

**ONLINE SAFEGUARDS FOR INTERNET USE  
BY CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 1997  
*Reviewed March 2006*

- WHEREAS,** The third principle of the National PTA Statement of PTA Principles states “We believe that the home is the basic unit in the structure of our society and should be the most constructive influence in building character, a sense of values, and a concept of the world for all children and youth;” and
- WHEREAS,** Telecommunication via the Internet is becoming increasingly accessible to children through home, school, and community computers; and
- WHEREAS,** Many parents are becoming concerned about the dangers and risks to children through the unsupervised access to information available via the Internet; and
- WHEREAS,** Parents need to be directly involved in the regulation of materials to which minor children have access; and
- WHEREAS,** Some parents are unaware of how to effectively supervise and guide their children’s access to appropriate material; and
- WHEREAS,** The Internet, properly used, can be a fun, safe and informative place for children to gain knowledge and information; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA support and work toward the establishment of a national, voluntary, multidimensional rating system of Internet information to aid families in their supervision and guidance of their children’s use of the Internet; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts offer information, materials and tips to parents, teachers and students for safe and effective use of the Internet; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to encourage school districts to develop and adopt policies regarding the appropriate use of the Internet by their students.

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**BACKGROUND SUMMARY**

Children and young people are among the most active users of new media and often are the first users of the Internet (information superhighway) within a family. Estimates show that more than four million children between the ages of two and eighteen are now online, with the number expected to grow nearly four times by the year 2000.

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There are 50 million children now attending elementary and secondary schools in the United States. Nine percent of elementary/secondary classrooms have Internet access and 50 percent of all schools in the United States have some kind of access to the Internet.

Parents are increasingly aware that certain information online is not appropriate for children. Most parents have strong feelings about what their children should be exposed to and are concerned about how easy it is to get information online. Parents worry about materials that are sexually explicit, violent, racially biased and overly commercial. Advertising is becoming increasingly common on the Internet, and as children spend or influence the spending of a significant part of a family's income, much advertising is aimed at children.

The usual regulations to protect children using the telephone and television do not apply in cyberspace. In addition, the distinctions between advertising and content that exist in traditional media are absent online and make the job of protecting children from inappropriate marketing difficult. Parents need to be aware of the commercialism online and decide how they want to limit their children's exposure. There are parental control features/mechanisms offered by commercial online services such as America Online, CompuServe, Prodigy and Microsoft Network. The Internet, a global "network of networks," is not governed by any entity and therefore has no limits or checks on the kind of information that is maintained and accessible to users.

California has some legislation in process to make it a felony to attempt to seduce minors through the use of electronic mail. In other states politicians are calling for tight restrictions on content of Internet transmissions. Computer experts believe the limitless scope of the Internet makes any national control plan unfeasible.

By taking responsibility for their children's online computer use, setting reasonable rules and guidelines for this use and monitoring compliance with these rules, parents may better safeguard their children from deceptive and exploitative online practices.

Parents are encouraged to communicate with those who prepare, sponsor, deliver and broadcast technology to commend good programs and productions and to voice their objections to those whose products are inferior, offensive, who advertise products to children that are hazardous or deceptive, or who coerce or exploit children and youth.

Parents must be urged to participate in the development of school policy regarding student access and use of the Internet. The potential educational value of the Internet is immense, and as with other information resources, should be evaluated on its merits and possible contribution to instruction and curriculum. Many departments of education in other states, as well as local school districts, recommend schools develop a contract (Acceptable Use Policies) with every student and staff member using online services at the school site to insure they are using the Internet properly.