

CyberBullying

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to support deliberate, hostile and hurtful behaviours towards an individual or group.

Cyberbullying can happen to anyone – children, youth and adults. Social media and texting make it easier to share images and messages, causing cyberbullying to spread quickly and remain online indefinitely.

Cyberbullying can be especially harmful because it can be hard to escape. It follows people home – a place where they should feel safe and supported.

The convenience of modern technology enables people who are bullying to hide behind anonymity.

There are several ways that people bully others online.

They do it by:

- Sending emails or instant messages containing insults or threats directly to a person
- Spreading hateful comments about a person through e-mail, instant messaging or postings on social media and/or blogs
- Stealing passwords and sending out threatening emails or instant messages using someone else's account
- Taking and/or sending pictures of the person without their permission

The law

Changes to the *Canadian Criminal Code* have made some forms of cyberbullying illegal. The police may lay charges if:

- Intimate images are sent without permission
- Hate speech is used (racial and/or homophobic slurs) to cause fear and distress
- Threats of harm and violence are repeatedly made against someone

A person may also be violating the *Canadian Human Rights Act* if he or she spreads hate or discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or disability.

For more information about cyberbullying and the law, visit: getcybersafe.gc.ca

The role of Internet service providers and cell phone service providers.

Internet service providers (ISPs) are the companies that provide Internet access to consumers. Most ISPs have Acceptable Use Policies that clearly define privileges and guidelines for those using their services, and the actions that can be taken if those guidelines are violated.

ISPs and cell phone service providers can respond to reports of cyberbullying over their networks, or help clients identify the appropriate service provider to contact.

Do not delete messages so they can be saved and referred to the appropriate people for resolution.

Most cyberbullying occurs amongst youth when adults aren't around.

Below are some tips to pass along to the young person in your life:

- Guard your contact information - don't give people you don't know your cell phone number, instant messaging name or email address
- If you're being harassed online, take the following actions immediately:
 - o Tell someone you trust.
 - o Leave the area or stop the activity (e.g., chat room, instant messaging).
 - o Block the sender's messages - never reply to harassing messages
 - o Save any harassing messages and forward them to your ISP
 - o If the bullying involves threats, tell the police
- Take a stand and speak up when you see someone harassing another person online. Show support for others online.

For more information on cyberbullying, visit:

<http://www.bewebaware.ca>

- Internet safety site for youth developed by the Media Awareness Network

<http://www.cyberbullying.org>

- Includes information and support for victims of cyberbullying