



# INTERNET SAFETY



## Teens Need To Think Before Posting Information Online

(NAPSA)—Your daughter may have posted the photos on a lark or only for her friends, but what starts as innocent snapshots and personal information on a social networking site can help make her vulnerable to online sexual exploitation. Photos can be copied, reposted and used to embarrass her, and they could potentially land in the hands of a sexual predator.

Although many teens think setting a profile to “private” guarantees safety online, many of them are not careful enough about safeguarding their privacy online. Teens also commonly feel that they can control information that they post or share online. Unfortunately, friends, acquaintances and even people they don’t know can copy pictures and text—and repost them elsewhere or share them via e-mail or instant messaging.

“Teens need to realize that anything they post online is public information. It might as well be written and posted on a bulletin board for everyone in the world to see,” said Nancy A. McBride, national safety director for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC).

And some teens grant access to their private profiles to people they don’t know in real life, which may make it easier for sexual predators to approach them. One in seven children has received an online sexual solicitation, according to a survey issued last year by the University of New Hampshire for NCMEC.

NCMEC recommends parents and guardians educate themselves about technology, establish rules for computer use, know who communicates with their teens, put



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their family computer in a common room and know what other access their teen has. It’s also important that young people understand not to give out personal information or to meet in person with someone they know only from online communication.

McBride says it’s even more important now for parents and guardians to help teens understand that online behavior can have real-world consequences. “The marks your teen leaves online can offer a virtual tour through their experimentations and flirtations. There may be no way to hide their missteps from a teacher, potential employer or college admissions counselor.”

She advises parents and guardians to talk with their teens about the information they post online, and if they find something of concern in their profile, to work with their teens to remove the picture or information.

To learn more about online safety, get resources for parents, guardians and teens, or report online solicitation, visit [www.cyber.tipline.com](http://www.cyber.tipline.com) or call 1-800-THE LOST.