



Mobile Safety Strategies for Children



THE PURPOSE OF THIS SHEET is to provide parents with information on the common mobile phone activities of 16-17 year-old adolescents, as well as ways in which you can help your adolescent protect him/herself from exploitation and abuse.

At this age, many adolescents have their own mobile phone, and have typically integrated mobile phone technology into their daily routines; however, it is still important to reinforce basic principles and guidelines regarding mobile phone use.

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Messaging to adolescents should be developmentally-appropriate, and should parallel messages promoting safety and the Internet:

What 16-17 year-old adolescents enjoy doing with mobile phones

- Calling friends
- Building intimate relationships (dating)
- Text messaging (which could include multimedia like audio or video)
- Instant messaging (IM)
- Using the phone's web browser to surf the Internet, check email, visit social networking sites, etc.
- Using the phone's web browser to download ringtones, wallpaper, and MP3s
- Taking pictures/video of themselves/friends
- Playing games

Key messages and strategies to help adolescents stay safe

- Remind your adolescent not to include his/her name or phone number on his/her voicemail message. "Hello—I'm unable to take your call at this time. Please leave a message" is fine
- Ensure your adolescent doesn't include his/her mobile phone number on online forms, social networking sites, contests, etc.
- Remind your adolescent to only share his/her mobile phone number with people s/he trusts, and who won't share the number with others
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Key messages and strategies to help adolescents stay safe *cont'd*

- Remind your adolescent about the public nature of text messaging. Discuss the possibility of someone sharing what s/he texts to someone. Stress the importance of being very careful not to send a text when upset or that includes anything personal
- Stress to your adolescent that mobile phones shouldn't be used to engage in intimate conversations with others—either voice mail or text messages could be saved and shown to/played for other people
- Talk to your adolescent about not sharing his/her friends' mobile numbers
- Discourage your adolescent from answering calls from unfamiliar phone numbers—if the call is important, the caller will leave a message
- Learn how to block calls/messages from unwanted users on your adolescent's mobile phone, and make sure your adolescent knows how to do so as well
- Remind your adolescent to be aware of his/her surroundings—it's easy to focus on a mobile phone, letting his/her attention slip away
- Ensure your adolescent is cautious when updating blogs, websites, or social networking sites remotely—don't let him/her disclose his/her location, what you are doing, etc.
- Remind your adolescent to save any messages with malicious content, and to share them with you or another trusted adult in case it needs to be reported
- Your adolescent should never arrange to meet someone from a chatroom, messaging, etc. alone—s/he should always bring a trusted friend or adult along

Act as a role model for your adolescent—make sure your actions parallel your words.

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