Internet Safety
Who are your children chatting with?

While on-line computer exploration opens a world of possibilities for children, expanding their horizons and exposing them to different cultures and ways of life, they can be exposed to dangers as they hit the road exploring the information highway. There are individuals who attempt to sexually exploit children through the use of on-line services and the Internet. Some of these individuals gradually seduce their targets through the use of attention, affection, kindness, and even gifts. These individuals are often willing to devote considerable amounts of time, money, and energy in this process. They listen to and empathize with the problems of children. These individuals attempt to gradually lower children's inhibitions by slowly introducing sexual context and content into their conversations.
There are other individuals, however, who immediately engage in sexually explicit conversation with children. Some offenders primarily collect and trade child-pornographic images, while others seek face-to-face meetings with children via on-line contacts. It is important for parents to understand that children can be indirectly victimized through conversation, i.e. "chat," as well as the transfer of sexually explicit information and material. Parents and children should remember that a computer-sex offender can be any **age** or **sex** the person does not have to fit the caricature of a dirty, unkempt, older man wearing a raincoat to be someone who could harm a child.
Further information on protecting your child on-line may be found in the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's Child Safety.

What Are Signs That Your Child Might Be At Risk On-line?

Your child spends large amounts of time on-line, especially at night.
Most children that fall victim to computer-sex offenders spend large amounts of time on-line, particularly in chat rooms. They may go on-line after dinner and on the weekends. They may be latchkey kids whose parents have told them to stay at home after school. They go on-line to chat with friends, make new friends, pass time, and sometimes look for sexually explicit information.

Your child receives phone calls from men you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize.

While talking to a child victim on-line is a thrill for a computer-sex offender, it can be very cumbersome. Most want to talk to the children on the telephone. They often engage in "phone sex" with the children and often seek to set up an actual meeting for real sex.

Your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from someone you don't know.

As part of the seduction process, it is common for offenders to send letters, photographs, and all manner of gifts to their potential victims. Computer-sex offenders have even sent plane tickets in order for the child to travel across the country to meet them.

Your child becomes withdrawn from the family.

Computer-sex offenders will work very hard at driving a wedge between a child and their family or at exploiting their relationship. They will accentuate any minor problems at home that the child might have.

What Should You Do If You Suspect Your Child Is Communicating With A Sexual Predator On-line?

"   Consider talking openly with your child about your suspicions. Tell them about the dangers of computer-sex offenders.
"   Review what is on your child's computer. If you don't know how, ask a friend, coworker, relative, or other knowledgeable person.

What Can You Do To Minimize The Chances Of An On-line Exploiter Victimizing Your Child?

"   Communicate, and talk to your child about sexual victimization and potential on-line danger.
"   Spend time with your children on-line. Have them teach you about their favorite on-line destinations.
"   Keep the computer in a common room in the house, not in your child's bedroom.
"   Teach your child the responsible use of the resources on-line. There is much more to the on-line experience than chat rooms.
"   Find out what computer safeguards are utilized by your child's school, the public library, and at the homes of your child's friends.

        Instruct your children:
"   to never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they met on- line;
"   to never upload pictures of themselves onto the Internet or on-line service to people they do not personally know;
"   to never give out identifying information such as their name, home address, school name, or telephone number;
"   to never respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, or harassing;
"   that whatever they are told on-line may or may not be true.

These types of predators have been in contact with teenagers here in Turner County. Don't be fooled into thinking this happens somewhere else and not here, because it does and it has.

For more information on internet safety you can go to:
http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm

Be safe and be careful!!!!!!!!