



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Department of Human Services, Attorney General Encourage Pennsylvania Families to Protect Children From Online Dangers

Harrisburg, PA – Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Teresa Miller, joined by Pennsylvania’s Attorney General and the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance, reminded Pennsylvanians today of resources available to help families protect their children from online dangers and to educate children about using the Internet safely and productively.

“Since March, the pandemic of COVID-19 has amplified the role of the Internet in the lives of many Pennsylvanians, including children whose classrooms have moved online to protect our families and communities from the threat of the coronavirus. Thanks to the Internet, thousands of Pennsylvanians are working and learning remotely to mitigate the spread of this dangerous illness. I believe that Pennsylvanians’ flexibility and resourcefulness has saved lives,” Secretary Miller said. “But we must also remain diligent about protecting our children from dangers that lurk online. I encourage parents and guardians to speak with their children about safe online behavior and to seek out resources that are available to help.”

Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro urged parents, guardians, educators and caregivers to make sure the children in their lives are aware of the [Safe2Say Something app and hotline](#), which children can use to anonymously and safely report threats of violence, harassment and bullying – much of which occurs today in the realm of social media. The hotline can be reached at 1-844-723-2729.

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The [Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance \(PFSA\)](#) has posted [a resource guide for parents to help them navigate the added challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic](#). This includes [a guide to recognizing child abuse when interacting with a child virtually](#).

“It’s vitally important that parents and caregivers are equipped with the tools and resources they need to keep children safe,” said Angela M. Liddle, president and CEO of PFSA. “Very often, that means parents have to first learn how online platforms work and what type of protections they should be utilizing.”

Liddle highlighted practical tips for parents, guardians and caregivers whose children are learning remotely or otherwise engaged online. For example, to protect children from online dangers:

- Put the computer in an open space so you can see what your child is doing online periodically.
- Set clear rules with children, such as not giving their name, address, phone number, or any personal information and no chatting with strangers.
- Limit how long your child can be online at one time.

- Spend time with your child online. Ask questions about what they are doing and look at their social media pages.
- Know who your children are hanging out with online and who they are talking to.
- Set a good example for your children. Parents who view inappropriate things online can leave traces for their children to find later.
- Urge children to alert you if they encounter something or someone on the internet that makes them feel uncomfortable.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has published [an extensive list of resources on its website to help families promote positive learning climates for their children online and at home](#). Pennsylvania's Professional Standards and Practices Commission has also offered [best practices guidance for educators to protect themselves and their students engaged in virtual learning](#).

DHS administers ChildLine, which is a 24/7 hotline available to anyone concerned for the safety or well-being of a child. To report a concern, call 1-800-932-0313.

Anyone can make a report to ChildLine. Anyone who is not a mandated reporter can make a report to ChildLine anonymously. DHS is encouraging all Pennsylvanians to learn more about the signs of potential abuse or neglect and make a report to ChildLine if they suspect abuse or neglect. Pennsylvanians can learn more about potential signs of abuse at www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov.

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