Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a serious and growing issue that affects the lives of young people across the country.

What is Cyberbullying?

The Cyberbullying Research Centre defines cyberbullying as "*the act of repeatedly harassing, mistreating, or making fun of another person online or while using cell phones or other electronic device*".

Some of the important elements of cyberbullying include:

- The behavior is deliberate, not accidental.
- The bullying reflects a pattern of behavior, not just one isolated incident.
- The target perceives that harm was inflicted.

Specific examples of cyberbullying and how it is perpetrated, provided by GetCyberSafe:

- Sending mean and/or threatening emails or text messages.
- Using electronic means to spread gossip, secrets or rumour about another person that will damage that person's reputation.
- Sending hurtful materials to others under an assumed identity.
- Creating blogs or websites that have stories, cartoons, pictures or jokes ridiculing others.
- Creating polling websites where visitors are asked to rate others in a negative way
- Taking a sexually explicit photo of someone and distributing it to others, also called sexting.
- Tricking a person into revealing personal information about themselves and then forwarding that to others, often referred to as phishing.
- Using someone else's password in order to change their profile to reflect sexual, racist and other content that may be hurtful or offensive.
- Posting false or hurtful messages on social media, online bulletin boards or in chat rooms.

Some Facts about Cyberbullying

- Nearly 1 in 10 Canadian youth say they have been victims of online bullying on social networking sites.
- More than 35 per cent of Canadian teens with a profile on a social networking site have seen mean or inappropriate comments about someone they know, and 14 per cent say they have seen mean or inappropriate comments about themselves.
- 18 per cent of Canadian parents say they have a child who has experienced cyberbullying and 31 per cent say they know a child in their community who has experienced cyberbullying.
- 90 per cent of Canadians would support a law that would make it illegal to use any electronic means to coerce, intimidate, harass or cause other substantial emotional distress.

The Impact of Cyberbullying

The impact of cyberbullying is terrible and long-lasting. Studies have found that young people who had been cyberbullied experienced:

- higher levels of health complaints
- daily smoking
- intense alcohol consumption
- increased mental health problems, like:
    - depression
    - drug and prescription drug misuse
    - suicide attempts

Cyberbullying victims were almost twice as likely to attempt suicide compared to youth who had not experienced cyberbullying. In some tragic cases, young people end their lives as a result of painful, relentless cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying and the Law

Cyberbullying is not only a hurtful behaviour, but in many cases is illegal.

Under the Criminal Code of Canada it is an offence to share intimate images. These are described as an image that depicts a person engaged in explicit sexual activity or that depicts a sexual organ, anal region or breast, or any image where the person pictured had a reasonable expectation of privacy when the image was recorded.

Anyone convicted of distributing an intimate image without consent could face serious legal consequences, including:

- Up to five years of imprisonment
- Having the computer, cell phone or other device used to share the image seized
- Being ordered to reimburse the victim for costs incurred in removing the intimate image from the Internet or elsewhere

Remember! The internet has no delete button!

For Further Links on Cyberbullying

- Canadian Red Cross: http://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/violence--bullying-and-abuse-prevention/educators/bullying-and-harassment-prevention/cyberbullying
- Government of Canada GetCyberSafe: http://www.getcybersafe.gc.ca/cnt/cbrbllng/prnts/cbrbllng-en.aspx
- PREVNet Canada's authority on bullying: http://www.prevnet.ca/bullying/cyber-bullying

Cyberbullying Research and Resources

- 2015 cyberbullying data - Cyberbullying Research Center Retrieved 2/13/2016, 2016, from http://cyberbullying.org/2015-data/
- Fridh, M., Lindström, M., & Rosvall, M. (2015). Subjective health complaints in adolescent victims of cyber harassment: Moderation through support from parents/friends - a Swedish population-based study. BMC Public Health, 15(1), 1-11.
- Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. (2010). Bullying, cyberbullying, and suicide. Archives of Suicide Research, 14(3), 206-221.