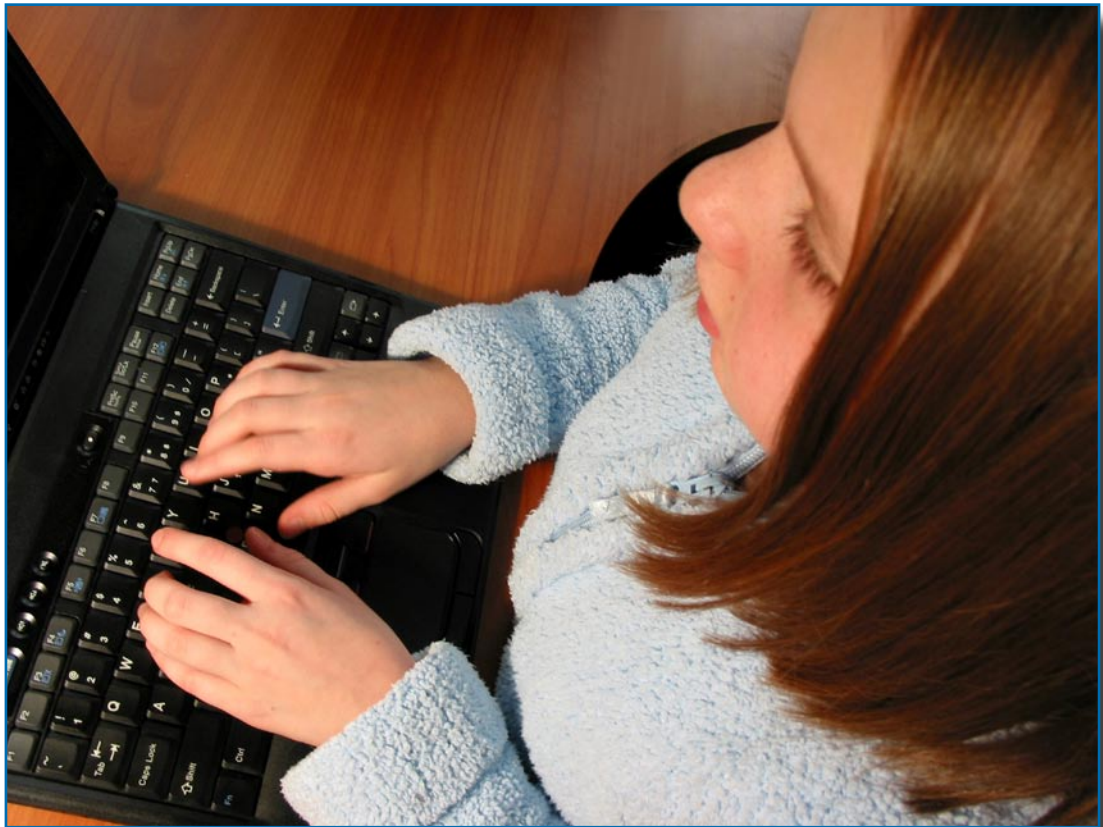


# Senator Kent Conrad's Online Safety Kit



Prepared by the Office of  
U.S. Senator Kent Conrad

## MESSAGE FROM SENATOR KENT CONRAD



Dear Friend:

The Internet can be a wonderful educational tool for children. Unfortunately, it is also a powerful vehicle for predators who prey upon them. It's estimated that of the 45 million children in the United States accessing the Internet, one in five has received an unwanted sexual solicitation while online. These predators must be stopped.

With the evening news filled with stories of young people joining Internet chat rooms and the increased number of online sexual predators, I am gravely concerned about making sure our children are protected when they go online. I know you are, too. That's why I am hosting this round table discussion about the issue of Internet safety. I'd like to hear what you think needs to be done, so we can take the kind of action and make sure tools are available to help protect our children while they are surfing the Web.

In January, I introduced legislation that would clamp down on Web pornographers and fund efforts to battle pedophiles using the Internet to lure victims. My legislation was developed in response to parents who have expressed concern about this issue. I also formed a special task force, the Advisory Group on Children and Media, to address ways in which parents and caregivers can protect children from exposure to sex and violence in the media.

One tool that can help raise awareness about the prevalence of online sexual exploitation is this Safety Kit. It is designed to help parents better protect children against online sexual predators and inform caregivers of the various resources available to keep kids safe. This meeting today and this tool kit are only the first step. Many of the groups represented by today's participants also have excellent information about how to help kids stay safe online. Be assured, I will continue to fight for legislation to protect our children from online predators.

This is literally a battle to protect our kids.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kent Conrad". The signature is fluid and cursive.

KENT CONRAD  
United States Senator

## Chat Room Dangers

While electronic chat rooms can be a great place for children to make new friends and discuss various topics of interest, chat rooms can also be prowled by computer-sex offenders. Cyber-predators often pose as other children and gain the confidence of their victims by chatting about the latest music and celebrities. Chat rooms can lead to private conversations, e-mails, instant messages and photo exchanges.

To protect children from online predators, give them sound guidelines about contacting others on the Web, including rules on how to protect their personal information. And, just as we were taught never to accept rides from strangers, today's kids should be instructed to never meet anyone they encounter online without your approval. Talk to your kids about who they're chatting with online. If you feel uncomfortable with what you hear, contact the police.

Here are some other simple tips to help keep your children safe in chat rooms:

- Only use a first name or nickname on the Web
- Never give out a phone number or address
- Never send or post photographs
- Never agree to meet someone online in person



### FACTS ABOUT ONLINE SEXUAL PREDATORS

- **Internet crime is the fastest growing crime in the U.S., and children are the fastest growing victim pool (County of San Diego District Attorney, 2006)**
- **Law enforcement officials estimate that as many as 50,000 sexual predators are online at any given moment (Dateline, January 2006).**
- **Internet pedophiles are increasingly adopting counter-intelligence techniques to protect themselves from being traced (National Criminal Intelligence Service, 8/21/03).**
- **Forty percent of people charged with child pornography also sexually abuse children (Reuters, 2003).**
- **In the U.S., 95% of schools are now connected to the Internet**
- **Among the 45 million children ages 10 through 17 who use the Internet:**
  - o **One in five has been sexually solicited**
  - o **One in four has encountered unwanted pornography**
  - o **Close to 60% of teens have received an e-mail or instant message from a stranger and half have communicated back (County of San Diego District Attorney, 2006)**

## Tips for Parents

Your supervision is the best protection for your kids. But you can't always be with your child, looking over his or her shoulder. There are steps you can take to help keep your children safer as they explore the World Wide Web. And there is evidence that kids will get the message.

## Stay Connected

Take an active interest in what they're doing both on and off-line. Spend time with your children online. Have them teach you about their favorite online destinations. Set online safety rules, and ask your kids to come to you if they ever get in an uncomfortable situation.



Keep the computer in a common room in the house, not in your child's bedroom. It is much more difficult for a computer-sex offender to communicate with a child when the computer screen is visible to a parent or another member of the household.

## Learn What's Out There

Using your child's interests, type keywords into a search engine and see what sites pop up. Visit sites geared toward children. Keep your children from entering personal information on the Web by finding child friendly sites that don't require it. Always maintain access to your child's on-line account, and randomly check his/her e-mail. Be up front with your child about your access and reasons why.

## Use Your Blocker

There are certain Web sites that you know you don't want children to see. Many software programs allow you to block out information that you find inappropriate or offensive. Some of the things you can screen for include coarse language, nudity, sex and violence. In addition, many Internet browser applications have parental controls to help protect your child from stumbling onto inappropriate sites. You can often choose separate levels of security for each child based on ages and maturity levels.

Find out what computer safeguards are utilized by your child's school, the public library, and at the homes of your child's friends. These are all places, outside your normal supervision, where your child could encounter an online predator.

One way to protect your kids from chatting with strangers is to set your instant messaging software to only accept messages from approved contacts. If your child wants to send someone an instant message, you have to add their name and contact information to the list.

## Keep Track Of Where They've Been

Your kids are going to be online even when you're not available to sit with them and review everything they're seeing. If you want to know what sites your children visited, review the History folder on the browser. If you're curious about something specific, simply click on the link in the folder and view recently visited sites.

## Set Rules

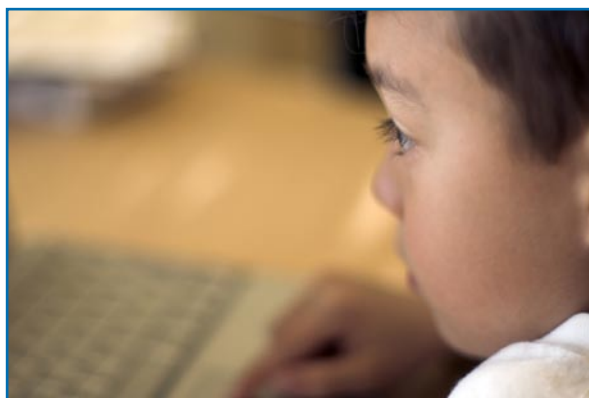
Instruct your children:

- to never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they met online;
- to never upload (post) pictures of themselves onto the Internet or online service to people they do not personally know;
- to never give out identifying information such as their name, home address, school name, or telephone number;
- to never download pictures from an unknown source, as there is a good chance there could be sexually explicit images;
- to never respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, or harassing;
- that whatever they see or are told online may or may not be true.
- to tell you if someone asks for personal information or anything inappropriate.

*Information from Staysafe.org, Safekids.com, FBI, County of San Diego District Attorney and the National Academy of Sciences*

## Family Contracts For Online Safety

Here's something concrete parents can do: Call a "family meeting" and have a conversation on Internet safety. Below are two family contracts from Safekids.com — one for parents, and another for kids. Go over them together and use them as discussion points on safe Web usage. Don't forget to sign the contract and post it near the computer.





SafeKids.Com

## Family Contract for Online Safety

### Kids' Pledge

1. I will not give out personal information such as my address, telephone number, parents' work address/telephone number, or the name and location of my school without my parents' permission.
2. I will tell my parents right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
3. I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents. If my parents agree to the meeting, I will be sure that it is in a public place and bring my mother or father along.
4. I will never send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parents.
5. I will not respond to any messages that are mean or in any way make me feel uncomfortable. It is not my fault if I get a message like that. If I do I will tell my parents right away so that they can contact the service provider.
6. I will talk with my parents so that we can set up rules for going online. We will decide upon the time of day that I can be online, the length of time I can be online, and appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.
7. I will not give out my Internet password to anyone (even my best friends) other than my parents.
8. I will check with my parents before downloading or installing software or doing anything that could possibly hurt our computer or jeopardize my family's privacy.
9. I will be a good online citizen and not do anything that hurts other people or is against the law.
10. I will help my parents understand how to have fun and learn things online and teach them things about the Internet, computers and other technology.

I agree to the above terms

I will help my child follow this agreement and will allow reasonable use of the Internet as long as these rules and other family rules are followed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child Sign Here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Sign Here

Items 1-6 © National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Entire contract © 2005 SafeKids.com. Have teenagers? Visit [SafeTeens.com](http://SafeTeens.com)





# Family Contract for Online Safety

## Parents' Pledge

1. I will get to know the services and web sites my child uses. If I don't know how to use them, I'll get my child to show me how.
2. I will set reasonable rules and guidelines for computer use by my children and will discuss these rules and post them near the computer as a reminder. I'll remember to monitor their compliance with these rules, especially when it comes to the amount of time they spend on the computer.
3. I will not overreact if my child tells me about a problem he or she is having on the Internet. Instead, we'll work together to try to solve the problem and prevent it from happening again.
4. I promise not to use a computer or the Internet as an electronic babysitter.
5. I will help make the Internet a family activity and ask my child to help plan family events using the Internet.
6. I will try to get to know my child's "online friends" just as I try get to know his or her other friends.

I agree to the above

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent(s)**

I understand that my parent(s) agreed to these rules and I will help my parent(s) explore the Internet with me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Child sign here**

(c) 2000-2004 [SafeKids.Com](http://SafeKids.Com)



## Resources, Tools and Information

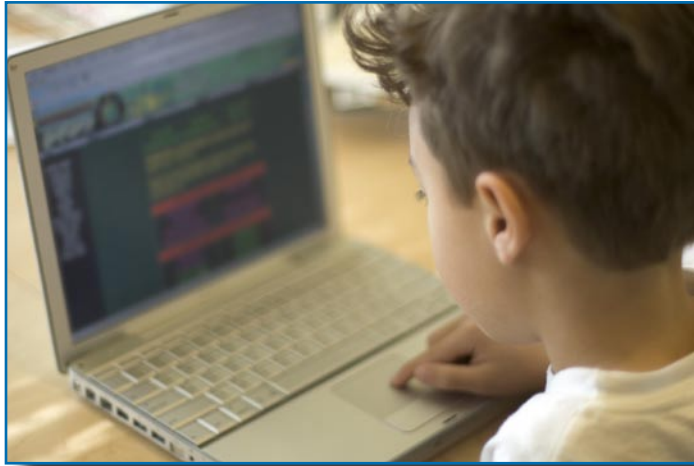
Many organizations that work with children have developed material to help keep children safe online. Here are some sources of information on protecting kids online:

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) is a nonprofit organization working in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Serving as the national clearinghouse for information and a resource center for child protection, NCMEC has worked with law enforcement on 89,000 missing child cases, resulting in the recovery of 73,000 children.

Visit [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

The National Academy of Sciences NetSafeKids provides practical information and tips on types and sources of sexually explicit content, ways that inappropriate material can reach children and teens, the threat of cyberstalking, the pros and cons of filtering and monitoring tools, and other issues involving Internet safety.

NetSafeKids is an important step on the road to becoming an Internet-savvy parent who can make informed decisions and plan effective strategies that promote safe and enjoyable Internet experiences for children. Visit [www.nap.edu/netsafekids](http://www.nap.edu/netsafekids)



The Federal Bureau of Investigation has a Web site dedicated to Internet safety for children.

Visit <http://www.fbi.gov/kids/k5th/safety2.htm> In addition, the FBI has resources and information available for parents at <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm>

The Federal Trade Commission has developed a Web site to protect kids' privacy while they are online. The site KidzPrivacy, provides online privacy guidelines and resources for kids, parents and educators. <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/kidzprivacy/index.html>

The U.S. Department of Justice's Cyber Computer Crime division has developed the Web site <http://www.cybercrime.gov> to provide resources on Internet predators to parents, teachers and children.

***If you or your child is approached in an inappropriate manner online, contact the police immediately.***



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