

First Call for Help 211

# Digital Defense

Keeping Kids  
Safe Online



The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## INTRODUCTION

The internet has become an essential part of daily life, shaping how we learn, communicate, and connect with the world. While it offers incredible opportunities, it also presents risks—especially for children and teens who may not fully understand the dangers lurking online. From cyberbullying to online predators, misinformation to privacy concerns, today's digital landscape requires awareness, education, and vigilance from everyone involved in a child's life.

That's why we created this guide: to empower families, caregivers, and schools with the tools and knowledge they need to navigate internet safety confidently. Whether you're a parent setting up parental controls for the first time,

a teacher addressing cyberbullying in the classroom, or a caregiver wanting to protect children from online scams, this resource is designed to provide practical advice, real-world strategies, and the latest information on online safety.

Our goal is simple: to help create a safer digital environment for kids and teens, while encouraging positive, responsible, and informed online behavior. By working together, we can ensure that young internet users develop the critical thinking skills and awareness they need to stay safe—while still benefiting from all the amazing things the internet has to offer.

## First Call for Help 211

Providing crisis intervention and active listening services to Itasca County since 1974.

First Call for Help of Itasca County is a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to provide free, confidential and non-judgemental crisis intervention, active listening, and information and referral services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to the residents and agencies of North Central Minnesota.

# CONTENTS

Introduction	1
About Us	2
Caregivers	3
Online Risks	4
Statistics	5-6
Popular Apps	7-8
Resources	9-10
Texting	11-12

## FIRST CALL FOR HELP 211

First Call for Help has graciously transformed over the years from its inception which included many dedicated and passionate volunteers operating "Nightingale" and answering 1332 calls in its first year, to a diverse staff of 126 employees and 42 contractors operating 8 programs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year from within our facilities. None of this would have been possible

without the tenacity, determination and kindness of our local residents and workforce of Northern Minnesota. I am a lifelong Northern MN resident and stand with pride among this rural community as it shines a light on what we have to offer and the innovative and progressive approaches we use to serve those who need us within our own county and now across the entire state of Minnesota.

*Cre Larson*

Executive Director  
First Call for Help of Itasca County

# CAREGIVERS

We live in an ever shrinking world. Kids today are exposed to things at young ages via online media, chat, and apps that would not even have been considered 20 years ago.

As parents and caregivers we need to be proactive to these threats and we need resources when the unthinkable happens. This guide just scratches the surface of what is available, but we hope that it will give every parent and caregiver a starting point.





## ONLINE RISKS

While the internet offers education, entertainment, and communication, it also poses significant dangers:

**Cyberbullying** – Harassment or intimidation through online platforms.

**Predators & Exploitation** – Individuals who manipulate children into dangerous situations.

**Privacy Invasion** – Personal information being shared or stolen.

**Sextortion & Grooming** – Increasing reports of teens being blackmailed for explicit images.

**Fake News & Deepfakes** – Misinformation designed to manipulate opinions.

# NUMBERS TELL THE STORY

The internet has transformed how children learn, connect, and entertain themselves—but with these benefits come serious risks. Today's youth are growing up in an always-online world, where social media, gaming, and instant messaging expose them to dangers that parents and caregivers may not always see.

The statistics in this section shine a light on the realities of the digital world. They are not meant to scare, but to inform and empower families, educators, and caregivers. When we understand the risks, we can take action. From setting up

parental controls to having open conversations with kids, knowledge is the first step toward protection.

Take a look at the numbers—and let's work together to make the internet a safer place for the next generation.

All information from the Bark 2023 Annual Report and Enough.org.

**Self-harm/suicide:** 33% of tweens/57% of teens were involved in a self-harm/suicidal situation

**Sexual content:** 58% of tweens/75% of teens encountered nudity or content of a sexual nature.

**Anxiety:** 19% of tweens/36% of teens used language or were exposed to language about anxiety

**Drugs/alcohol:** 58% of tweens/77% of teens engaged in conversations surrounding drugs/alcohol

**Bullying:** 67% of tweens/76% of teens experienced bullying as a bully, victim, or witness.

**Depression:** 26% of tweens/38% of teens engaged in conversations about depression

**Predators:** 8% of tweens/10% of teens encountered predatory behaviors from someone online

**Violence:** 68% of tweens/82% of teens expressed or experienced violent subject matter/thoughts

**Human trafficking is the second most profitable illegal industry in the United States (UNICEF).**



The following statistics are courtesy of ParentsTogether, a nonprofit organization providing independent reporting and commentary on issues that affect kids and families.

- 1 in 3 children are first exposed to social media at age 5 or younger.
- 1 in 3 children are expected to have an unwelcome sexual experience online before they turn 18.
- Younger social media exposure correlates with more sexual harm online and peaks for kids who start using social media at 11-12 - the age around which most American children get their first smartphone.
- 43% of kids exposed to inappropriate sexual content online were under 13.
- Kids with disabilities, special needs, or who identify as LGBTQ+ are 2-4x more likely to send explicit images of themselves than their peers.

The most chilling fact about these statistics is that they only reflect the reported numbers. Human trafficking lives in the shadows, meaning it is impossible to ever know how many cases are happening without being reported.

**40% of kids in grades 4-8 reported they connected or chatted with a stranger online. Of those 40%**

- **53% revealed their phone #**
- **21% spoke with the stranger on the phone.**
- **15% tried to meet the stranger**
- **11% met the stranger**

**(Center for Cyber Safety and Education)**



Anyone who does anything to help a child is a hero to me.

~Fred Rogers



# POPULAR APPS



INSTAGRAM



YouTube



TikTok



SNAPCHAT

The majority of teens use these apps. Teen girls are most likely to use the apps above and teen boys the apps below (Pew Research Center, 2022)



REDDIT



YouTube



TWITCH

# DATING

Although dating apps are intended for users 18 and older, some are labeled 17+ or lack proper age verification, making it easy for teens to bypass restrictions by falsifying their age. A young person seeking connection can quickly sign up, start messaging adults, and unknowingly enter unsafe or inappropriate relationships. Some apps are even designed for in-person meetups, putting teens at immediate risk of dangerous situations. Even when interactions remain online, private messaging and photo-sharing features create opportunities for exploitation and enticement by predators.



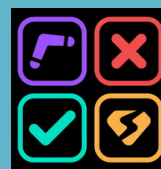
TINDER



BUMBLE



GRINDR



SPOT A FRIEND

# MESSAGING



DISCORD



SIGNAL



GROUPME



WECHAT



WHATSAPP



KIK



GOOGLE  
HANGOUTS

Child predators often attempt to move online conversations with minors to private messaging apps to evade detection. It's common for them to initiate contact on one platform before urging the minor to switch to another app for added secrecy. This tactic makes it easier for predators to manipulate victims and solicit explicit images without raising public suspicion.

Disturbingly, some of these private apps have also been used to buy, share, and trade child sexual abuse material, further highlighting the dangers of unsupervised online interactions.

# SECRET PHOTO VAULTS



PRIVATE PHOTO  
VAULT



KEEPSAFE



CALCULATOR  
VAULT

Many apps and websites offer features that allow users to hide photos, messages, and conversations, making it easy for kids and teens to conceal online interactions from parents or friends. While young users may use these tools to maintain privacy and independence, predators exploit them to hide grooming and exploitation, keeping their activities undetected. These hidden messaging features create an added layer of risk, making it even harder for concerned adults to intervene and protect vulnerable minors.

# NATIONAL RESOURCES

Organization	Web Address	Phone Number
Bark	<a href="https://www.bark.us/">https://www.bark.us/</a>	1-800-921-9724
The Trevor Project	<a href="https://www.thetrevorproject.org/">https://www.thetrevorproject.org/</a>	1-866-488-7386
National Human Trafficking Hotline	<a href="https://humantraffickinghotline.org/">https://humantraffickinghotline.org/</a>	1-888-373-7888
NetSmartz (NCMEC)	<a href="https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz">https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz</a>	1-800-843-5678
Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force	<a href="https://www.icactaskforce.org/">https://www.icactaskforce.org/</a>	N/A
Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI)	<a href="https://www.fosi.org/">https://www.fosi.org/</a>	N/A
Common Sense Media	<a href="https://www.commonsensemedia.org/">https://www.commonsensemedia.org/</a>	N/A
Stop It Now!	<a href="https://www.stopitnow.org/">https://www.stopitnow.org/</a>	1-888-773-8368
ConnectSafely	<a href="https://www.connectsafely.org/">https://www.connectsafely.org/</a>	N/A
Be Internet Awesome (Google)	<a href="https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/">https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/</a>	N/A
Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)	<a href="https://www.cisa.gov/">https://www.cisa.gov/</a>	N/A
Internet Matters	<a href="https://www.internetmatters.org/">https://www.internetmatters.org/</a>	N/A

# 9888

SUICIDE & CRISIS  
LIFELINE

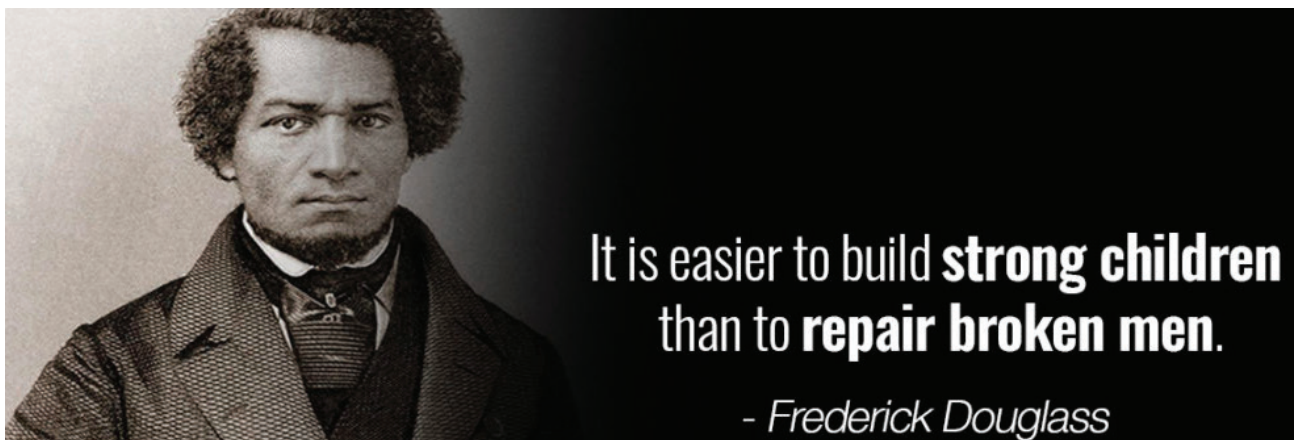
# LOCAL (218) RESOURCES

Organization	Web Address	Phone Number
First Call for Help 211	<a href="https://firstcall211.net/">https://firstcall211.net/</a>	218-326-8565 Or 211
ISD 318 (Grand Rapids Area Schools) - Online Safety Resources	<a href="https://www.isd318.org/domain/74">https://www.isd318.org/domain/74</a>	218-327-5700
Northland Counseling Center	<a href="https://northlandcounseling.org/">https://northlandcounseling.org/</a>	218-326-1274
Beyond Counseling LLC	<a href="https://www.beyondcounselingmn.com/">https://www.beyondcounselingmn.com/</a>	218-999-9432
Children's Mental Health Services	<a href="http://www.cmhsreach.org/">http://www.cmhsreach.org/</a>	218-327-4886
New Beginnings Counseling	<a href="https://newbeginningcounseling.com/">https://newbeginningcounseling.com/</a>	218-999-7081
North Homes Children and Family Services	<a href="https://www.northhomes.org/">https://www.northhomes.org/</a>	218-999-9908
Lakeview Behavioral Health	<a href="https://lakeviewbh.com/">https://lakeviewbh.com/</a>	218-327-2001



# TEXTING ACRONYMS

Acronym	Meaning
POS	Parent over shoulder
PIR	Parent in room
PAW	Parents are watching
CTN	Can't talk now
CD9	Code 9 (Parents are around)
KPC	Keeping parents clueless
LMIRL	Let's meet in real life
NIFOC	Naked in front of camera
IWSN	I want sex now
ASL	Age, sex, location
KMY/KYS	Kill myself / Kill yourself
FOMO	Fear of missing out
HAK	Hugs and kisses
ADR	Address
KFY	Kiss for you



# TEXTING ACRONYMS

Acronym	Meaning
143	I Love You
99	Parent no longer watching
53x	Sex
CU46	See you for sex
GYPO	Get your pants off
DOC	Drug of choice?
CID	Acid
304	Hoe
TINA	Meth
1174	Party meetup or Nude club
S2R	Send to receive
LH6	Let's have sex
WTPP	Want to trade photos
FYEO	For your eyes only
TDTM	Talk dirty to me
IWU	I want you
P&C	Private and confidential
4Q	F*** you

These acronyms are commonly used in text messages and online chats. Parents should familiarize themselves with these terms to better understand their children's digital communications and address any potential concerns.

Note: Some acronyms involve explicit language or references to risky behaviors. It's important for parents to approach conversations about these topics with sensitivity and openness.



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