

# POINTERS FOR PARENTS

## Helping Your Teen Stay Safer Online

(NAPSA)—You warned her not to talk to people she doesn't know and told her to take a buddy to the mall. But when you see your daughter chatting online or instant-messaging, do you know who is typing back?

Unfortunately, it may be someone who's up to no good. Of the 24 million children online, one in five have received an online sexual solicitation, according to a U.S. Department of Justice survey. Two-thirds of these solicitations were aimed at teen girls.

"Although the Internet offers many benefits to youth, it gives predators access to teens when they are supposedly 'safe' at home," said Nancy A. McBride, national safety director for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC).

Well-intentioned warnings from parents about "stranger danger" won't immunize your daughter off-line or online from contact with potential predators. Teen girls often don't associate the seemingly friendly, flattering and supportive older guys they meet online with someone who means them harm. And they don't think it can happen to them.

To help parents and teens realize the potential dangers that exist on the Internet, NCMEC and the Ad Council recently announced the second wave in a three-year public service advertising effort designed to raise awareness about keeping children and teens safer online.

The television, magazine, Internet and radio spots—which are also available in Spanish—show teen girls how easily someone can manipulate their insecurity.



**Experts say parents need to talk with their teens about avoiding online predators.**

ties. The ads end with the tag line, "Don't Believe the Type."

"Even if you don't know a lot about Internet fads, if you talk with your teenager about online safety and keep the lines of communication open, then you are taking a step in the right direction," said McBride.

Shutting off the computer won't isolate your teen from the Internet's influence. It's also important that your children understand not to give out personal information or to meet in person someone they know only from online communication.

Installing the latest security gadgets on your computer is no substitute for dialogue and supervision. "Talking with a parent about Internet safety can help teens develop awareness and good decision-making skills that will translate into safer choices," said McBride.

To learn more about the campaign, find resources to help parents and teens, or report online solicitation, visit [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com) or call 1-800-843-5678.