Pointers For Parents

University Of Phoenix Survey Suggests The Majority Of Parents May Be Unaware Of The Effects Of Cyberbullying On Their Children

(NAPSA)—October is National Cyberbullying Prevention Awareness Month, a national campaign to educate and raise awareness of cyberbullying prevention. With the prevalence of social media sites and mobile apps that connect people, children today are becoming increasingly more susceptible to cyberbullying. Yet recent findings suggest many parents may be unaware of just how often their children are victims and the impact of online bullying.

Cyberbullying research shows that 70 percent of students report seeing frequent bullying online and more than 40 percent of children aged 12–17 say they have been a victim, with one in four saying it has happened more than once. The majority of teens say that cyberbullying is a serious problem. While parents agree, the survey suggests that many may be unaware of their children's plight.

University of Phoenix recently conducted a survey on cyberbullying, which found that nearly 60 percent of U.S. adults believe it has gotten much more common in recent years. Despite this belief, 79 percent say their child/children have never been the victim of cyberbullying. This is often due to the fact that children are afraid to share this information with their parents: Only one in 10 victims will inform a parent or trusted adult of their abuse.

According to the survey, of those parents whose children have been the victim of cyberbullying, more than half say it occurs on social media. Connecting with children on this issue is extremely important. When cyberbullying goes unnoticed, it can be deadly.

Each year, 4,500 children commit suicide, many as a result of the bullying they receive online. According to data from the CyberBully Hotline, 20 percent of children think about suicide after being cyberbullied and one in 10 attempt it. In fact, suicide is the No. 3 killer of teens in the U.S., behind car accidents and homicide.

Dennis Bonilla, executive dean of University of Phoenix's College of Information Systems & Technology and School of Business, said parents should understand how to make these apps more secure and share that knowledge with their children. Following his tips can help prevent future cyberbullying attacks.
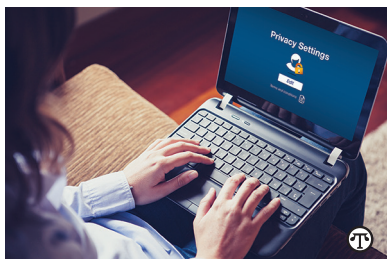
Ways to protect your kids from cyberbullying can be at your fingertips.

Bonilla's tips:

• **Be empathetic to their situation.** Children are often afraid or embarrassed to talk about bullying with their parents. Connect with them by telling them of your own similar situations and offer to listen to their issues. Don't approach them right away with solutions, as this may make them hesitant to share their struggles with you in the future.

• **Teach them how to react.** Many children may not know how to respond to a bully. Tell them to save evidence and reach out for help. Retaliating or responding could cause a bigger issue. If they feel in danger, they need to know who and when to call for help. They should also speak out if someone they know is a victim of cyberbullying.

• **Protect their accounts.** Many social media sites allow users to block or report people. This is not being a coward and can help stop future attacks. Make sure your children have strong passwords and don't share them and close and lock devices and accounts when not in use, as this can lead to other forms of bullying like identity theft.

• **Perform a "friends-list" audit.** Sit down with your children to do an audit of their friends lists on social media. If a peer is engaging in bullying, encourage them to remove him/her. Ask them to keep their friends lists to people they truly know and talk to. Children may feel obligated to add everyone they know to their social sites, but this could cause bullying and security issues.

• **Serve as an example.** Refrain from posting negative comments on your social channels and limit your connections to only people you know. Your children are more likely to make a change if you lead as an example.