



The Safe Haven updates you every month on safety issues confronting communities, including child abuse, cyberbullying, financial elder abuse, and more. Through awareness and education, we can work together to help the vulnerable—kids, tweens, teens, and elders—stay safe.

kids/tweens

Today's Parents May Be Yellers

A generation ago, many frustrated parents spanked their misbehaving kids. The parental antidote today is yelling, reports Hilary Stout in her *New York Times* article "For Some Parents, Shouting is the New Spanking." As parents understand spanking is socially unacceptable, they may raise their voices because it seems like the only option to correct behavior. Yelling may also be a release for present day stressed-out "multi-tasking, overachieving adults," parenting experts say. While there is little hard data on the effects of yelling, psychology professionals generally advise that it's both ineffective (kids tune you out) and may be "damaging to a child's sense of well-being and self-esteem."

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Stranger Than Fiction Bullying

Bullying redheads? If you thought the idea could only come from fiction, you're right. *The Los Angeles Times* reports that three Calabasas youth, ages 12 and 13, were arrested for attacks on redheaded students at the local middle school, including a threat via text. The kids apparently got the idea from an episode called "Ginger Kids" on the TV show "South Park." Some of the kids may be placed in a diversion program for first-time juvenile offenders, rather than face criminal charges.

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teens

Older Teens More Likely to Sext

In its 2009 report on teens and sexting based on a national survey, the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project found that older teens are more likely to engage in sexting. 30% of 17-year-olds had received nearly nude images on their cell phone as compared to 15% of teens between the ages of 12-17. The report also found three primary scenarios behind sexting: 1) images exchanged between romantic partners; 2) partner exchanges that are shared outside the relationship; and 3) exchanges by persons not in a relationship, but at least one person hopes to be.

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QUIZ CORNER

TRUE OR FALSE:

1. Sexting is generally not a form of cyberbullying.
2. 400,000 cases of elder abuse occur nationally each year and these figures will increase due to the aging baby boom population.
3. A parent may violate child abuse laws if they leave their teenager unattended for several hours in a public place.

ANSWERS
ON PAGE 4

What States are Doing About Sexting

In the past year, sexting incidents in several states, including Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Ohio have led state prosecutors to charge teens with minor offenses such as disorderly conduct to severe crimes, including child abuse. Because of the growing concern that pornography laws shouldn't be used against kids when they were created to protect them, some state legislatures are taking steps to downgrade sexting offenses from felonies to misdemeanors. For example, Vermont recently enacted a new law allowing minors charged with a first sexting offense to be declared delinquent in juvenile court and sent to a diversion program.

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Educating Kids about Dating Violence

According to CBS news anchor Katie Couric in her December 2009 report on dating violence, 25 percent of teens experience physical violence in their romantic relationships. Lindsay Ann Burke was a Rhode Island college student when she lost her life to dating violence in 2005. Her mother, Ann, blogs that she and her husband established the Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund, an organization that supports the prevention of abuse through education, including legislation requiring awareness of dating abuse in schools. Through efforts of the Burke Fund, Rhode Island passed a law in 2007 requiring dating abuse awareness to be taught in its middle and high schools. Six other states have passed similar legislation and more states are considering dating abuse awareness laws.

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elders

Elder Abuse Includes Self-Neglect

We generally think about elder abuse as harm perpetrated on elders by third parties. But, elder abuse can also be self-neglect—actions of older persons that threaten their own health and safety, such as by failing or refusing to provide themselves with adequate life necessities or not taking prescribed medication. According to Rush University Medical Center's recent study on elder self-neglect, elders who have limited social networks and interaction are most at risk for neglecting themselves. The study's lead author, Dr. Zinqi Dong, cautions that the problems of social isolation will increase during the current economic trouble as social services are cut and community resources dry up.

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Investment Scams

Two recent court cases highlight investment scams perpetrated on elders.

At the conclusion of one of the largest elder abuse trials in Orange County, a 51-year-old San Juan Capistrano man received a 90-year prison sentence for using his older client's retirement money in a Ponzi scheme in which he promised investment returns as high as 12 percent. The bilker, who obtained nearly \$11 million from 124 clients, gained his clients' confidence initially by preparing wills and trusts for them.

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KNOW THE NUMBERS

on Child Abuse in the U.S.

- **50 percent** of the 721,646 confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect in 2007 were associated with alcohol or drug abuse by parents
- **2.4 children out of 100,000** die in the U.S. from abuse and neglect
- **The U.S. death rate** is three times higher than Canada's and twice that of France, the closest European nation to the U.S. rate. [Read More](#) in the 2009 Report by the Every Child Matters Education Fund, "We Can Do Better: Child Abuse and Neglect Deaths in America."

An arbitrator awarded 95-year-old David Wolfson \$1.6 million against a Beverly Hills discount securities firm, including triple damages for elder abuse as permitted under California law. Mr. Wolfson, who had been a client for nearly 20 years before the firm dropped him, claimed the firm directed him to use his home equity as investment capital in a reverse mortgage transaction.

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e-safety

Netiquette Instead of Cyberbullying Laws?

Many Internet experts advocate stopping cyberbullying with education, not new laws. For example, in his article “Stop Cyberbullying with Education, Not New Law,” Larry Magid, advocate and founder of Safekids.com, believes educational programs promoting cyber citizenship or “netiquette” and helping kids learn what to do if they are bullied are the best means to prevent bullying. Magid points out some cyberbullying laws seem fine in theory, but such laws ultimately may be “used to punish political and other forms of speech.”

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Social Networking Sites Take Steps to Curb Bullying

The social-networking site Bebo has created a “help button” on its site that users can click on to report abuse and bullying. [Click to See »](#)

Some news sources are reporting that Facebook is embedding a similar panic button on its site.

[Click here for example »](#)

In December 2009, Facebook announced changes to its security controls, requiring users to establish who can have access to their personal information. This means that users may make certain posts available to some lists but not others. And, users under 18 will no longer be able to make posts available to “everyone.”

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Digital Citizenship and Cyber Civility

In November 2009, Larry Magid also participated in the Family Online Safety Institute Conference held in Washington, D.C. that was attended by nearly 400 Internet safety advocates. The theme of the conference was “Building a Culture of Responsibility: From Online Safety to Digital Citizenship.” Magid observed that “while Internet adult material continues to be an issue, the ‘predator panic’ that was rampant a few years ago has largely been put to rest” as a result of findings by recent law enforcement and safety studies. “When kids are harmed or annoyed online, the culprit is far more likely to be a fellow young person.”

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Similarly, Jimmy Wales and Andrea Weckerle opine in the *Wall Street Journal* that adults need “to engage in civil dialogue” in order to keep pace with the Internet’s technological innovations. They propose several steps to establish “cybercivility,” including “individuals appalled at the degeneration of online civility need to speak out, to show that this type of behavior will no longer be tolerated.”

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Legal lookout

While Cyberbullying Laws Proliferate, So Do Concerns For Free Speech

It's been a year since California added cyberbullying to school disciplinary laws that previously limited the definition of bullying to physical or verbal harassment, allowing schools to suspend or expel students for bullying by cyber means. Additional states with other cyberbullying laws include Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota and New Jersey.

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Courts, however, are voicing the need to balance legal protection for cyberbullying with First Amendment speech rights. For example, U.S. District Judge Stephen Wilson in Los Angeles recently sided with a middle school girl that her free speech rights were violated when Beverly Hills Middle School suspended her for posting a video on YouTube that “bad-mouthed” a fellow student. The school had cited cyberbullying concerns as justification for the girl’s suspension. Judge Wilson ruled that the school cast “too wide a net” when it suspended a student “simply because another student took offense to their speech, without any evidence that such speech caused a substantial disruption of the school’s activities...”.

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QUIZ CORNER

ANSWERS FROM PAGE 1

1. Sexting is generally not a form of cyberbullying.

ANSWER: False. Research results show 56 percent of kids say sexting is often used to blackmail or coerce other kids. [Read More»](#)

2. 400,000 cases of elder abuse occur nationally each year and these figures will increase due to the aging baby boom population.

ANSWER: False. Although the elder population is rising due to aging baby boomers, the current estimate of yearly elder abuse and neglect cases is between 500,000 and 5 million. [Read More»](#)

3. Can a parent violate child abuse laws if they leave their teenager unattended for several hours in a public place?

ANSWER: True. In North Carolina, a mother was charged with child abuse after she left her 15-year-old special needs son at a gas station for 8 hours. [Read More»](#)