

## **Tips for Dealing with Cyber-Bullying of Shoreline Staff**

Young people have fully embraced the Internet and other technologies, like cell phones, as both an environment and a tool for socializing. They send emails, create their own web sites, post intimate personal news in blogs (online interactive diaries), send text messages and images via cell phone, message each other through IMs (instant messages), chat in chatrooms, post to discussion boards, and seek out new friends in teen community sites.

Unfortunately, there are increasing reports of teens (and sometimes younger children) using these technologies to post cruel text or images to bully their peers and/or teachers or engage in other cruel behavior.

Bullying has always existed in schools, colleges and universities, but with a rise in the use of mobile phones, email and social networking websites amongst young people, inappropriate comments and images can now be viewed by a much wider audience. For the victims of cyber-bullying this can cause more pain and anxiety than traditional forms of bullying. It is also more difficult for schools and teachers to deal with as they have no control over external websites.

### **Forms of Cyberbullying:**

Cyberbullying is being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material using the Internet or a cell phone. Here are some of the more common types of cyber-bullying:

- **Flaming.** Online “fights” using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language.
- **Harassment.** Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages.
- **Cyberstalking.** Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or are highly intimidating. Engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid for her or her safety.
- **Denigration.** “Dissing” someone online. Sending or posting cruel gossip or rumors about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships.
- **Impersonation.** Breaking into someone’s account, posing as that person and sending messages to make the person look bad, get that person in trouble or danger, or damage that person’s reputation or friendships.
- **Outing and Trickery.** Sharing someone’s secrets or embarrassing information online. Tricking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information, which is then shared online.

### **What To Do If You Are the Target of Cyber-bullying Behavior:**

#### **Email or Text Messages:**

- If you receive a threatening, intimidating, sexually suggestive, or obscene email or other electronic communication from a student, report the message to an administrator as soon as possible.
- Do not reply to the message. Replying confirms your email address as a real one.
- Print out the message and any routing information. **DO NOT DELETE** the message from your computer or phone regardless of how offensive or disturbing it might be. Have a computer technician (building or district) examine the message to determine if any tracing of the source is possible.
- If you have reasonable cause to suspect individual student(s) as the source of the offensive messages, report this information to your administrator immediately. Be aware that the author of the message may have hacked into another person's account to shield his/her own identity or to maliciously implicate the other person.
- Any incident involving possible sexual harassment or sexual content should be reported to Human Resources to determine if there has been a violation of the district's Sexual Harassment policy.

#### **Web:**

- If you learn of a phony MySpace/Facebook website or other website that is being falsely attributed to you or contains content that constitutes harassment of you, report the existence of the website to your administrator as soon as possible.
- If possible, download or take screenshots (Command->Shift->4) of the content of the website.
- Contact your building or district technical team about the site so they can attempt to identify the source

of the material or any other participants involved with the website.

- Do not confront students or classes of students about the site until district administration and technicians have had a chance to investigate.
- While it is not always possible to identify the creator of the website, it is often possible to flag it as inappropriate or to request that the site be removed by the host company (MySpace, etc.).