



# All Children Considered

FALL 2010

A NEWSLETTER FOR PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR CHILDREN

## CHILDREN, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE MEDIA

### FEATURE ARTICLE

Today's Technology: Friend or Foe? 1

### CAREGIVERS' RESOURCE CORNER 2

Taming the Gaming: A Parent/Professional Perspective 2

Managing the Internet Experience: Protecting Youth and Your Program 3

Exergames Get Kids Moving 4

If You Give a Preschooler a Mouse, Beware of the Cookies 4

### STATE AGENCY UPDATE

#### Department of Public Health

Staying Connected With Child Day Care Licensing 5

Cyber bullying: A Growing Menace 6

### PARENT HANDOUT

Technology, Media, and Children 7

### 2-1-1 CHILD CARE MAILBAG 8

Published by



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM  
College of Agriculture & Natural Resources

In Collaboration with



Connecticut  
Departments of  
Social Services  
& Public Health

## Today's Technology: Friend or Foe?

Terri Ruducha-Roberts, Child Care Licensing Specialist  
Child Day Care Licensing Program  
Terri.ruducha-roberts@ct.gov  
www.ct.gov/dph/daycare  
860.509.8045

Family Day Care Home, Group Day Care Home, and Child Day Care Center statutes and regulations do not address the use of electronic technology. Although many programs and providers use today's technology as effective tools in children's learning, Child Day Care Center, Group Day Care Home, and Family Day Care Home regulations do require that children have a flexible and balanced schedule which consists of a variety of learning experiences (This prevents them from sitting in front of a computer or TV screen for hours on end!).

When I visit programs throughout this state, I see children playing outside on the playground, singing songs during circle time, painting pictures, playing with play dough,

napping, eating, being read to, as well as playing computer games or watching a video.

Programs/providers can develop and have developed their own policies/ procedures on the topic of electronics/media. Such policies address whether or not computer/internet is used with the children and identify restrictions. They also determine whether children are allowed to bring cell phones, iPods, or hand held games, such as Game Boy and Nintendo DS. These policies delineate the parameters of use, as well as state consequences for not adhering to these policies.

Whether we like it or not, technology will continue to emerge and progress. So, is today's technology friend or foe? It is our **friend**. However, without implementation of appropriate guidelines and supervision on its use, it can become our **foe**. With technology, as in other aspects of their lives, it is **our responsibility to ensure children's safety and development**.

### From the editor...

"Technology, Media, and Children" is the theme of our first issue of this school year. The impact that technology and media have on children and youth is an important subject for caregivers and parents trying to manage these powerful forces for the intellectual and emotional health of their children.

The article on page one summarizes the inherent contradiction of technology and media. Both can be friends or foes of children's positive development depending on whether or not they are used appropriately.

Our authors have presented information on dangers, such as cyber bullying and inappropriate use of media, as well as benefits such as exergames and positive uses of technology. A special one-page handout

on technology and media is provided for caregivers to share with parents and guardians. Other articles reflect the experience and viewpoints of child care program administrators, university professors, and parents.

Be sure to check the state agency update section, caregivers' resource corner, and the child care mailbag for additional timely and useful information.

Lastly, let us know how we are doing. We welcome your feedback on ways to make our newsletter more helpful to you and the important work you do with children.

Harry Mangle, Editor



### New Anti-Bullying Free Resources for Child Care Providers and Parents

are available at [www.FindYouthInfo.gov](http://www.FindYouthInfo.gov), the U.S. government's new website to help create, maintain, and strengthen effective youth programs. Especially helpful is a sample newsletter article on bullying at [www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/HHS\\_PSA/pdfs/SBN\\_Tip\\_14.pdf](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/HHS_PSA/pdfs/SBN_Tip_14.pdf)

### Safety Filter for "YouTube"

can be found at the website [www.common sense media.org/improve-youtubes-safety-one-click](http://www.common sense media.org/improve-youtubes-safety-one-click). Find out how to begin filtering out content that's not age appropriate. Although, not fool proof, the filter does provide information for parents on how to use the YouTube 'Safety Mode'. Commonsense Media advocates that families that have children under 13 should use this method to screen objectionable content.

### Opportunities to Learn by Using New Media

are available by visiting Standards.gov ([www.standards.gov/standards\\_gov/assistiveTechnology.cfm](http://www.standards.gov/standards_gov/assistiveTechnology.cfm)), Kids Together, Inc. ([www.kidstogether.org](http://www.kidstogether.org)), or contacting Lisa M. Hagermoser Sanetti, Ph.D., Assistant Professor School Psychology Program, University of Connecticut at [lisa.sanetti@uconn.edu](mailto:lisa.sanetti@uconn.edu). Assistive technology is any item or service that helps improve functioning for a child with a disability. With advancements in educational technology, continued expansion of the Internet, and innovations in gaming and mobile media, supporting a child's unique needs is now easier than ever and can be fun, too! A multitude of applications (or "apps") are available to support children's learning. Video game consoles provide a platform for children to play games that aim to develop academic and social skills, as well as physical coordination.

### Latest information on the National Health Care Legislation

can be found at [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov). The purpose of this website is to inform the public about the new health care reform legislation. The site is easy to navigate and has lots of helpful information, including time-frames for implementation of different aspects of the law.

### Great Place for Information about Kid's Health

([www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)) that you can trust and is free of "doctor speak," is found at this website. Some examples of the kind of subjects found in this site are:

- The Daily Brain Buzz (interesting facts and questions for kids)
- In the spotlight (your heart)
- Big Questions: What's bad breath?

Please note that all information on KidsHealth® is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.



## Taming the Gaming: A Parent/Professional Perspective

Melissa Mendez Begnal, LCSW  
Early Childhood Consultant  
Wheeler Clinic/ECCP®  
[mmendez@wheelerclinic.org](mailto:mmendez@wheelerclinic.org)

Before becoming a mom, my attitude about video games was that they were bad; bad for children, bad for society. As an early childhood professional, I was aware of the research defining the damage video games do to children and committed to making sure my children would never be gamers.

My husband and I kept video games out of our son's hands until he was 6. While preparing for a weeklong trip last Thanksgiving, we discussed getting a hand held "learning" game to fight boredom and limit conflict with his 4-year-old sister. After deliberating, we bought the Leapster 2 with its Jedi reading and math games. Meanwhile, my sister bought and shipped the Nintendo DS for the trip; so much for Jedi math!

We came back from that trip with the gift of a used Xbox 360. It went back in the box after two weeks because my son couldn't control the urge to play it, and we couldn't help him. We'll try again when he is 10.

After a year of the Nintendo DS, I'm confident video games will not destroy my son. He doesn't engage in violent behaviors or show attention-deficit behaviors that aren't developmentally appropriate. We have learned a lot from this experience and have put limits in place that have been helpful:

- He can play for 20 minutes a day on school days or 30 minutes on weekends. He can use all 20 or 30 minutes at once or split it up into two 10 or 15 minute segments.
- The game is to be played at home and not taken to public places like grocery stores, to doctor visits, or family events.
- Racing games or others where the goal is to jump over mushrooms are fine, but violent games are not.



- Chores must be taken care of first; no game time if his bedroom is a mess or if there is homework to do.

I suspect on some busy weekends he has had double the amount of game time we've designated. But more often than not, the limits have worked well. They are teaching him responsibility and self-control, and we're seeing those skills play out in other areas. He keeps his room clean, and doesn't play without asking first. He sets the timer on the microwave and gives himself one extra minute to account for the time it takes him to walk from the kitchen to the family room where he plays. How can we argue with that logic?



# Managing the Internet Experience: Protecting Youth and Your Program

Andrew DePalma, Ph.D.  
Assistant Extension Professor  
UConn Neag School of Education  
andrew.depalma@uconn.edu  
860.486.9194

The Internet can be a wonderful educational tool for the young people in your child care programs and a rich resource for staff. Once the decision has been made to allow Internet access in your program, the following guidelines will help you provide the safest and most productive environment possible.

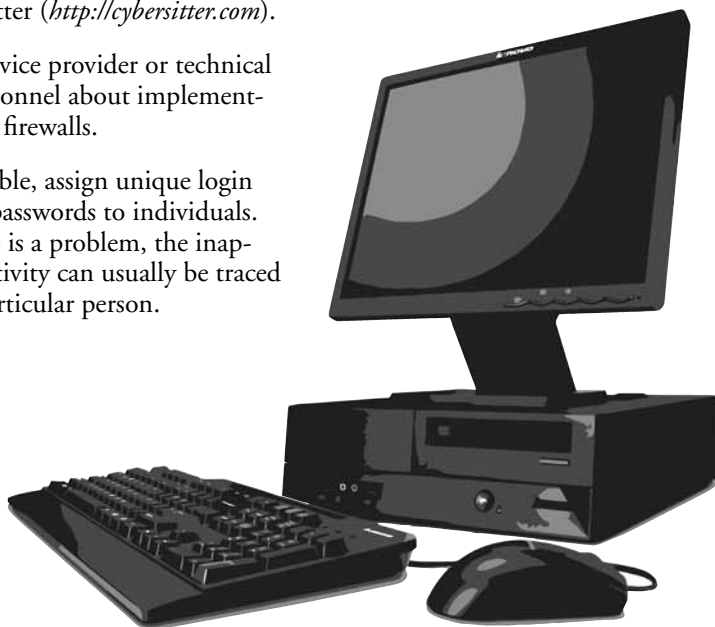
## DO:

1. Provide an age-appropriate orientation for all children on proper Internet use, emphasizing that Internet access is a privilege and must be used responsibly.
2. Require an encrypted password for wireless network access.
3. Provide mandatory training to staff on policies regarding the proper use of Internet connected computers, etc.
4. Post these policies on the staff bulletin board or similar location.
5. Ask your service provider or others with technical expertise about options for filtering software, which can control access to single sites or entire categories of sites. Common products are Net Nanny ([www.netnanny.com](http://www.netnanny.com)) and Cybersitter (<http://cybersitter.com>).
6. Ask your service provider or technical support personnel about implementing network firewalls.
7. Where possible, assign unique login names and passwords to individuals. In case there is a problem, the inappropriate activity can usually be traced back to a particular person.

8. Read console and computer game labels and warnings carefully. The Entertainment Software Ratings Board ([www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org)) maintains an easy to use rating system.
9. Regularly inspect web browser "visited site" logs and hard drives.

## DON'T:

10. Don't allow children to use handheld devices or game consoles that can browse the Internet without close supervision. The small single-user screens of handheld devices make casual monitoring difficult. Also, any PC-based filtering software will not filter the content delivered to these devices.
11. Don't allow children's educational use and staff business or personal use on the same computer. This is the best way to keep sensitive information from young eyes.
12. Don't forget to require a signed release from primary caregivers or parents to inform them that in spite of responsible oversight on your part and security software in place, some children might gain access to age inappropriate Internet sites. Fully describe the steps you take to monitor use and your reporting policy.
13. Don't forget to use a sign-in list that tracks which computers older children use if individual login names and passwords are not practical.



## ALL CHILDREN CONSIDERED

Fall 2010, Vol. 19, No. 1

• 2010-11

*All Children Considered* is published by the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System. We welcome readers' comments and contributions. Please send correspondence to the editor via e-mail: [Harry.Mangle@uconn.edu](mailto:Harry.Mangle@uconn.edu), (860) 570-9077 or to UConn Greater Hartford, 1800 Asylum Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06117-2659.

## 2010-2011 EDITORIAL BOARD

**Dean Batterson**, Graphic Designer, UConn College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

**Anne Bladen**, Executive Director, UConn Child Development Laboratories

**Devon Conover**, Early Childhood Program Consultant

**Patsy Evans**, Editorial Consultant, UConn College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

**Patrice Farquharson**, Director, West Haven Child Development Center

**Karen Foley-Schain**, Executive Director, CT Children's Trust Fund, CT Dept of Social Services

**Amparo Garcia**, Lead Planning Analyst, Bureau of Assistance Program-Family Services Unit, CT Dept of Social Services

**DeAnna Lia**, Director of Prevention, Bureau of Prevention, CT Dept of Children and Families

**Harry Mangle**, Editor and Educator, UConn Dept of Extension

**Melissa Mendez**, Early Childhood Consultant, Early Childhood Consultation Partnership

**Gerri Rowell**, Education Consultant, Bureau of Teaching and Learning, CT Dept of Education

**Terri Ruducha-Roberts**, Child Care Licensing Specialist, CT Dept of Public Health

**Arlene Swatson**, Executive Director, SONCCA, Inc.

**Mary Ellen Welch**, Educator, Family & Consumer Science, UConn Dept of Extension

**Grace Whitney**, Director, Head Start State Collaboration Office, CT Department of Social Services

**Deborah Zipkin**, Director, Family Resource Center at Charter Oak Academy

**Tracy Zolnik-Brown**, Director of Child Care Services, 2-1-1 Child Care

You are encouraged to reproduce articles or excerpts from the *All Children Considered* newsletter. Please give credit to *All Children Considered* published by the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System and the Connecticut Department of Social Services. The University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System is an equal opportunity employer and program provider. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, Stop Code 9410; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964.

# Exergames Get Kids Moving

Barbara Chamberlin, PhD, Associate Professor  
Extension Instructional Design and Educational  
Media Specialist  
New Mexico State University  
bchamber@nmsu.edu

Exergames, also called active video games, use the body to move, jump, swing, and dance, instead of sitting on a couch and controlling a game with only thumbs and hands. They all offer an enjoyable way to get exercise indoors when it is too hot, cold, or windy to be outside.

Exergame players burn significant calories and increase the heart rate when compared to traditional “sedentary” games, even in young children. Games like *Dance, Dance Revolution*, in which players dance on a mat following music and

stepping to the beat in the game, require balance and stability, including yoga, step aerobics, and strength training. Other games with a bike-style controller can significantly result in greater oxygen consumption and energy expenditure than even riding a bike outside. Also, the caloric expenditure of obese children playing exergames is higher than their non-obese peers playing exergames.

Schools, afterschool programs, and child care environments can benefit from exergames. A University of Connecticut 4-H Food and Nutrition Club program in New Haven has been hosting ‘exergame olympics’ as a way to get families playing together in community programs.

Game consoles are available at local retailers and easily hook into your television or some LCD projectors. To gain the benefits of exergames, consider two important guidelines:

- Find ways to involve families by hosting a game night where children, their families, and friends can all play together. It’s easier for multi-age groups to play together when the games don’t require specialized skill with thumbs and a controller.
- Don’t use active games as a substitute for physical activity. While exergames can help convert passive screen time to active screen time, they should not be used as a substitute for other forms of physical activity. Find ways to encourage movement and ways your children and families can play together in or outside.

For more information and recommendations on using exergames, visit [www.exergamesunlocked.com](http://www.exergamesunlocked.com)



## If You Give a Preschooler a Mouse, Beware of the Cookies

Patrice Farquharson, Ed.D, Assistant Professor,  
Early Childhood Education, Post University  
and Executive Director,  
West Haven Child Development Center, Inc.

In the preschool classroom, computers are no longer an “add-on.” Since our Center received its first computer in 1993, many changes have taken place and now technology is part of our everyday lives. Unfortunately, computers are used all too often in ways that are developmentally inappropriate<sup>1</sup>, and therefore it is important to plan the most developmentally sound use in the preschool classroom.

As an administrator who wants children to get the most from their classroom experience, I first need to ensure that teachers are confident with their own computer skills. It is a good idea to start by having a few training sessions for the teaching staff to learn some basics about computers. Younger staff can serve as mentors for older staff, who would benefit from developing computer skills. These skills will be used for implementing developmentally appropriate computer activities with their children.

Once staff has agreed how computers will be used in the classroom, it is necessary to set some basic administrative guidelines for their use, even before you think about ways for children to use the Internet:

- If the agency is connected to the Internet, then certain programs should be blocked.
- Decide who will block what programs and who will be in charge of this new technology
- Staff members should sign a “Use of Technology Statement.”
- Find out if your program has an infrastructure to support wireless technology and who will manage it.

Once you have established administrative policies for classroom technology, consider the instructional aspects:

- Set up the computer as another learning center, but make sure the learning center meets licensing safety requirements. For example, computers should be secured so no one is injured, and wires need to be placed safely out of the reach of young children. Little Tykes makes computer desks for children that provide sturdy housing for the monitor and the keyboard. The drive tower itself is located below the monitor with a locked cabinet.

- Be sure to review the Internet sites that are appropriate to advance learning for young children. Hand-eye coordination, word recognition, spatial relations, and fine motor skills are some of the skills that computers can reinforce. Does your center technology staff member or the director need to approve these sites? If there is no access to the Internet, you can still use computer programs made for preschoolers and install them yourself.
- Once children have access to the learning center, teachers should be available as needed. The children need time to experiment and figure out how the new technology works, with the teacher providing a few words of encouragement or suggesting the ways of making program shortcuts and using different tools on the computer itself. Additionally, the teacher should scaffold the learning by encouraging higher order thinking programs.

To end on a personal note, my younger daughter, at age two, was inserting playing cards into the disk drive slot. Needless to say, this did not help with the workings of our computer. Therefore, I would not recommend children younger than 3 years old use the computer for anything other than a pretend prop! It is not safe for the devices or helpful for infant/toddler early learning development.



<sup>1</sup>[www.kidsource.com/education/computers.children.html](http://www.kidsource.com/education/computers.children.html)

### Staying Connected With Child Day Care Licensing

Laurie Audette, Child Care Licensing Specialist  
Child Day Care Licensing Program  
860.509.8045  
[www.ct.gov/dph/daycare](http://www.ct.gov/dph/daycare)

The Department of Public Health Child Day Care Licensing Unit's website allows visitors to access the following helpful information:

**What's New:** Information on mailings, fact sheets, video presentations, and changes.

#### Day Care Licensing Program

**Description:** Defines and describes the types of licensure and includes information on program exemptions.

**Emergency Planning, Preparedness, and Response:** Provides providers and programs information on emergency care and emergency response plan guidelines for severe weather, natural disasters, hazardous materials and evacuation, facility emergencies, violence/missing child, and abuse. It also provides a variety of related links for additional information.

**Forms/Applications:** Do you need a head teacher application or perhaps a change of address form? This link will provide Family Day Care Providers, Child Day Care, and Group Day Care staff a variety of downloadable applications and forms.

**Currently Licensed, New, and Closed Programs/Providers:** Provides lists of currently licensed, newly licensed (licensed within the last month), and closed (closed within the last month) Family Day Care Homes, Group Day Care Homes, and Child Care Centers.

**Parent Info:** Provides parents with information on finding childcare in Connecticut by allowing them to chat live with a 2-1-1 Info line Child Care Referral Specialist. Also provided are guidelines for choosing a child care program, inspections of licensed facilities/providers, how to file a complaint, and information about staffing at family daycare homes.

**Provider Info:** A great tool for staff and providers. Here you will find one of many resources such as Department of Public Health approved first aid /CPR courses and information, technical assistance such as guidelines for abuse/neglect policies/procedures, organizing your current licensing application, and miscellaneous which includes information on the Connecticut immunization requirements, records to be maintained on the premises, and much more!



**Resources and Links:** Here you will find links to the *All Children Considered* newsletter, Care 4 Kids, CT Nurses' Association, and Birth To Three, just to name a few.

**Statutes and Regulations:** If you need to check what your water temperature should be or if you can have a dog for a pet in your family day care home, this is where you will find the answers. Family Day Care Home, Group Day Care Home, and Child Care Center statutes and regulations can be found here along with recently enacted Public Acts, changes to regulations, presentation on changes to regulations for child day care centers and group day care homes, effective 11/6/2008.

**Department of Public Health Main Menu:** Allows visitors to access additional non-child day care related information, some of which includes emergency medical services, physician profiles, statistics, and research.

Technical assistance is available by calling our Help Desk at 800.282.6063 from 8:30 to 4:30, Monday through Friday, or 24 hours a day by visiting our website at [www.ct.gov/dph/daycare](http://www.ct.gov/dph/daycare). Add us to your favorites on your web browser and check in. You'll be glad you did!



# Cyber bullying: A Growing Menace

Cheryl Varnadoe, Extension 4-H Specialist  
Family and Consumer Science  
University of Georgia 4-H Faculty  
706.542.4444  
cv4h@uga.edu

Cyber bullying, also known as electronic bullying or online social cruelty, is **defined as bullying through email, instant messaging, chat room, a website, gaming site, or through digital messages/ images sent to a cellular phone.**

Although sharing certain features in common with traditional bullying, cyber bullying is unique. It not only looks and feels different than traditional bullying, but presents some unusual challenges in dealing with it. Nevertheless, the damage done by cyber bullies is no less real and can be even more painful.

Recent tragic events of teen suicide have made parents and educators painfully aware of the growing menace of cyber bullying. As early as 2004, a survey conducted by i-SAFE<sup>1</sup> found that **42% of kids (1,500 students in grades 4 to 8) were bullied while online**, and one in four has experienced it more than once. Also, **35% of kids were threatened online**, and it occurred more than once with nearly one in five of them.

Your children probably will not tell you they are harassed online. In addition, as they get older, they are even less likely to share that information with you,

according to Parry Aftab, a nationally recognized privacy attorney and child internet safety advocate.

So, get educated. Tune into your children's behavior more closely. They might be cyber bullied if they are:

- hesitant to be online;
- nervous when an Instant Message, text message, or Email appears;
- visibly upset after using the computer or cell phone;
- suddenly not using the computer or cell phone;
- hiding or clearing the computer screen or closing the cell phone when you approach;

**Your children probably will not tell you they are harassed online. In addition, as they get older, they are even less likely to share that information with you**

- spending unusually longer hours online and seeming more tense;
- withdrawing from friends, falling behind in schoolwork, or wanting to avoid school;
- angry all of a sudden, hard to pin down, withdrawn, or showing a marked change in personality or behavior;

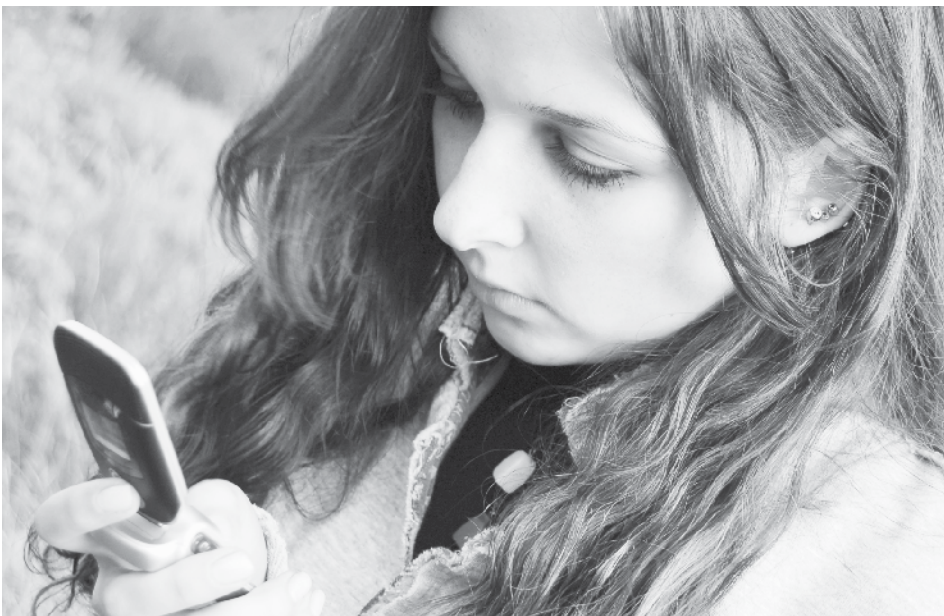
- having trouble sleeping, showing a loss of appetite, seeming very moody or depressed; and
- receiving suspicious phone calls, e-mails, and packages.

As parents or caregivers, what can we do? The goal is to keep a good ongoing dialogue with young people so they will feel comfortable telling you if something bad happened online or elsewhere. You are your child's best filter both on and off line. Build a relationship of trust and then listen carefully to what your kids say about their online experiences. Also let them know that you want to know if they receive an inappropriate message (either on or offline).

Teaching your children 'Cyber Citizenship' is also very important. Online, people can feel invisible and capable of doing things they know are wrong and wouldn't do in person or in public. Teach your children at an early age to have responsible cyber social behavior and cyber ethics, since poor e-habits can start at an early age. Simple rules such as the following can go a long way in helping your children prevent and avoid cyber bullying:

1. Don't hurt others' feelings online.
2. Respect people's online rights.
3. If someone insults you, don't respond.
4. Respect the privacy of others.
5. Don't pretend to be someone other than yourself.

Get educated, help your friends become more aware, get your community involved, and please watch for the signs of cyber bullying.



<sup>1</sup> i-SAFE, Inc. is a leading publisher of media literacy and digital citizenship education materials (<http://www.isafe.org/>).

# Parent Handout

## Technology, Media, and Children

### “Media use in kids ages 8-18 has exploded!”

- Over the past 5 years, there has been a huge increase in media use -- from nearly 6 1/2 hours to over **7 1/2 hours** today.
- Due to multitasking, kids pack a total of **10 hours and 45 minutes of media content** into those 7 1/2 hours.
- Mobile and online media use have fueled huge increases in media use.
- Three groups stand out for their high levels of consumption: preteens, African Americans, and Hispanics.
- Kids who spend more time with media report **lower grades and lower levels of personal contentment**.
- Parental involvement matters: Children whose parents set rules or limited access spent less time with media than their peers.”



### Too sexy for kids?<sup>2</sup>

- A 2010 policy statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics states that exposure to sexual content in the media is a significant factor in the intention to have sex in the near future.
- Girls with a heavy sexual media diet engage in sexual activity younger than their peers, according to a 2007 Harris Interactive Poll.
- Of the 68% of TV shows with explicit sexual content, **only 15% discuss risk and responsibility**, found the 2007 Harris Interactive Poll.
- More than 40% of teens and preteens said they've recently come across nudity and pornography on the Internet, according to a 2007 ForbesLife survey.

### Tips for parents

- **Start good habits early**, establish limits, and stick to them. Restrict access to media (phone, Internet, TV), turn the phone off when doing homework, and take the TV out of your child's bedroom.
- **Experience media together**. Choose appropriate media for young children. For older ones talk about what you see, hear, and read. Stay involved with what your kids are doing online - and on the go. Don't think that racy jokes go over their heads; what they see and hear does affect them.
- **Keep distractions to a minimum**. For older kids, make sure that social networking and chatting happen after homework is over or at timed intervals. And for kids of any age, make sure that social networking and chatting does not take place when kids should be resting and sleeping. When lights are out, social networking and chatting devices should be, too.
- **Be a positive role model**. When kids are around, use media the way you want them to use it and keep mobile devices away from the dinner table.
- **Seek balance**. Help kids develop responsible media habits and good digital citizenship so they can pursue their interests with media savvy.
- **Help them make age-appropriate choices**. Kids get excited about movies and TV shows being marketed to them, but be sure you first check out their reviews.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[www.common sense media.org/side-effects-media](http://www.common sense media.org/side-effects-media)

<sup>2</sup>[www.common sense media.org/sex-and-media-tips](http://www.common sense media.org/sex-and-media-tips)

<sup>3</sup>[www.common sense media.org/tv-reviews](http://www.common sense media.org/tv-reviews)

For advice for children of specific ages, see [www.common sense media.org/advice-for-parents](http://www.common sense media.org/advice-for-parents).

All Children Considered Editorial Board

*Please share the newsletter with all staff.*

## Child Care 2-1-1 Mailbag

**Question:** With winter in full swing, do you have any ideas on how I can incorporate outdoor activities in my child care program?

**Answer:** Cold weather months that bring changeable weather, different schedules, and varying children definitely have an impact on your program. You need to plan stimulating activities for your full-time children as well as your school-age children, who will be with you only before and after school. However, winter months don't mean an end to outdoor activities.

Children need to explore their environment and should use the outdoors even in winter for play and learning activities, but always with the proper attire. Even on cold mid-winter days you can go on nature walks and do different activities with snow (e.g., snowmen, color snow, or even bring the snow indoors and observe it melt, etc.). Use items collected during your outdoor time in creative ways that incorporate math, science, and reading.

On extremely cold or rainy days, you can organize indoor activities to encourage children's physical fitness. Here are some examples:



- Plan music activities that allow children to dance, jump, and hop.
- Use props such as scarves or even beach balls to encourage fun indoor play.
- Set up tents or have an indoor picnic.
- Arrange an obstacle course or do various physical exercises.
- Rotate toys and materials or do cooking activities like making applesauce or snow cones.

With some creativity you can provide a fun, stimulating environment for the children all year round.

For suggestions of additional activities, contact 2-1-1 Child Care by dialing 2-1-1 or 800.505.1000 to speak to a Referral Specialist. Another way to get help is to visit our website [www.211childcare.org](http://www.211childcare.org) and click on Live Chat option to "chat" with a Referral Specialist. In addition, our Early Childhood Specialists can provide free workshops on related activities to any child care provider.

