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Verizon and Online Safety: Protecting Children in the 21st Century

Submitted by: Verizon



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Among Member Economies Promoting Safer
Internet Environment for Children
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APEC-OECD Joint Symposium on Promoting Safer
Internet Environment for Children

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Growing up in a Digital World

- At the beginning of 2008, there were 1.3 billion Internet users worldwide.
- Children are growing up with an “always-on” mentality:
 - 94% of American 12-17-year-olds use the Internet
 - 58% of 12 to 17-year-olds use online social networking sites
 - 70% of girls 15-17
 - 57% of boys 15-17*
- Kids consume-and increasingly-produce content.

(*Pew Internet & American Life Project, June, 2008)



PEW / INTERNET
PEW INTERNET & AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT

Teens, Online Stranger Contact & Cyberbullying, June 30, 2008



Online Threats

- **Children face a variety of threats when online today:**
 - Cyberbullying
 - Online predators
 - Cutting and suicide sites
 - Anorexia, bulimia sites

- **Threats are not static-they are dynamic and ever-changing.**
 - Social networking sites and chat rooms didn't exist five years ago.
 - “Sexting” (inappropriate images taken with cell phone cameras and transmitted between teens) is the latest threat to emerge in the U.S.

- **Companies, governments, educators and law enforcement need to engage in an ongoing cooperative effort to make the internet as safe as possible for our children.**



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Verizon's Position

- **Verizon provides access to broadband services across multiple platforms.**

- **Parents need tools to help protect their children on all platforms:**

- **Verizon Wireless**
 - Age appropriate content filters, usage controls and family locator for children's wireless devices (verizonwireless.com/parentalcontrols) & (verizonwireless.com/usagecontrols).

- **Verizon FiOS TV**
 - Extensive parental controls are offered on all FIOS subscriptions providing the ability to block unsuitable or objectionable content (verizonwireless.com/fiostivhelp).

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Verizon Online Parental Controls and Cybersecurity Tools

- **Tools: We offer strong cybersecurity tools which allow parents to identify and block websites which are inappropriate for children:**
 - Block websites by category
 - Block or allow websites based on URL of the site
 - Block Internet access for certain programs or groups of programs
 - Schedule when Internet access is available
- **Verizon Security Advisor is a free security test to see if a personal computer is protecting you from the latest online threats.**
- **In addition, Verizon Internet Security Suite offers a package of anti-spyware, anti-virus, firewall, pop-up and ad blocker, privacy manager, fraud protection and personal computer tune-up.**
- **More information: (<http://www.verizon.net/parentalcontrol>)**
- **Personal safety on the Internet is a top priority for Verizon.**

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Education and Awareness

- **While a range of blocking tools continue to expand and improve, more attention is being drawn to online safety education and awareness-raising.**
- **Recent studies in the United States and the United Kingdom have shown the importance of teaching critical thinking, digital citizenship, and new forms of media literacy.**
- **However, experts are continuing to stress that young people are not passive “victims” but active participants.**
- **How can we best promote self-respect and socially responsible behavior both online and offline?**

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Corporate Responsibility

Devoting resources via partnerships, grants, industry coalitions.



➤ **Coalitions & industry partners**

- Family Online Safety Institute
- MySpace Task Force
- StopCyberBullying
- NCTA Blue Ribbon Task Force
- U.S. Telcom Online Safety Working Group



➤ **Expanding research into online habits.**

➤ **Part of the Verizon Foundation's focus on family health & safety.**

- Sponsoring PBS Frontline "Digital Nation" project

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation>

- Two-year \$150K fellowship in youth Internet safety research
- Grants to libraries, schools, and public broadcasting
- Online safety resources for Thinkfinity.org



Consumer Awareness & Education



➤ Engaged parents and children in 2007-2008, collaborating with state and civic leaders.

➤ Empowering people to help themselves.

➤ <http://responsibility.verizon.com>





Working with Law Enforcement

- Supporting investigations into all manner of online criminal activity.
- Working with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to report and investigate child pornography.
- Maintaining a highly trained staff of investigators and security personnel to respond to legal process.
- Providing training to law enforcement regarding subpoena compliance and forensic investigation.

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Conclusions (1)

- Rapid evolution from just consumer to producer of online content.
- Online threats always evolving-we need flexibility to respond.
- Online parental controls and cybersecurity tools are also evolving, and improving.
- Education and awareness becoming more important, with extensive industry-sponsored programs underway, with a focus on:
 - Children
 - Parents
 - Teachers and schools
- Working to do more:
 - More education outreach
 - Better communication through web-based media
 - Continuing research into technical approaches to address online safety and security issues
 - Increase resources for law enforcement

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Conclusions (2)

- No quick fixes: Online safety is a societal issue demanding a broad-based response through schools, libraries, and community outreach.
- While the internet has caused a fundamental shift in the way people learn, socialize and interact, communication with our children remains of fundamental importance.
- Today we heard a lot about the evils lurking on the Internet, but let us not lose sight of the fact that the Internet is overwhelmingly a good thing for society.
- Our focus will remain providing the best network tools available; informing people on how to make safer choices; and guarding against cybercrime.

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Thank you!

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Appendix

- Verizon Parental Control Center: <http://responsibility.verizon.com/parentalcontrols/>
- Online Safety Resources for educators, students, and parents: <http://thinkfinity.org>
- Other family online safety resources:
 - GetNetWise: <http://www.getnetwise.org>
 - StopCyberbullying: <http://www.stopcyberbullying.org>
 - Progress and Freedom Foundation: <http://www.pff.org/parentalcontrols>
- Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI) – resources for companies that would like to learn more or get more involved: <http://www.fosi.org>
- Government resources at the U.S. Federal Trade Commission: <http://www.onguardonline.gov>
- Law enforcement resources at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: <http://www.ncmec.org>