



# MISSOURI INTERNET CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN TASK FORCE

**[www.moicac.org](http://www.moicac.org)**

## **Cyberbullying: Recognizing the Signs and Reporting the Problem**

The use of Internet technology, including cell phone text messaging, for the use of threatening and harassing others has become an increasing problem among school-age youth.

The technology allows instant communication and often communication without deliberation. Because messages are not spoken face to face it can promote bravery and create a feeling of anonymity. Often the impact of cyberbullying, compared to the spoken word, can be more hurtful because of the feeling of permanency.

Some of the warning signs that may surface from children who have become victims of cyberbullying are:

- Change in personality
- Change in or loss of friends
- Drop in grades
- Becoming more secretive
- Increased isolation

If parents or other responsible adults become aware that their child is being victimized online through email, chat rooms, social networking sites like Facebook.com or MySpace.com, or through text messaging on cell phones they should give the following advice to their child:

- **DO NOT RESPOND TO THE MESSAGE.** A response will only escalate the situation. If you don't respond the sender will not know you got the message.
- Do not forward the message.
- Do not encourage others to do it.
- Stand united against it.
- Report the message to your school or police based upon the intent and content of the message. This includes harassing, derogatory or embarrassing statements, serious threats and/or repeated threats.
- Save the evidence.
- Report the cyberbullying online at [abuse@\(internet service provider\).com](mailto:abuse@(internet service provider).com) or [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com).

Parents can help protect their children online by reminding them that they should protect their name, identity and reputation. Remind them that what they post online about themselves, including photos or other images, can impact their future. This information can easily be copied or altered. **Once information is on the Internet it is no longer private and you no longer own it.**

For more information about cyberbullying and how to keep safe on the World Wide Web, check out the following websites: [www.inobtr.org](http://www.inobtr.org), [www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org), [www.ikeepsafe.org](http://www.ikeepsafe.org), and [www.digizen.org](http://www.digizen.org).