SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2024
HEBISD

#ThinkBeforeYouPost

Hoax threats are **serious** federal crimes. Issuing a threat—even over social media, via text message, or through e-mail—is a federal crime (threatening interstate communications). Those who post or send these threats can receive up to five years in federal prison, or they can face state or local charges.
With a thoughtless remark on social media, young people risk starting out their adult lives in prison and forever being labeled a felon.

In addition to consequences for individuals who issue threats, there is also a significant societal cost. Law enforcement agencies have limited resources, and responding to hoax threats diverts officers and costs taxpayers. The threats can also cause severe emotional distress to students, school personnel, and parents.

What Should You Do?

- Don't ever post or send any hoax threats online…period.
- If you are a target of an online threat, alert your local law enforcement immediately.
- Report the threat to school administrators and/or local authorities but don't share or forward the threat until law enforcement has had a chance to investigate
- If you are a parent or family member, know that some young people post these threats online as a cry for attention or as a way to get revenge or exert control. Talk to your child about the proper outlet for their stress or other emotions, and explain the importance of **responsible social media use** and the consequences of posting hoax threats.

Anonymous Reporting



HEBISD's Crisis Team

The team addresses mental health concerns to create a positive school environment for all students. You can submit a referral to our team by clicking HERE

Go Guardian - Beacon Alerts

The HEB ISD Crisis Intervention and Prevention Team wants to make parents aware that some of our students' online activity is monitored to ensure the safety of your children and others. Our software, Go Guardian Beacon, sends alerts to our team when students are researching and/or having conversations about things of concern such as suicidal ideation, harm to others, bullying, fighting, threats and the like. The Crisis Team (of four mental health professionals) monitors those alerts during work hours and brings concerning activities to the attention of campus counselors, parents, or administration, depending on the level of concern. At this time, grade levels included in this program are: 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th and all of secondary. We recommend that you continue to be diligent in monitoring what your children search for, and engage in, online. We will continue to notify you, on an as needed basis, of posts that we deem to be concerning.

HEBISD's Crisis Intervention & Prevention Team

Helping Children Understand the Seriousness of Making School Threats

All too often, we hear in the media of yet another school locked down due to a student who has threatened violence. Sadly, we don't see this ending anytime soon, so it is important for both educators and families to talk frankly with their students about the ramifications that can occur from making any kind of violent threat against others.

We can no longer simply scold a child who makes a threatening statement and move on; those days are long gone. Because of the number of school shootings nationwide, every single threat--no matter how innocuous it might seem--has to been taken as truth and dealt with swiftly. One of school staff's top priorities is ensuring the safety of every student and staff member on their campuses. Therefore, schools have no choice but to address each threat, no matter how idle it may seem. Equally as important, though, is educating them about the impact their words can have.

Sadly, many times students are just joking around and don't realize the short- and long-term effects that more than likely will occur because of their action. Experts say having so many avenues for posting these threats is an easy temptation for vulnerable youth.

One way to address this concern is in the context of a healthy online presence; what to post, what not to post and the ramifications of such.

Some helpful websites regarding digital citizenship can be found below:

- Google's Be Internet Awesome: Family digital safety resources
- Common Sense Media: Privacy & internet safety (for parents)
- NetSmartz: Teaching digital citizenship

For younger children, the best way to address this may be to help the child express what they're feeling. Children may be saying these things because they want the adults in their life to take their concerns seriously, and they think raising the stakes by saying something scary will get someone's attention. All they may want is to feel like their feelings are important, so acknowledging their feelings and saying you know they must be frustrated or hurt can give them a lot of the validation they're looking for.

Threatening harm to others or to themselves is a very big deal with very big consequences. Equipping our children with the appropriate language, strategies, and coping skills to address the underlying need will be crucial in addressing these concerns. As parents/guardians, we are called to be gatekeepers of these things. Please find additional resources throughout this newsletter to help in the process.

Violent Language in Young Children

If your child is frequently saying things like "I'll kill you," it's important to take it seriously and address the issue directly by talking to them calmly, assessing the situation, and potentially seeking professional help from a child psychologist or counselor.

Why children might say this:

- Coping Mechanism - often, children may use this extreme language to communicate intense frustration or anger.
- Attention seeking - to get a reaction from a parent or adult.
- Underlying Issues - in some cases, frequent violent language can be an indication of deeper concerns such as anxiety, trauma, exposure to violence, etc.

What to do:

- Calmly address the behavior
- Ask open-ended questions
- Teach appropriate ways to express anger
- Seek professional help
- Don't dismiss it as "just kids being kids"
- Monitor for other concerning signs