# KEEPING CHILDREN AND TEENS SAFE ONLINE

## Technology: Recognize the Warning Signs of an Unhealthy Relationship

- Constant texting, instant messaging or calling
- Sleeping with a cell phone
- Reacting irrationally to being without a phone or Internet access
- Insisting on answering a cell phone right away
- Increases in the amount of time spent talking, texting, or on social networking sites
- Taking unnecessary risks—such as using a cell phone in class.

## Do your part to help your teen understand what a healthy relationship feels like and looks like

- Talk to your teen today.
- Visit www.startstrongparents.org to learn more.
- Find out about school-based support groups and youth leadership activities in Austin at **www.SafePlace.org/expectrespect** and at **www.startstrongaustin.org**
- E-mail ExpectRespect@SafePlace.org or call the **SafePlace 24-hour Hotline, 512.267.7233** if you have concerns about your teen's relationships.

expect RESPECT SafePlace START STRONG AUSTIN BUILDING HEALTHY TEEN RELATIONSHIPS

**Many children and teens start to explore the idea of "dating" or having a boyfriend or girlfriend online. This digitally-savvy generation uses texting and social networking sites to "get to know" a potential girlfriend or boyfriend before they start dating.**

## What can you do to keep them safe online?

- Understand their communication world. Log onto YouTube, Facebook and MySpace to see what social networking is all about.
- Ask your teen, "What do you like to do online and how do you communicate with friends?"
- Talk to your teen about online privacy. Does he or she understand that everything online is public and permanent—something written to one person can be shared with the entire school and beyond.
- If you have a home computer, keep it in a public place so you can be more aware of what your teen is doing online. (But, realize that cell phones and other electronic devices also connect to the Internet.)

## Talk with your teen about using technology safely

- **Set Privacy Controls.** Ask your teen to show you where the privacy features are on their social networking websites. Privacy settings, when used, can reduce the likelihood of receiving inappropriate material.
- **Establish Ground Rules.** Agree on rules regarding on/off hours and weekday/weekend time limits for cell phone and Internet use. Know and follow your school's policy on cell phones, cyber-bullying and other digital communications.
- **Monitor Online and Cell Phone Activity.** Let teens know that you are concerned about their safety and that you may check phone and chat logs, emails, files, and social networking profiles for inappropriate content, friends, messages and images.
- **Define Inappropriate Usage.** Instruct your teen never to send or forward abusive or humiliating texts, pictures or pranks. If teens receive content that is mean or hurtful, they should save the message and show you or another adult.
- **Cameras.** Sending or forwarding private or embarrassing photographs or videos can result in tragic consequences and is potentially illegal. Remind your teen never to take or send photos or video of someone without their consent.
- **Digital Dating Abuse.** Digital abuse, including unwanted or repeated calls or text messages, breaking into social networking sites, and spreading rumors online is increasingly identified as a form of dating abuse among teens. Help your teen recognize and prevent this behavior among their peers.