ+¹¹ or as a racial or ethnic minority¹² were more likely to have experienced these online sexual harms during childhood (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3

Respondents' experiences of online sexual harm during childhood disaggregated by characteristic¹³

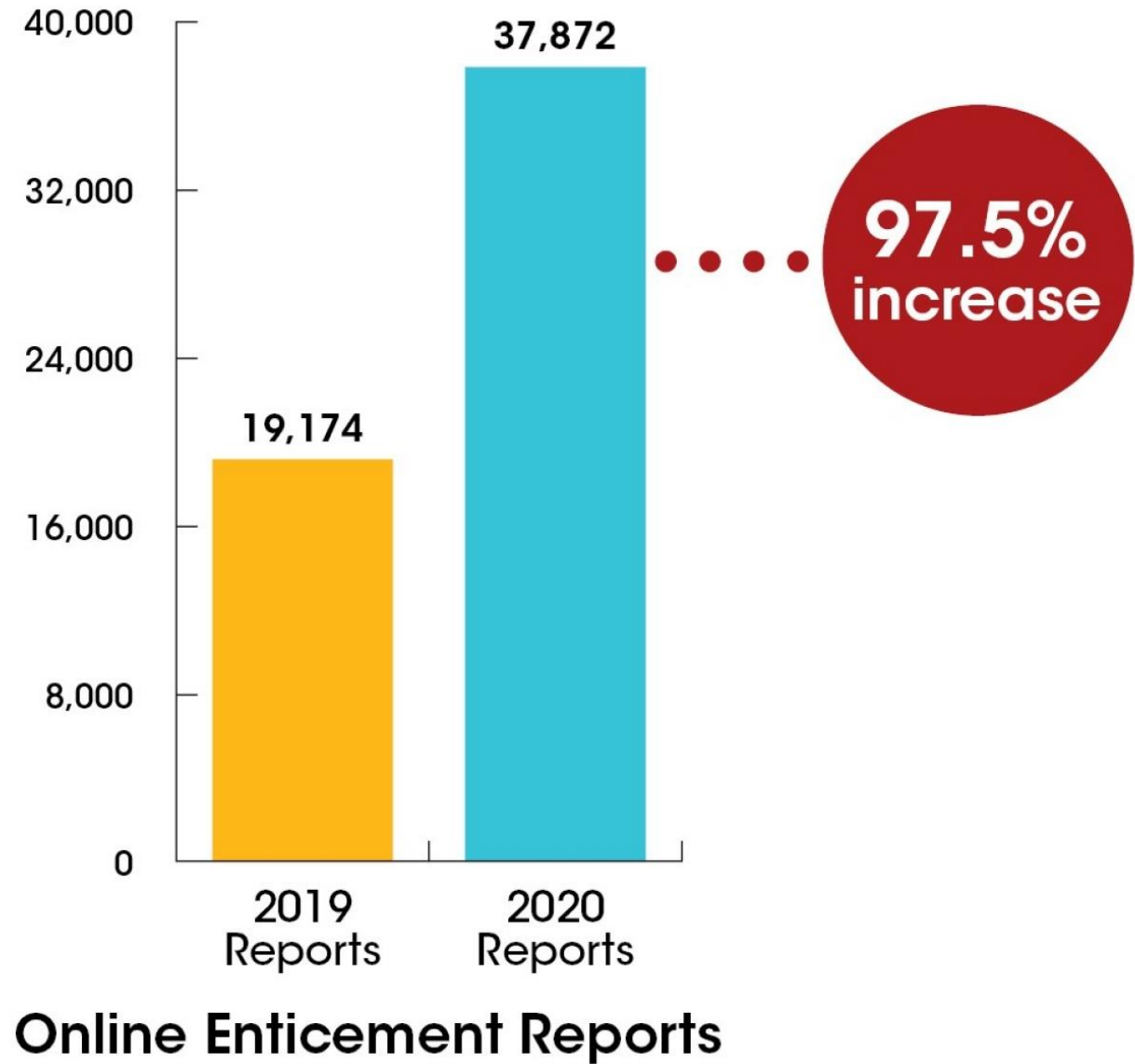
% who experienced any online sexual harm




Notes:

Transgender / non-binary n=457; cisgender n=4568, LGBTQ+ n=731; not LGBTQ+ n=4264, Disabled n=549; not disabled n=4530, Ethnic / racial minority n=957; not ethnic / racial minority n=4226

Increase of
Reports in
Pandemic





Our global response to this crime needs a new approach, or more children will continue to be placed at risk and suffer the trauma of abuse.

- Global Threat Assessment 2021

Global Response Hampered



Lack of Clear Definition



Inconsistent Legislative
Response

Definitions

Online Enticement

On-Line
Solicitation

Sexual Grooming

Online Enticement

involves an individual communicating with someone believed to be a child via the internet with the intent to commit a sexual offense or abduction. This is a broad category of online exploitation and includes sextortion, in which a child is being groomed to take sexually explicit images and/or ultimately meet face-to-face with someone for sexual purposes, or to engage in a sexual conversation online or, in some instances, to sell/trade the child's sexual images. This type of victimization takes place across every platform; social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, etc.

On-Line Solicitation

Involves the use of the Internet to interact with children or adolescents for sexual purposes

Can include various cybersexual activities such as sexualized conversations or activities for the purpose of sexual gratification, sending or receiving sexual images or videos

Sexual solicitation of minors may occur soon after the initial contact with a minor online

Online sexual solicitation can be wanted or unwanted. The online solicitor can be another minor or an adult.

The online solicitation may or may not result in offline contact.

On-line Sexual Grooming

- Sexual Solicitation and Sexual Grooming are often incorrectly used interchangeably in the literature
- “Online sexual grooming differs from online sexual solicitation in that solicitation is a behavior, which may occur only once, whereas grooming is a process, the outcome of which is an intimate relationship” (Greene-Colozzi et al. 2020; p 838)



Sexual Grooming Model

Victim Selection

Gaining Access

Trust Development

Desensitization to Sexual Content and Touch

Post Abuse Maintenance

Definition

“Sexual grooming is the deceptive process used by sexual abusers to facilitate sexual contact with a minor while simultaneously avoiding detection. Prior to the commission of the sexual abuse, the would-be sexual abuser may select a victim, gain access to and isolate the minor, develop trust with the minor and often their guardians, community, and youth-serving institutions, and desensitize the minor to sexual content and physical contact. Post-abuse, the offender may use maintenance strategies on the victim to facilitate future sexual abuse and/or to prevent disclosure.”

The Online Sexual Grooming Model Behaviors or Characteristics

SGM Stage	Behaviors or Characteristics
Victim Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observes chatroom and assesses ongoing conversation • Observes profile content (e.g., age, sex location, hobbies and screen names (e.g., younger or sexually-suggestive names) • Using “vetting” questions to determine a target • Difficult family circumstances, such parental neglect or conflict • Lacks supervision on the Internet • Target multiple victims at one time to select the most vulnerable target
Gaining Access and Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes a private conversation with the minor • Offender may ask about the victim’s parents’ schedule or other contextual risk factors (e.g., whether the victim is alone) to ensure they are alone • Encouraging the victim to hide the relationship from family and friends
Trust Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim’s shared personal information with the adult, including name, age, interests, hobbies, and location • Develop a friendship or flirty/dating relationship with the victim, or in some situations a romantic/loving or sexually-driven relationship • Compliment the victim on their personality, intelligence, and maturity • Personal conversations about life, school, and relationships • Discuss similarities with the victim, such as their likes, dislikes, and interests • Promises of love and companionship • Some discussed marriage, having children, and running away together with the victims • Claims to want to meet the victim’s friends and family • Giving money or gifts (tickets, day trips, cell phone, games, v-bucks)
Desensitization to Physical Contact and Sexual Touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing sexual content in conversation, often very quickly (e.g., within the first day of conversation) • Normalize sexual behaviors between an adult and child, through sending adult pornography or nude photographs of themselves Broach the topic on an in-person meeting soon in conversation (e.g., within three days of conversation)
Post-Abuse Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining trust to prevent disclosure • Threats or blackmail

On-Line Sexual Grooming

- Solicitation versus grooming
- Varied Purposes
 - CSAM
 - Fantasy
 - Off-line contact
- New results suggest many perpetrators known to victims
- Generally do not portray themselves as minors
- Use sexual grooming strategies that mirror SGM
- Sexual topics introduced in first day of contact generally after about 30 minutes
- Majority take conversations off-line
- Minors who have sexual relationship off-line consider it consensual
- Can be other adolescents

Implications for Prevention, Detection and Prosecution

Training and Education

Policies and Procedures

Environmental Protections

Legislation

- Model On-Line Grooming Legislation
- On-line Providers



How to Prevent Online Sexual Grooming

What parents and Teachers Need to Know

Talk to your children of all ages about online dangers

Explain that while social media, chatrooms, and online gaming can be fun, they also have risks.

Teach your children never to share their name, age, or location with anyone.

Never share picture online.

Never chat with an adult online

Never agree to meet in person.

Parents to explain the rationale behind the rules so that children can learn to think critically about potentially dangerous or risky situations on their own.

Keep Lines of Communication Open

Always let your kids know that they should tell you if someone online is doing something to make them feel uncomfortable and that you will be there to help and support them.

Perpetrators will turn the conversation to sexual content almost immediately, minors must recognize this as a red flag and know to discontinue the conversation and tell you as soon as this happens.

The most important thing that parents can do is to let their children know that they will not be in trouble even if they have already chatted or shared photos with someone.

Privacy settings on all games, social media platforms, and apps are set to the highest level

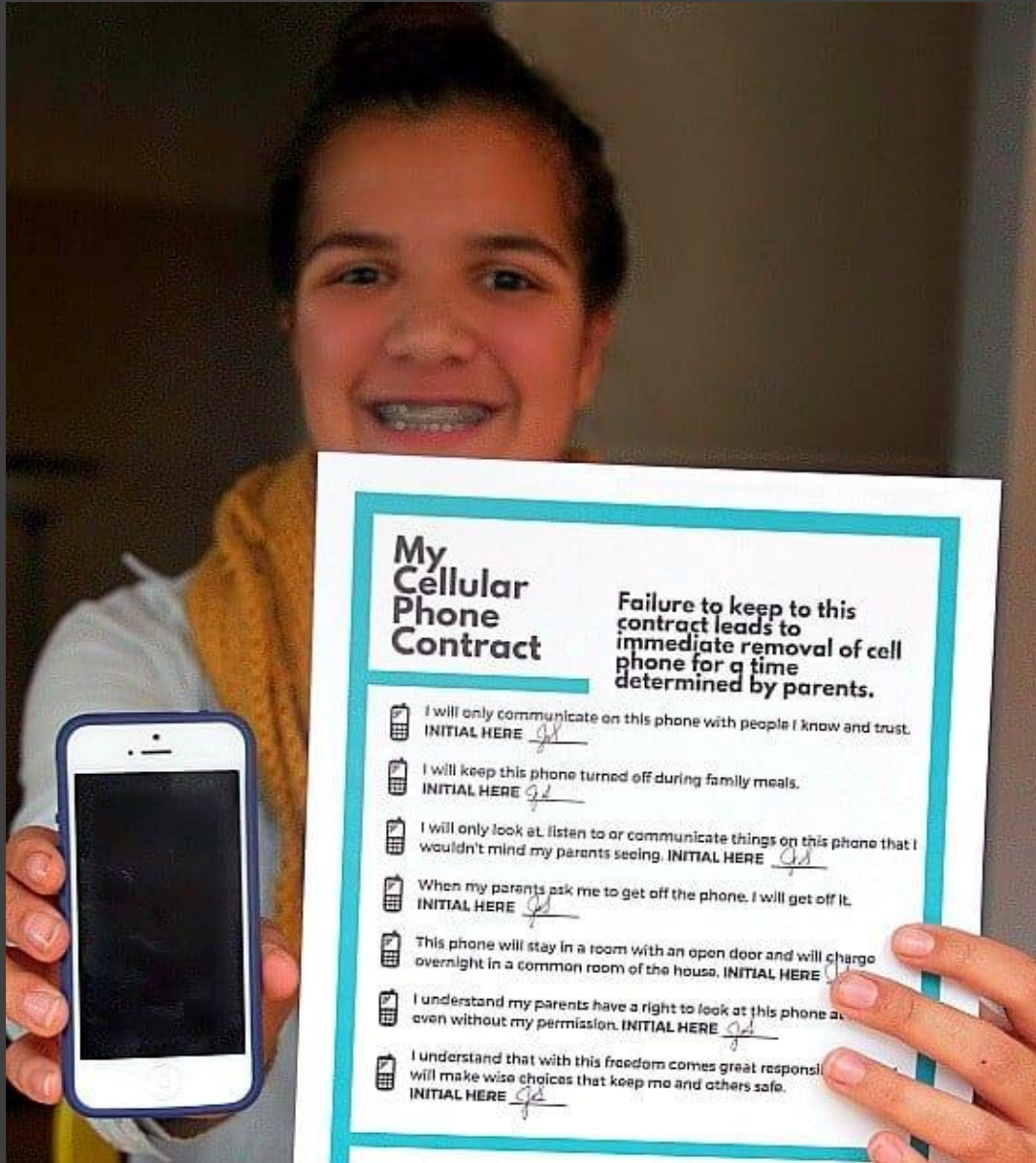
- If teens are using social media, their sites should be private so that only those in their inner circle have access.
- For gaming, enable parental controls so that your children cannot text or communicate with strangers.



Have your children use internet-enabled devices in common areas of the home



- You need to know what your child is doing on-line
- If your child is having private conversations in their bedroom, you want to make sure you know who they are communicating with.



Have user agreements or contracts with your children for their phones and other internet-enabled devices

- Have all your children's passwords
- Let them know that you will periodically be monitoring their online communications as a condition of use.
- Periodically check what they are doing and who they are speaking to

Do not allow internet- enabled devices in bedrooms at night



While you may permit the use of phones and laptops in their rooms during the day, these devices should be returned to a common area at night for recharging



This promotes healthy sleep habits



Our research also found that most online solicitation of minors takes place after 11 p.m. at night when parents are not around to monitor.



Questions?

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