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Trends and Characteristics of Youth Internet Victimization

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* Thank you for your interest in this presentation. Please note that analyses included herein are preliminary. More recent, finalized analyses may be available by contacting the Crimes against Children Research Center or CIPHR for further information.

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How YISS-1 & YISS-2 Were Conducted

- Telephone surveys of national samples of 1,500 young people, ages 10 through 17, who were Internet users
- Short parent interviews & 30 minute youth interviews, with parental consent
- Youth participants received \$10 checks and information about Internet safety
- Care taken to preserve youth privacy and confidentiality during both surveys
- YISS-1 interviews: Autumn 1999 to February 2000
- YISS-2 interviews: March to June 2005

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Sexual Solicitations & Approaches

DEFINITION:

Online requests

- To engage in sexual activities or sexual talk, or
- Give personal sexual information

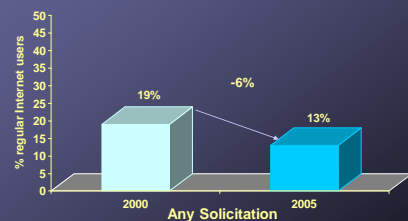
That were

- Unwanted, or
- Made by a person 5 or more years older (whether wanted or not)

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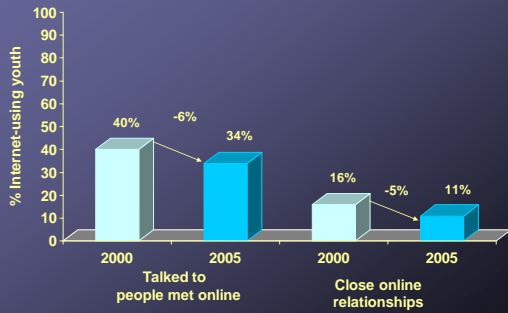
YISS-2 shows a decline in unwanted sexual solicitations and approaches.

- 1 in 7 youth Internet users (13%)
 - 1 in 5 (19%) five years ago



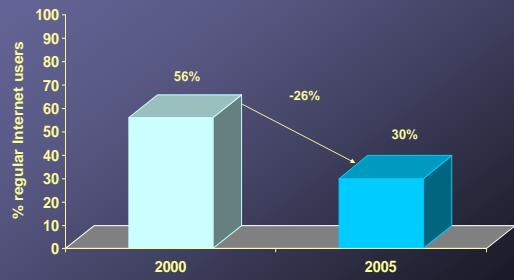
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Why the decrease? Less Communication with People Met Online



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Why the decrease? Less Chatroom Use



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Why the decrease? 5 Years of Prevention Education

- Many of the youth in focus groups had absorbed prevention messages about online predators

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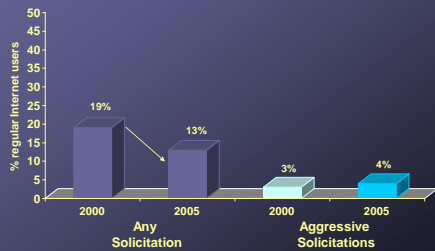
Aggressive Solicitations

- Aggressive solicitations – Offline contact with the solicitor through mail, by telephone or in person – or attempts or requests for offline contact

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No Decline in Aggressive Solicitations

- 4% of youth Internet users in YISS-2
- 3% five years ago



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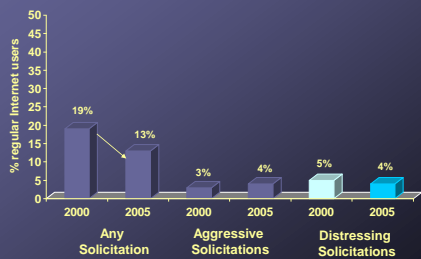
Distressing Solicitations

- Distressing solicitations – Youth rated self as very or extremely upset or afraid as a result of the incident

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No Decline in Distressing Solicitations

- 4% of youth Internet users in YISS-2
- 5% five years ago



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Unwanted Exposures to Pornography

DEFINITION

Without seeking or expecting sexual material

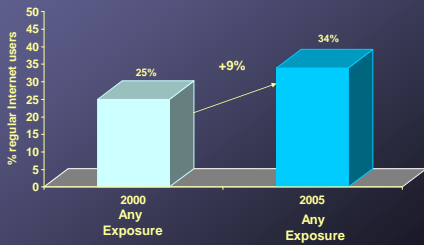
- Being exposed to pictures of naked people or people having sex
- When doing online searches, surfing the web, opening e-mail, Instant Messages, or links

Distressing exposure – youth rated self very or extremely upset as a result of the incident

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Unwanted exposures to pornography increased.

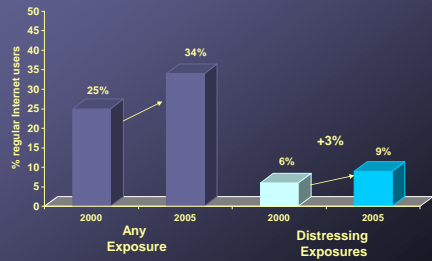
- 1/3 of youth Internet users (34%)
 - 25% five years ago



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Distressing exposures also increased.

- 9% of youth Internet users
- 6% five years ago



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Why the increase? Increased Internet Use

Compared to 2000, youth had more Internet access

- Home access up 17%, school up 17%
- Access in 3 or more places up 23%

And spent more time online

- Online 2+ hours at a time up 10%
- Online 5 - 7 days/week up 18%

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*But increased Internet use, alone,
is not enough...
(Solicitations declined with
increase in use.)*

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Why the increase? Aggressive & Unethical Marketing of Pornography

- Pop-up & banner ads
- SPAM
- Malware
 - Spyware, adware, pornware
 - Malicious installers
 - Hijacking
 - Unauthorized links

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Why the increase? Technological Changes

- Increased capacity of computers to receive, store and transmit images
 - Size of hard drives, amount of memory
 - DSL lines
 - Digital photography
 - Web cams & streaming video

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Threats & Harassment

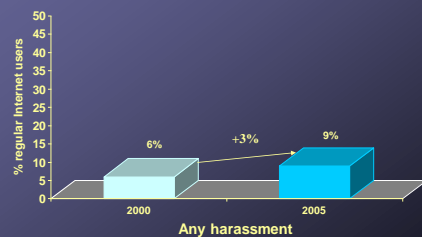
DEFINITION

- Threats or other offensive behavior (not sexual solicitation)
- Sent online to the victim, or
- Sent or posted online about the youth for others to see

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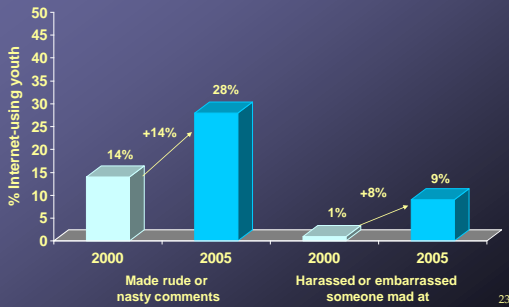
Threats and harassment also increased.

- 1 in 11 youth (9%)
- 1 in 17 five years ago (6%)



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Why the increase? More youth admitted being rude and harassing others.



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Why the increase?

Since 2000,

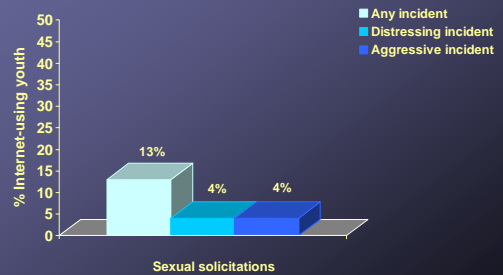
- More Internet access by youth with behavior problems?
- Deteriorating civility?
 - Online bullying and harassment becoming institutionalized among youth?
- More youth-created vehicles for online harassment?
 - "Rating" sites, blogs & online journals, etc.

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Unwanted Sexual Solicitations & Approaches

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1 in 7 youth (13%, n = 200) were solicited.
 Aggressive solicitations – 4%
 Distressing solicitations – 4%



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Characteristics of Solicited Youth

- 30% were boys (34% in 2000)

Sexual solicitations remained rare among pre-teen youth

- 10-year-olds reported no solicitations
- 11 & 12 year-olds reported 10% of incidents
 - Compared to 11% in 2000

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Characteristics of Solicitors

- Increase in % of solicitors that youth knew in person
 - Prior face-to-face acquaintances
 - 14% in YISS-2
 - 3% in YISS-1

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What happened?

- Home computers (79%)
- Fewer began in chatrooms
 - About 1/3 (38%)
 - Almost 2/3 five years ago (65%)
- More began with Instant Messages (40%)
 - 24% five years ago

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Solicitations for Sexual Photos: A New Concern

4% of youth Internet users (n = 57) said solicitors asked them to take sexual photographs of themselves and send them online to solicitors

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Sending Sexual Photos to Solicitors

- 1 youth admitted to sending a sexual photo to a solicitor
 - A 16-year-old boy sent his picture to a 23-year old woman

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Sexual Photos of Solicitors

In 7% of incidents (n = 14), solicitors sent sexual photos of themselves to youth

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Most solicitations were not distressing.

Two-thirds of incidents (66%) were neither

- Very upsetting nor
- Very frightening

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Online Relationships with Older People

- 3% of youth had formed close friendships with people 5 or more years older they met online
- 1% had a face-to-face meeting with an older person they met online

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Most relationships with older people seemed benign.

- A boy, 16, became friends with a 40-year-old woman in a chatroom about psychic phenomena. They exchanged pictures and telephone calls. They met face-to-face in a public place. One of his parents and a friend went along. He said, "She's really nice."

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Online Relationships with Sexual Elements

- 8 youth (0.5%) reported online relationships with sexual elements, with people who were 5 or more years older
- Sexual elements
 - Asking for a sexually explicit photo
 - Sending a sexually explicit photo
 - Physical sexual contact
 - Other behavior that showed sexual interest

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Risk for Solicitations

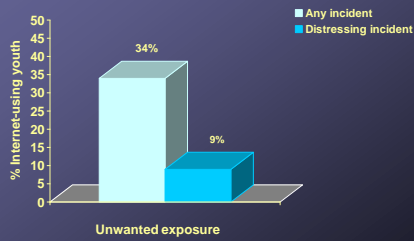
- Older teenager (14-17 years)
- Female
- Using chat rooms
- Engaging in risky sexual behavior online
- Engaging in aggressive behavior online
- High conflict with parents
- Conventional physical/sexual abuse
- Withdrawn/depressed

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Unwanted Exposures to Pornography

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1 in 3 youth (34%, n = 512) were exposed to pornography they did not want to see.
Distressing exposures – 9%



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Characteristics of Exposed Youth

- Girls, 46% & boys 54%
 - Compared to girls, 42% & boys 58% in 2000
- 10, 11 & 12 year-olds reported 13% of exposures
 - Compared to 7% in 2000

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Sources of Exposures

More youth were exposed while **surfing** the Web – 83%, compared to 71% five years ago

- Online searches, 40% of incidents
- Clicking on links in websites, 17%
- Pop-up ad, 14%
- Misspelled Web addresses, 12%
- Other ways, 13%

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More Than Just Naked People

- In 43% of incidents, youth saw pictures of naked people only
- 57% involved more explicit images
 - People having sex – 37%
 - Sexual violence – 13%
 - “Animals or other strange things” – 10%

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Two youth told about stumbling upon child pornography.

- **Boy, 11**, doing an online search. "[I saw] naked men with young boys on the screen."
- **Boy, 17**, looking for games from a computer in his bedroom: "I clicked on a link and I did not know what it was. It took me to an underage porn site, which is illegal... I know you're not allowed to go to those. It was disguised as a different link."

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Why did exposures happen?

- "I spelled a word wrong."
- "I guess I wasn't being careful."
- "I was not clear enough doing the search."
- "I was dumb enough to click on the link."
- "I didn't read the information underneath the link."

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Exposures Happened During Searches for...

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Youth interests | School projects |
| • X-Men | • Romeo and Juliet |
| • Skate board tricks | • Famous poets |
| • Drum beats | • Benjamin Franklin |
| • Cheerleading stunts | • Fire prevention |
| • Cars | • DNA |
| • Song lyrics | • Liquids |
| • Hairstyles | • Squid |
| • Patches for software | • Forensic serology |

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Risk for Unwanted Exposure to Pornography

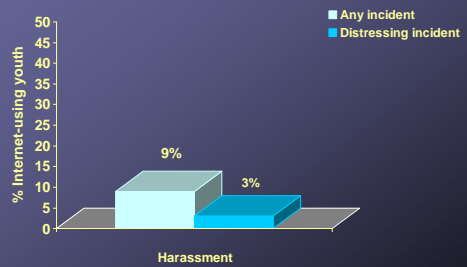
- Older teenager (13-17 years)
- Using file sharing to download pictures
- Conventional interpersonal victimization
- Withdrawn/depressed
- Protective factors:
 - Attending law enforcement presentation on Internet safety
 - Filter/blocking software on most used computer

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Threats & Harassment

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1 in 11 youth (9%, n = 130) were harassed online.
Distressing harassment – 3%



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Characteristics of Harassed Youth

- 58% girls, 42% boys
- 72% of the episodes occurred to high school age youth (14 – 17)
 - Same as in 2000

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Characteristics of Harassers

- 44% were offline friends or acquaintances
 - Compared to 28% five years ago
- Half (50%) male, 28% female, 21% unknown
- Most under 18 (58%)
 - 63% in 2000

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What Youth Said...

- **Girl, 12:** "These people from school were calling me a prostitute and whore ... and saying I was raped. [It happened] because I'm an easy target. I didn't let it bother me until about a month ago and [then] I started getting physical with people."

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What Youth Said...

- **Boy, 14:** "I have my own ... website and I have my own page on it and someone posted something bad about me on it."
- **Boy, 15:** "I was playing a first person shooter game and unintentionally offended this person who became very serious and began to threaten me by saying if this was real life he would physically harm me. [It happened because he] was unable to accept this was just a game."

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Stress Symptoms among Harassed Youth

In 34% of the incidents, youth reported at least one of the following symptoms of stress

- Hyper-arousal
- Avoidance reactions, or
- Intrusive recollections

At a level of 3 or higher on a scale of 1 to 4

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Risk for Harassment

- Using Instant Messaging
- Using Internet 4+ days per week
- Going to chat rooms
- Withdrawn / depressed
- Conventional interpersonal victimization

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Are youth doing risky things online?

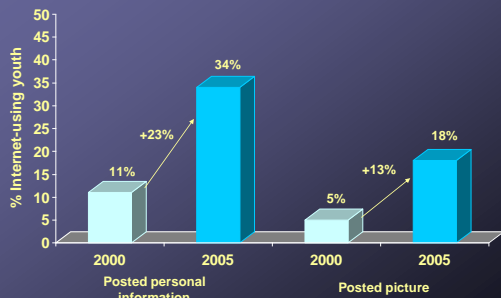
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Online Risky Behavior

- Giving out personal information or pictures online
- Engaging in sexual behaviors online
- Being rude or using the Internet to harass or embarrass

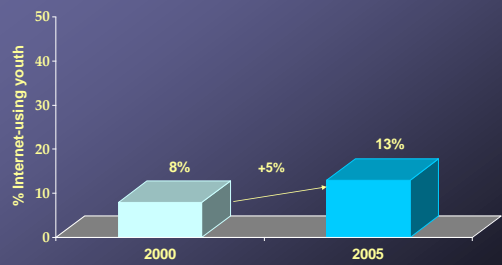
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Posting Personal Information Online



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Going to X-Rated Sites on Purpose



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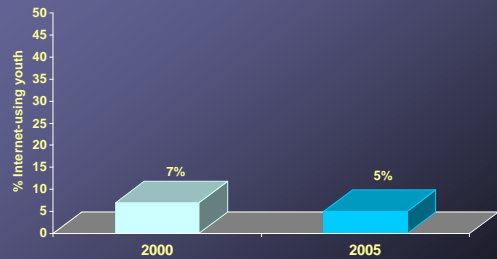
Going to X-Rated Sites on Purpose

Youth found out about sites they went to through:

- Another youth (52%)
- An online search not about sex (33%)
- A pop-up or other ad (27%)
- SPAM (14%)
- Someone they met online (1%)

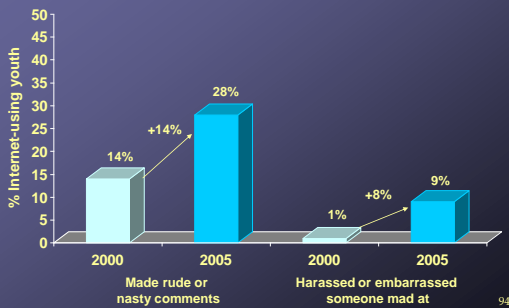
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Talking about Sex with Strangers Online



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Using the Internet to Harass



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Have youth gotten prevention information?

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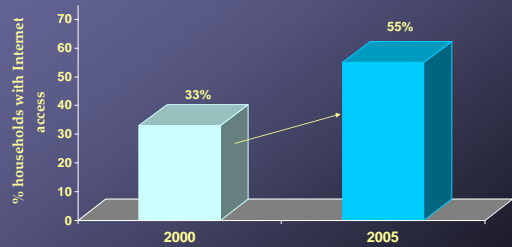
Parents' Views on Prevention

Parents have talked to their children about:

- Giving out personal information online (90%)
- Chatting with strangers (87%)
- Responding to offensive messages (79%)
- Talking online about sex (77%)
- Dealing with x-rated SPAM or pop-ups (77%)

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Use of Filtering and Blocking Software



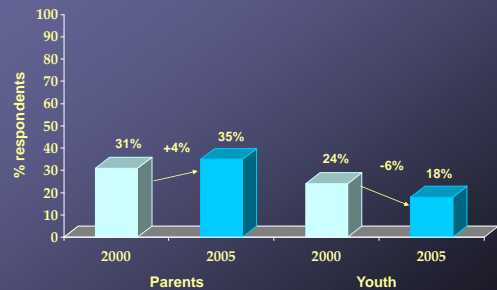
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Law Enforcement Safety Presentations

- About 1 in 5 youth had attended a presentation about Internet safety that was put on by law enforcement
 - 21% (n = 321)

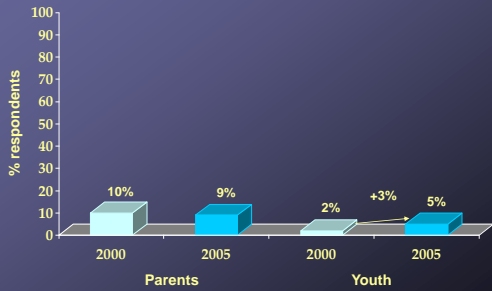
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Did more parents or youth know about places to report incidents?



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Did more parents or youth know about the CyberTipline?



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Knowledge of the CyberTipline

Youth who attended law enforcement Internet safety presentations were more likely to know about reporting and the CyberTipline

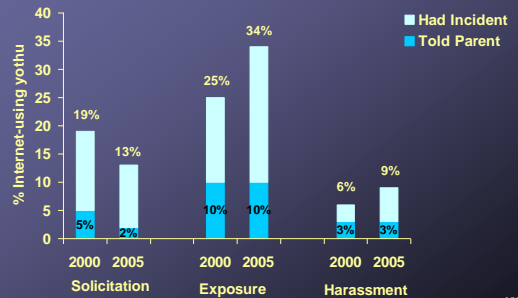
- 23% knew of places to report
 - Compared to 17% w/o LEA safety info
- 8% knew of the CyberTipline
 - Compared to 5% w/o LEA safety info

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Youth remain reluctant to reveal unwanted solicitations, exposures and harassment.

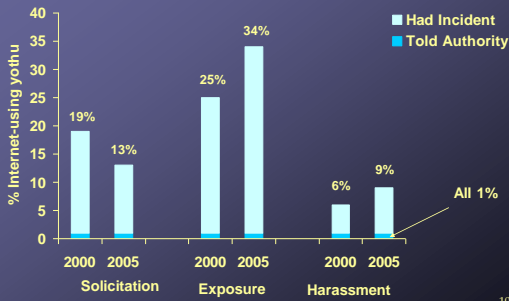
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Few youth told parents what happened.



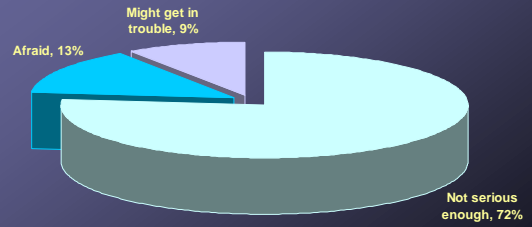
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Few incidents were reported to authorities.



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Why didn't youth tell?



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What should you find out about the Internet in specific victimization cases?

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For all youth reporting Internet-related challenges, find out...

- Is there Internet access?
 - Where is the computer?
 - Is it in the common area?
 - Does it have software to filter or block sexual material or otherwise monitor Internet use?
 - Is there a web camera/scanner/digital camera?
 - Do adults need education about Internet safety?

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For youth targeted by unwanted sexual solicitations, find out...

Are youth

- Using suggestive screen names or posting suggestive profiles?
- Visiting chat rooms?
- Have strangers in their IM buddy list?
- Talking online to adults about sex?
- Being aggressively targeted?
 - Gifts?
 - Telephone contact?
 - Face-to-face meetings?

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For youth who have been the target of harassment, find out...

Are youth

- Instigators of harassment themselves?
- Targets of chronic harassment?
- Being targeted by an adult?
- Being targeted by a 'stranger'?
- Being aggressively targeted?
 - Asked to send a picture?
 - Telephone or face-to-face contact?

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RECOMMENDATIONS

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The decline in sexual solicitations is good news.

- More young people are confining their online communications to people they know in person.
- Real possibility that much of this decline can be attributed to prevention programs
- Continue prevention messages

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Next Steps for Prevention Programs

- Prevention should be aimed at teens – Few younger kids being targeted
 - Kids in middle and high school
 - Acknowledge teen interests & independence
 - Acknowledge teen interest in sex
 - Different messages for different ages
 - Don't leave out older kids – those 16 & 17

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Next Steps for Prevention Programs

Focus on teen desires for love and romance

- Illusions of love
- Romantic fantasy

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Next Steps for Prevention Programs

Be frank with youth about online sexual activities

- Going to x-rated chatrooms
- Talking about sex with people they meet online
- Looking at pornography
- Cybersex

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Prevention of Sexual Photos

- Possibly increasing youth involvement in the making and transmission of sexual photos
 - Teach what is illegal
 - Dangers of permanent dissemination of pictures
 - Understanding of voyeurism and exhibitionism as perversions
 - Educate parents about misuse of webcams and digital cameras

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Acquaintances as Solicitors

Increasing solicitations from acquaintances

- No evidence these incidents are less harmful or disturbing
- Much sexual victimization among youth is perpetrated by peers
- Use prevention to discourage adolescent offending

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Next Steps for Prevention Programs

Take on harassment issue

- Increase in harassment and signs of more elaborate forms

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Harassment Prevention

- Describe problem effectively for kids, parents and officials
- Include online harassment in anti-bullying programs in schools
- Propose codes of conduct
- Urge strong sanctions by schools and youth groups for online harassment

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The Pornography Exposure Problem

- Focus on “unwanted” part of Internet porn exposure
- Education for kids about these practices
- Inoculate kids for exposure
- Make security easier, built in, less dependent on individual initiative, technical knowledge
- Teach more sophisticated lessons about protecting privacy

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Promote Reporting

- Reporting is low and knowledge about reporting declined
- Desensitization, cynicism, discouragement, ignorance

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Motivate People to Report:

Teach reasons to report

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Increase the number and visibility of reporting options.

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Enhance Reporting Mechanisms.

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Enhance Internet Accountability.

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Evaluate and improve filtering and blocking software solutions.

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Train mental health, youth service and educational professionals to recognize and respond to Internet problems.

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Research

- Effective prevention for at risk youth
- Group dynamics of risky online behavior

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The End

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