

Important Information for Parents Regarding Cyber Safety

Parents and students need to be aware that Pennsylvania has a new law about Cyber Harassment. House Bill 226 amended the PA Crimes and Offenses code to include Cyber Harassment of a Child as a misdemeanor offense.

According to the new law, Cyber Harassment of a Child involves:

The *intent to harass, annoy, or alarm* a child by *continuously or repeatedly* communicating directly to a child or posting through social media services about a child in a way that is

-seriously disparaging regarding physical characteristics, sexuality, sexual activity, or mental or physical health conditions

and/or

-a threat to inflict harm

Cyber communications by a child or adult that fit this description can be deemed a misdemeanor offense. If this crime occurs on school property or during the school day, police involvement and additional disciplinary consequences are possible.

Tips for Parents for Cyber Safety

Open the lines of communication with your child:

Discuss the appropriate use of the internet and cyber communications

Discuss the dangers of inappropriate cyber communications

Discuss the consequences of cyber harassment and the new law

Encourage your child to always come to you if they feel uncomfortable about something online

Set Age Appropriate Rules and Limits:

Limit the amount of time spent online or on the phone

Set a time at night when electronics must be turned off

Adjust the parental controls provided by the Internet Service or Social Media sites you utilize

Monitor phone and computer use:

Know your child's passwords for each social media site they use, and monitor them regularly, along with phone communications/texts

Know the Warning Signs:

Spending large amounts of time online

Turning off the computer when you walk into the room

Withdrawing from friends or activities to spend time online

Receiving phone calls or mail from people you don't know