

Staying safe online information sheet

How to respond to inappropriate requests and proposals online:

Human traffickers are increasingly looking for victims online. The purpose of this handout is to help young people safely enjoy the online world.

When young people go online, there are certain dangers that they, their parents and guardians, and other trusted adults should be aware of. These risks are connected to three distinctive areas of activity: content, contact and conduct.

The content-contact-conduct risk framework is also a helpful tool for thinking about the kinds of danger young people can be exposed to and the harm they may experience.

1. **Content.** Traffickers can expose young people to inappropriate and unwelcome content, and may attempt to extract money or cooperation.

What can you do? Block anyone that tries to get information or images from you or tries to get you to view certain content. You can block, unfriend or unfollow any attempted trafficker and their friends and followers on social media.

You can also use your critical-thinking skills to evaluate messages online. For example, ask yourself: “Who is the message from?”, “Is the source credible?”, “Does the message sound too good to be true?” and “Are the statements or claims in the message true?”

2. **Contact:** Online communication can be a big problem. The young person that you are chatting with online may be not who you think they are. They could be an adult who is grooming you, pretending to be a friend to prepare you for an inappropriate contact or solicitation.

Traffickers use the anonymous nature of the Internet to disguise their intent and motives. This enables them to function within a cloud of invisibility. Do you really know who you are communicating with? Be careful of who you are talking to online.

What can you do? Do not reveal your schedule, daily activities, friends and family or other personal details online that might enable them to show up at your school, home or any place you frequent. Enable your privacy settings and disable any tracking features, such as the global positioning system that can track and locate your movements. Do not accept any invitations to meet offline. If a meeting takes place, take a parent or another adult with you.

3. **Conduct:** Your own behaviour online can make you more vulnerable to traffickers.

What can you do? Think about what you post online. Posting hate speech, sexually explicit pictures or content that promotes dangerous behaviour can increase the risk of being noticed by a trafficker. Visiting chatrooms whose users are sharing extremist ideology can make you a target for radicalization.

If you are targeted for radicalization, harassment or bullying, save copies of all the communication and content, and cease communication. Then tell a parent, trusted adult or friend.