

Online Sexual Solicitation¹

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Internet connectivity in the form of blogs, chat rooms, and forums can be hazardous to our teens today. These online communication aids are not themselves the problem; rather, teens face an ever-present threat of being sexually solicited online.

For example, teens may be persuaded to discuss sex with someone, to do something sexual, or disclose personal sexual information. This can happen when an adult initiates a nonsexual relationship with

a child or adolescent online, builds trust, and then seduces her or him. Similarly, online seduction can also occur between peers.

Studies find that teens most at risk for being approached sexually online are more likely to be female and between the ages of 14 and 17 years. Teens who are depressed and who have experienced difficult life transitions are especially vulnerable. Also, teens who use the Internet more frequently and who engage in high online risk behavior are more likely to be approached sexually online (Mitchell et al. 2001, Ybarra et al. 2004).

Ways to keep your teen safe online include keeping computers with Internet access in a centralized location in the home, educating your child or preteen about potential dangers and devising ways to handle online solicitation, and setting ground rules for Internet use, such as scheduled times, permissible websites, and limiting online communication to familiar peers. Although there is a big scary cyberworld out there, the family and home can be a safe haven for teens.

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http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/465.mp3

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References

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