Understanding Cyberbullying

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is a behavior that takes place over digital communication, via cell phones, computers, and tablets. Bullying is negative, aggressive behavior that involves harming another person through a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is typically repeated over time, creating a situation that is difficult for the victim to separate from.

Cyberbullying can be displayed in many forms:

- Sending hurtful messages individually or in a group
- Encouraging self harm or suicide on social media
- Verbally abusing other players during video gaming
- Using technology to exclude others

How do I recognize cyberbullying?

You may find that your child has a noticeable negative reaction when using their digital device. Other signs of cyberbullying include:

- Quickly hiding a screen when other people are present
- Hesitance to explain what they are doing on the platform
- Using a device less and less

What should I do if my child is being cyberbullied?

Talk openly with your child about the problem and be a good listener

- Review safety and privacy settings on the apps and platforms in question
- Take screenshots of each instance
- Block the cyberbully and report them to the platform’s safety center
- Escalate the issue to school administration or law enforcement if necessary

What if my child is a cyberbully?

All children make mistakes. If you discover that your child is using technology in a negative way:

- Discuss the importance of digital reputation and kindness with your child
- Review the family’s online safety agreement and consider loss of privileges
- Set parental controls on devices and monitor closely until the behavior is corrected

For more information:

fosi.org/parenting | cyberbullying.org | stopbullying.gov