If You Are A Victim of Online Stalking or Harassment

- Tell your parents or a trusted adult if you are being harassed or threatened, especially if you are under the age of 18.
- Get a new account or a new log-on name and password from your Internet Service Provider, if you are getting harassing e-mails. Close your old account.
- Save all communication from the cyberstalker. Save all of the header information if it's an e-mail or newsgroup posting. Print a hard copy and save a copy on disk or CD for documentation.
- Log each communication, explaining the situation in detail.
- Contact the harasser directly and state in simple, strong, and formal terms, *once and only once,* to stop contacting you and/or posting anything about you. State that the communications are unwanted and inappropriate, and that you will take further action if it does not stop. E-mail a copy to the system administrator of your Internet Service Provider. Save copies of these communications, and note that you sent them in your log.
- Report any incidents to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's CyberTipline at www.cybertipline.com.

THE LAW

West Virginia Code §61-3C-14A
It is unlawful for any person, with the intent to harass or abuse another person, to use a computer to make contact with another without disclosing his or her identity; make contact with a person after being requested by the person to stop from contacting them; threaten to commit a crime against any person or property; or cause obscene material to be delivered or transmitted to a specific person after being requested to stop sending such material. It is also unlawful for any person to knowingly permit a computer under his or her control to be used for any purpose prohibited by this section. Any person who violates a provision of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not more than five hundred dollars or confined in a regional jail not more than six months, or both. For a second or subsequent offense, the person is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not more than one thousand dollars or confined in a regional jail for not more than one year, or both.

Federal Law 18 U.S.C. §2261A(2) It is a federal crime, punishable from five years to life in prison, to stalk another person across state, tribal or international lines using regular mail, e-mail or the Internet. The defendant must have the intent to kill or injure the victim, or to place a family member or a spouse or intimate partner of the victim in fear of death or serious injury.

If you are a victim of sexual assault, call the center in your area.

Someone is there to listen and to help.

CONTACT Huntington Rape Crisis Counseling
Huntington
304-399-1111

Family Refuge Center
Lewisburg
304-645-6334

REACH
Family Service of Kanawha Valley
Charleston
304-340-3676

Hope, Inc.
Fairmont
304-367-1100

Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center
Morgantown
304-292-5100

Sexual Assault Help Center
Wheeling
304-234-8519

Shenandoah Women's Center
Martinsburg
304-263-8292

Women's Aid In Crisis
Elkins
1-800-339-1185

Women's Resource Center
Beckley
304-255-2559

Or

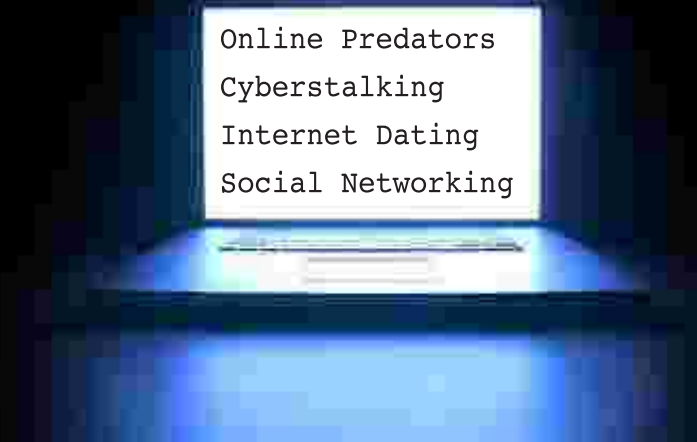## THE NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE
1-800-656-HOPE

FRIS

The West Virginia Foundation
For Rape Information and Services
112 Braddock Street
Fairmont, WV 26554

www.fris.org

INTERNET DANGERS

Online Predators
Cyberstalking
Internet Dating
Social Networking

FRIS

West Virginia Foundation for Rape Information and Services, Inc.

112 Braddock Street, Fairmont, WV 26554
304-366-9500   Fax 304-366-9501
www.fris.org

STATISTICS
- As many as 50,000 sexual predators are online at any given moment (Dateline, January 2006).
- Over 2 million children, ages 2–12, surf the web.
- The average age of first exposure to Internet porn is 11 (Family Safe Media, December 15, 2005).
- 87% of youth, or about 21 million teens, go online.*
- 75% of online teens and 65% of all teens (16 million) use Instant Messaging.*
- 87% of teens go online from home.*
- 11% of all Internet-using adults in the United States (about 16 million people) have used Internet dating services.**

*Pew Internet and American Life Project, Teens and Technology, 2005
**Pew Internet and American Life Project, Online Dating, 2005

RISKS WHEN USING THE INTERNET
- Free e-mail accounts, chat rooms, and online dating services provide many opportunities for a predator.
- The Internet creates a false sense of security because communication can be intimate and anonymous. As a result, more personal information is often posted than would normally be given to a stranger.
- A predator uses this basic information to contact the victim or the victim's friends and co-workers, impersonate the victim online in chat rooms, and post that personal information to slander and further endanger the victim.
- Teenage victims are easily found through online social networking services such as Friendster, MySpace and Facebook. With only the name of a local school, sex and age being sought, a predator can see pictures and gather personal information from profiles (names, phone numbers, addresses and habits) of teens and their friends.
- Children often willingly share personal information online in exchange for goods and services.
- Children are open and trusting. Their curiosity and innocence make them vulnerable to online predators.
- Children naturally search for others who will listen. With access to e-mail and Instant Messaging they become easy targets.
- The desire for independence and the fear of punishment make children less likely to tell parents about inappropriate contacts.
- Predators message online with targeted victims before attempting to meet them.

DEFINITION OF CYBERSTALKING
Cyberstalking is the use of the Internet, e-mail or other technology to harass or stalk another person. More than the annoyance of unsolicited e-mail, it is methodical, deliberate, and persistent. The communications are often filled with inappropriate content and continue after the recipient has asked the sender to stop.

Predators often use the Internet to find, track and lure victims of all ages.

MONITOR COMPUTER USE FOR CHILDREN
- Keep the computer in a visible place and monitor activity, reading what your children read, write and receive online.
- Set limits for Internet use. Warn your children about potential dangers and that people are not always who they say they are.
- Enforce a list of "Do Nots", including:
    —Do not give out personal information. (Explain what personal information is – name, address, etc.)
    —Do not upload your picture.
    —Do not complete personal profiles
    —Do not share a password with anyone other than a parent or guardian.
    —Do not plan to meet face-to-face with someone you met online.
- Implement controls within your browser or purchase filtering software. Remember that a filter is never a substitute for your presence.
- Maintain open communication. Encourage your child to come to you with problems they encounter online. If your child comes across a "forbidden" site, openly discuss the content. Fear of punishment from parents is a main reason children do not report inappropriate contacts.

SOCIAL NETWORKING
Social networking sites, or "friend-of-a-friend" sites, connect users to new people through people they already know. There are currently more than 300 sites, such as Facebook and MySpace, available for making new friends, online dating and establishing business connections. Users provide personal information to encourage communication on these sites.

SAFETY TIPS
- Limit the information that you post. Avoid giving out information that would make you vulnerable - your last name, address, school, teams and groups you belong to or your schedule. The Internet is a public resource. Information posted can be seen by anyone.
- Use caution when posting photos, avoiding identifying or suggestive ones.
- Use privacy preferences or "friends" list if available to control who visits your profile.
- Do not respond to offensive comments. Delete them.
- Avoid face-to-face meetings with someone you have met online unless you are certain of their identity and background. People are not always who they say they are. If you do meet, always bring some friends along and meet in a public place. Make sure someone else (other than the person going with you) knows whom you are meeting, where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Tell your parents or an adult you trust if you feel threatened or harassed online.

ONLINE DATING
Online dating services solve the issues of time and geography in meeting potential partners. The anonymity of the Internet, however, sometimes encourages people to divulge more personal information than they should to someone they really don't know. If using an online dating service:
- Use a reputable service.
- Do not write provocative essays. Cyberflirtation can escalate quickly.
- Do not believe everything you read.
- Consider using a free e-mail account (such as Yahoo or Hotmail) that reveals nothing about your geographical location. Once you have verified that someone is trustworthy, you can give them your personal e-mail address.
- Save all e-mail conversations and tell a friend where to find them.
- Make a report to the dating service if someone makes you uncomfortable. Keep copies of all the messages.
- Get help if you are being cyberstalked or harassed.

REDUCE THE RISK

| Use gender- and age-neutral user names. Change passwords frequently. | Do not give out personal information online. | Monitor chat room activity before you "speak" or leave messages. | Edit your profile to remove personal information. | Do not respond if someone is aggressive or offensive to you online. |