TOP 5 RISKS TO CANADIAN CHILDREN ON THE INTERNET

1. Sexual offenders targeting online games that have chat rooms including interactive web games, computer and console games.

Recommended Strategies

➢ Stay involved and know the games your child is playing.

➢ Pay particular attention to games that incorporate a chat component – caution should be used before permitting your child to engage in chat with their opponent(s).

➢ Reinforce the concept of keeping personal information private.

➢ Some gaming consoles come with built in parental controls – activate this feature if available.

➢ Pay attention to what features come with your gaming console. For example, you may not want to give your child the ability to voice chat with others.

2. Sexual offenders hijacking instant messaging accounts and coercing children to send nude or partially clothed images of themselves. Over the last few years, reports of this threat have doubled.

Recommended Strategies

➢ Follow computer best practices such as installing anti-virus, firewalls, and keeping your software up to date.

➢ Stress the importance of using appropriate passwords for instant messaging accounts. Obvious passwords are an easy way for others to gain access and control over accounts.

➢ Never enter your password into anything other than your IM program. Teach your child to check with you if unsure about the login area they are being asked to sign into.

➢ As the parent/guardian, you should be the only ones that knows your child's password.

3. Sexual offenders using 3D animated characters, referred to as Avatars, to engage youth in online conversations.

Recommended Strategies

➢ Be aware of the IM game program your child uses and any associated characters they have adopted to represent themselves (avatar).

➢ Ensure your child's avatar is age appropriate and non-descriptive. Recognize that avatars don't have to represent a person and can be used to mislead children / youth.

➢ Ensure they always get your permission before sharing personal information or accepting anything. Teach them what is meant by personal information and where on the Internet they may be asked for it.

➢ Explain that once a picture is sent online they lose control of what is done with it (it may never be completely removed from the Internet).

➢ Monitor increased independence. Even though adolescents can appear

as though they can "handle" things, they actually require and unconsciously seek adult guidance and supervision.

Most social networking sites are designed for age 13 and up but do not require age verification to become a member. It is therefore very easy for young children to join.

5. Youth sending nude images to peers without understanding the images could be forwarded or permanently posted online.

➢ Reinforce the public nature of the Internet and make sure your child understands that you will monitor their online activity.

➢ Explain where it is appropriate for them to have privacy: confiding in close friends face-to-face, writing in a journal, private space in their bedroom (there is no privacy on the Internet).

➢ Monitor use of webcams, cell phones, posting and exchanging pictures

online.

➢ Be aware of all the contact names on your child's IM list and set the expectation that you must approve any new contacts added.

4. Sexual offenders targeting social networking sites where children and youth are encouraged to create online diaries and connect with new people.

Recommended Strategies

➢ Review the social networking sites that your child visits and ensure that their online diary, profile, or photos do not contain identifying information.

➢ Be aware that your child can be exposed to inappropriate content as there is little or no moderation of content on social networking sites.