



Who Are The Offenders?

Cybersex offenders--cyberstalkers, pedophiles, and predators, whatever name we use to refer to these people--are lurking in the shadows of the Internet. From the safety of their homes, they use the Internet to find their victims and work their way into that victim's confidence.

What does a sex offender look like? Not like a masked man hiding in dark corners! If you watch the news, you will learn that they could be a police chief, a minister, a teacher or even the man next door. Predators may feel that their behavior is normal because through the Internet they discover many others with the same interests. We would never send our children out alone to meet a stranger on a dark street, and yet it is that little box sitting on a table in a protected area we call our home that creates the greatest danger of our children becoming a victim of a violent crime.

How do they find their victims?

- Predators frequently find a child through chat rooms. These offenders have anonymity with the ability to “chat” with anyone they want to without having their identity discovered. They can entice children and teens by appearing to be any age or gender they choose to lure their victim into a trusting relationship. They invest a lot of time in building this trust by offering sympathy and support. They will encourage the child to complain about something and use that to drive a wedge between parent and child.
- They look for children who are lonely and who are new to the Internet. Remember that children in their early teens can be easily manipulated. An online predator can take a child with low self-esteem and build them into feeling secure when they are talking with this person they consider to be a friend.
- The offender may “groom” several victims at the same time. After the trust relationship has been built, they may start sending gifts or making phone calls to your child in an attempt to set up a one-on-one meeting.
- They can change innocent pictures into explicit ones perhaps putting them with pictures of themselves. They can easily take and store digital photos of their victims without the risk of being discovered by family or employers.

Who are their victims?

A recent study of over 1500 Internet users ranging in age from 10 to 17 revealed that approximately 1 in 5 received a sexual solicitation over the Internet in the past year.

- One in 33 received an “aggressive” approach with an individual requesting a meeting; telephoned; or sent regular mail, money or gifts.
- One in 4 had unwanted exposure to explicit pictures.

- One in 17 faced threats.
- Only 10% of the sexual solicitations were reported to law enforcement or ISPs.
- Less than 25% of children receiving solicitations reported the incident to their parents.

Children can also become victims by innocently sending pictures of themselves to these offenders. These images can be changed (“morphed”) into pornography. Until the pictures begin to surface online, you may not know that your child has become a victim of this type of cyber crime.

What can you do?

- It is important that you maintain a relationship of respect and trust with your child.
- Watch for warning signs that your child may be in trouble.
- Find out and remember your kid’s screen names and make sure they do not identify anything personal about them.
- They should not use screen names that are suggestive such as “sexyteen.”
- Report any suspicious activity immediately to your local law enforcement and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 1-800–843-5678. Learn more by going to: North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, <http://www.ncsbi.gov>.
- Above all--**Don’t delay taking action if you think a cybersex offender has confronted your child!**

The click of the mouse will bring all of the knowledge the world has to offer right into your home. Learn all you can so the World Wide Web will become a safe place for your child to visit!

To find sex offenders in your area or neighborhood, go to the NC Attorney General’s Website, www.ncdoj.com, click on Protecting Children and from that page click on Sex Offender Information. You can search by name, county, city or zip code.

At the National Sex-Offender Registry at <http://www.nsopr.gov/>, clicking "yes" to agree to the conditions of use will direct you to a page where you can search by name or location. You can also search your zip code for the sex offenders living in your neighborhood, or you can choose to search regionally or nationally by using the last name and first initial of a specific person.

You can also search state sites by visiting: <http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/cac/states.htm>

Statistics from: Federal Bureau of Investigation Law Enforcement Bulletin – March 2005 Issue, <http://www.fbi.gov/publications>

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Protect Every Child
www.protecteverychild.org