



## Safe Internet for Children – Awareness, Red Flags, and Rules

On-line computer searching opens a world of information for our children, expanding their horizons and exposing them to different cultures and ways of life. The problem is they can be exposed to many dangers as they are exploring this information highway. Sexually exploitation and fraud are the main crimes using our children using the Internet. Our children are our most valuable members of society, current and future. Protecting our children against crime and from becoming victims of crime must be our priority.

How do we protect our children? Awareness is the most effective method and the earlier the better.

**First** make our children aware of key warning signs (Red Flags). These key Red Flags are: people asking for sensitive information, ask for money; ask for photos that the child would not put in the front window of their home; first meeting outside of home without a parent; request for phone numbers and addresses; and, opening or downloading links or files. Sensitive information include passwords, bank accounts, credit card numbers, mother's middle name, parents' birthdays and social security numbers, birth cities, vacation dates and locations, etc. Social media has lots of the child's information name, date of birth, schools, clubs, hobbies, sports, etc. So focus on what is really important and not everything. **Rule #1:** With the first Red Flag – end the conversation.

**Second** is that anyone can be anything from anywhere, so trust no one on the Internet. Yes, the new Internet friend could be a school student who is the same age and sex as the child, but they could also be a 55 year old, male sexual predator. A good friend will love to meet your parents to know you better and for you to meet theirs. Invite them to meet your parents via video-audio media. If they cannot or will not do this, it is another red flag. **Rule #2:** If my parents have not met the person sending the email or file – delete it and don't download it!

**Third** is to talk to them about their day on the Internet. Take an interest in what they are seeing and learning. Make this a point of sharing their success in learning new things. **Rule #3:** Motivate safe Internet through interest, sharing and providing opportunities to identify concerns and ask questions.

So what can you do for your child? Make them aware that they should:

- **NEVER** arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they met on-line;
- **NEVER** share pictures. on-line they would not post in the front window of their home;
- **NEVER** give out sensitive information;

- **NEVER** download files from an unknown source, they could be sexually explicit images, malicious software, etc.;
- **NEVER** respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, or harassing;
- **NEVER** believe whatever they are told on-line;
- **NEVER** communicate with people who have raised Red Flags.

Remember motivation is better than ordering. Be involved with their awareness.

**Jim Litchko, CISSP-ISSEP,**

**Senior Cybersecurity Analyst and Safe Community Portugal Board Member**

10<sup>th</sup> February 2016