Aug 26, 2020

Contact Kylie Mason

Phone 850-245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

VIDEO: Back to School Online Safety Tips



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—As millions of Florida students begin another school year, many of them virtually, Attorney General Ashley Moody is offering online safety tips for parents to help protect kids from online predators. Today, Attorney General Moody released simple tips and resources to help parents monitor students' online activity, block location tracking and begin a continuous conversation about safe virtual communications.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "As a mother who has juggled parenting and a career throughout this pandemic, I know how challenging it can be to constantly monitor our children's online activity and trust they are safe when they are spending so much time online. That is why I am reaching out to parents with tips and resources to help them protect their children from threats online as many students begin virtual back-to-school—requiring more time in front of a computer screen than normal. While these guidelines are important, the most vital thing that we can do as parents is to show our children that we are interested in what content they are seeing online and most importantly, who they are communicating with."

Attorney General Moody serves as Chair of the Statewide Council on Human Trafficking and oversees the Office of Statewide Prosecution, charged with prosecuting human trafficking organizations operating across judicial circuits in Florida. While leading these teams, Attorney General Moody has seen cases involving human traffickers targeting children through social media, online games or popular apps to build trust and try to meet in person.

Attorney General Moody is sharing the following tips to help parents better protect children from these online predators:

Limit online activity to common spaces: Make sure your child is only accessing the internet in areas where other trusted adults are present—such as the living room, kitchen or dining room. Do not allow children to surf the internet or utilize social media alone in a bedroom at all hours of the day. Set a time window for when it is appropriate to engage online.

Don’t share too much information: Create a list of things children should never post or share online—such as birthdates, full names, addresses and phone numbers. Make sure they understand why it is important to keep this information private.

Be careful about what you post: The internet is not private. Once children share a post, picture or video, they cannot control how others will use it and it can never be permanently deleted. Teach children to be thoughtful and cautious about what they post and share online.

Only connect with people you know: If they are not friends in real life, then they should not be friends online. Predators can easily create fake profiles to hide their identities, so instruct children to only connect with friends they actually know in real life. Also check children’s privacy settings regularly to make sure strangers cannot see their profiles.

Never meet up with someone you met online: This tip may be the most important. If parents don’t act on any of the other rules, this one tip may save the life of their child.

Keep locations private: Many apps, networks and devices have geotagging features that broadcast locations. This information could lead a stalker directly to a child, so make sure these features are deactivated.

Protect passwords: Create strong passwords for children and make sure they know to never share passwords with anyone except a parent or trusted adult. Parents should be able to regularly access every email account, social media network and app used by their child.

To access a printable resource for parents with the above-mentioned tips to help parents better protect children from online predators, click here.

For more information about cybersafety, check out the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Chatting with Kids about Being Online Booklet from the Stop.Think.Connect.™ Campaign. For more information about the campaign, click here.