

## Other Dangers of Life Online

### Threats

The Sheriff's Office has investigated cases involving threats made online. In one case, a local teenage boy posted photos of himself with his parents' gun collection. Classmates reported that he had made threats about his school. Investigators who viewed the Web page arrested the teen and charged him with unlawful possession of a handgun by a juvenile. Police take these threats seriously.

### Sexting Crimes

There are criminal implications for people (adults or juveniles) who possess sexual images or videos of young people. If you obtain the content from someone other than the original sender, or forward the content on to others, you could be charged with sexual exploitation of a child. This can result in jail time, and/or registration as a sex offender.

Nationwide, teens have faced charges, both for sending explicit photos and for possessing them. Although criminal charges are rare, they should be a consideration for anyone about to hit "send."

### Identity Theft

Sharing too much personal information online, such as full name and birthdate, may also allow a criminal to steal a user's identity. He could represent himself as you or apply for credit using your name.

### Access to Pornography

There is a massive amount of free pornography online. Teens, especially teenage boys, with access to porn sites may develop an unhealthy concept of sex. Extremes in sexual behavior depicted online, or the sheer volume of the imagery, can consume a teen until reality becomes a distant memory. Porn addiction, sexual aggression and violence toward women can develop from unrestricted access to porn.

Information in this brochure was adapted from [NetSmartz.org](http://NetSmartz.org) and [FBI.gov](http://FBI.gov).

[www.jeffcosheriff.com](http://www.jeffcosheriff.com)



*As law enforcement professionals, we pledge to serve the Jefferson County community, build trust and confidence, and respond to community needs with:*

### Integrity

We interact with each other and the community we serve with honesty, dignity, and respect.

### Innovation

We respond to the community's needs with vision and initiative, relying on both traditional and non-traditional problem-solving methods.

### Partnership

We actively promote a spirit of teamwork and cooperation through open communication and the free exchange of ideas.

### Service

We continuously develop our skills and talents to provide top quality, responsive, effective law enforcement services.

### Accountability

We ensure judicious management of human, financial, and physical resources.

### Jefferson County Sheriff's Office

200 Jefferson County Parkway  
Golden, CO 80401

Office Hours: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Mon.-Fri.

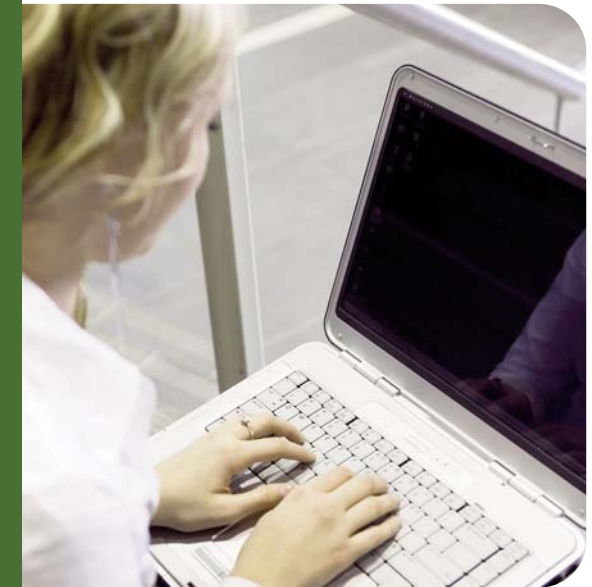
Phone: 303.277.0211

Emergency: Dial 911

[www.jeffcosheriff.com](http://www.jeffcosheriff.com)

CRIME PREVENTION

## Online Safety



*For children and parents*



# Online Safety

Children of all ages have discovered the wonders of connectivity. Online they can chat with like-minded people. They can play games against real people all over the world. With a cell phone, they can text friends or swap photos. On social networking sites, they can post a profile, music, photos, and messages. They can even get help with homework.

These are some of the joys of the Internet. However, there are also serious risks to consider. Today kids are often more computer-savvy than their parents. But while they may be skilled online, they are often in the dark about online safety.

This brochure provides guidance for adolescents, teens and their parents about the dangers of connectivity, and how to keep from being victimized.

## Child Predators

Online child predators can interact with children through a variety of channels: computers, video games, handheld gaming devices and mobile phones. These tools make millions of people accessible at your child's fingertips ... and vice-versa. Paradoxically, young people asserting their individuality online remain very vulnerable to predation. Their innocence, natural curiosity, desire for attention, ingrained trust in adults, and/or desire to rebel against their parents can lead them into the path of someone who could harm them.

Posting personal information can be dangerous in itself. But engaging in conversation online with people you don't already know can create new dangers. The anonymity of online communications allows would-be predators to alter their own personas. Teens who believe they are talking to other young people may be disappointed, at best, to find that their "friends" are actually middle-aged men.

In 2007, Jeffco District Attorney's Office investigators posing online as a teenage girl received a series of messages from a "17-year-old boy" who said he attended a high school in Jefferson County. His language and the topics he discussed were convincing. When he set up a meeting with the "girl,"

investigators confirmed their suspicions: the "boy" was a 60-year-old convicted sex offender.



## What Kids Can Do

Activities that may seem fairly harmless to your child can lure the attention of predators. Here are some precautions your child can take — with your help — that may help him or her steer clear of predators.

- **Profile and content.** The profile information and content you generate is critical. The images, opinions and personal information you share can be used by others to manipulate you, blackmail you, or literally locate you. Use a neutral profile photo that doesn't show your face; consider a photo of an object or landscape. Never take nude or semi-nude photos of yourself or allow someone else to do so. Remember, anything you say or post can live forever online if re-posted by someone else.

- **Screen names.** Select gender-neutral and age-appropriate screen names for yourself. You can inadvertently give out a lot about yourself with a screen name like "britt98" (Brittany, born in 1998?). Screen names that suggest sex, violence or drugs, which might seem fun or funny, can draw attention from the wrong people.

- **Privacy settings.** On Facebook and other social sites, lock down your privacy settings so that only your approved friends can see your photos, video and updates. Leaving privacy open is like inviting strangers to tag along with you everywhere you go.

- **Friends list.** While it may be tempting to build the largest friend list possible, to appear more connected or popular, you should only accept friend requests from people you actually know, and trust.

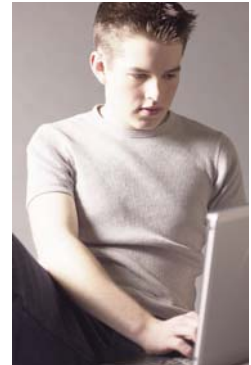
- **Say no to creepers.** If you are contacted, in any format, by someone you don't know, do not respond. Use your settings to block that person from contacting you. Never agree to meet someone in person whom you met online. If you're contacted by an adult you know, talk to your parents about the communication.

## Posting is Forever

It's important for teens to realize that anything they post online, while editable, can be saved while it's live. Any user can save, keep or distribute photos or text. This means that sexual photos, photos depicting drug use, gang signs, threats against others or criminal behavior are all potentially permanent collector's items for their classmates, friends, enemies, parents and total strangers.

## What Parents Can Do

Every child is different. Different ages, maturity levels and special circumstances will dictate what's appropriate for each child. The most important thing parents can do is stay involved with kids' online activities, and help them understand the dangers. Sooner or later they'll be on their own, and will need that foundation of online common-sense. Until then...



- Keep a computer in a well-trafficked room in your home. Remember that smartphones are just small computers ... limit private access to them as well.

- Stay involved in your child's online activities. Insist on access (including passwords!) to social networking, e-mail, texting and gaming. Check them periodically.

- Find out what online safeguards are in place at your child's school, friends' homes, and any other place where your child may be using computers or video games.

- Consider downmarket mobile phones that don't offer photo, video or Internet capabilities.

- Remember, predators aren't always strangers. "Grooming" by trusted adults plays a huge role in child predation. Watch for changes in your child's relationships with adults. Adults who work with children and teens have professional boundaries; cultivating significant online or text-based relationships with individual children is not appropriate.

Visit us online at [www.jeffcosheriff.com](http://www.jeffcosheriff.com)