

## Social Networking Tips for Parents

- 1. Be reasonable** and try to set reasonable expectations. Pulling the plug on your child's internet activities is rarely a good first response to a problem. – it's too easy for them to "go underground" and establish free messaging and social networking accounts at a friend's house or many other places.
- 2. Be open with your teens** and encourage them to come to you if they encounter a problem online – cultivate trust and communications because no rules, laws or filtering software can replace you as their first line of defense. Teaching your kids to be critical thinkers about their safety will pay dividends in the years to come.
- 3. Talk with your kids** about how they use the services. Make sure they understand basic internet and social networking safety guidelines. These include protecting privacy, (including passwords), never posting personally identifying information, avoiding in-person meetings with people they meet online and not posting inappropriate or embarrassing photos. Suggest that they use the services' privacy tools to share information only with people they know from the real world and never admit "friends" to their pages unless they are certain who they are.
- 4. Consider requiring all online activity take place in a central area of the home**, not in a kid's bedroom. Be aware that there are also ways kids can access the internet away from home, including on many mobile phones and game players.
- 5. Try to get your kids to share their blogs or online profiles** with you, but be aware that they can have multiple accounts on multiple services. Use search engines and the search tools on social networking sites to search for your child's full name, phone number and other identifying information.
- 6. Under no circumstances should your child have access to a web cam without parental supervision.** More and more teen and young adult girls are finding their inappropriate and embarrassing photos being posted on the web by disgruntled or abusive boyfriends.