

PARENT INSIGHTS: CELL PHONE USE

Do you know how many text messages your child sends? Do you know what sexting is? Do you know what PIR, YBS or 182 means?

Cell phones can make communication a lot easier and can be very helpful in emergencies. However, as cell phones become more and more sophisticated, it is very easy to get large phone bills due to the high volume of text messages or access to the internet. Parents are surprised to find out their child has ten pages of text messages alone on a phone bill. Today's cell phones has also become a sub-culture with its own language. The lack of adult supervision can lead to harassment, bullying, and even legal charges that can result in felony convictions.

Sexting is becoming a new trend with tweens and teens. Sexting is sending flirty messages and in more and more cases, sending sexually explicit pictures of themselves or others by cell phone. What most children and parents don't realize is the transmission or possession of naked photographs is illegal - and can lead to felony charges that results in 14, 15, and 16 year olds registering as sex offenders for the rest of their lives. Most children don't stop to think that those pictures are not private - messages can be sent to thousands of people in a matter of minutes or end up posted on YouTube or Facebook.

Texting has also developed it own language using acronyms and slang to keep outsiders guessing about what is being said. There are websites dedicated to keeping up with the codes to help parents monitor what their children are saying (see addresses at right under guidelines/tips). Sample acronyms:

PIR Parent in room
TDTM Talk dirty to me
420..... Marijuana
RUSOS..... Are you in trouble
TT..... Big tease
YBS..... You'll be sorry
182..... I hate you
LMIRL Lets meet in real life
NIFOC..... Naked in front of computer
143 or ILY.. I love you
MOS Mom over shoulder
CD9 Parent watching

Illegal use of cell phones can lead to felony charges

GUIDELINES AND TIPS

Parents are a child's first and best teacher. Cell phone use during school hours is a distraction in the classrooms for students and teachers and is not allowed. If students use cell phones during school hours, the phone will be confiscated and parents notified. Please talk to your child about the school rules and model behavior by not calling or texting your child during the school day. If you have an emergency and need to contact your child, please call the office and we will be happy to relay the information. Your child is also allowed to make emergency calls from the office to a parent/guardian at any time.

- Establish guidelines for cell phone and internet use and monitor who your child is talking/texting and what internet sites are visited. Be firm about how you intend to monitor internet and cell phone use.
- Children should know to report inappropriate messages or pictures immediately to a trusted adult.
- Learn about parental controls.
- Put computers in family areas of the house and not in bedrooms or behind closed doors.
- Report offensive or suspicious behavior to your internet provider and local police.
- Stay current on texting slang on websites such as NoSlang.com or teenchatdecoder.com.
- If your child has information about inappropriate behavior at school, encourage them to talk to the principal or counselor.
- Be very aware of social media websites that have limited controls.
- Print out copies of offensive emails for reporting purposes; do not delete the original email, even if you have a hard copy, so the police can track the source.
- Contact the police if your child receives threats, obscene messages, or explicit photos via email or texting.