Fact Sheet for Virginia’s Parents
Cyberbullying

What is Cyberbullying?

The Cyberbullying Research Center defines cyberbullying as: “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronics.”

- The behavior must be deliberate, not accidental.
- The bullying reflects a pattern of behavior, not a single incident.
- The target of the bullying must perceive that harm was inflicted.

The PACER National Bullying Prevention Center defines it as: “the use of technology to intentionally harass, hurt, embarrass, humiliate, or intimidate another person.”

Cyberbullying can take place anywhere that your child is on-line, and sites keep expanding (Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, etc.). Cyberbullying can take place through email, text, online video games, YouTube, and virtual reality (See PEATC Handout on 15 Apps of Which Parents Should be Aware). It is critical that as parents, you know where your children are spending their time when they are on their phone, computer, tablet, etc.

Why is Cyberbullying Harmful?

Just like traditional bullying, youth who are cyberbullied report being sad, depressed, angry, and frustrated. The Cyberbullying Research Center notes that students say that they feel sick and worthless and are often afraid and/or embarrassed to go to school. There are documented instances of cyberbullied youth taking their own lives.

Cyberbullying can be worse than traditional bullying because the victim may not know who is targeting them. The bully can often hide his/her identity and the actions can go viral, reaching countless other people who may then choose to participate without even knowing the target. The bully may share personal or private information about the target, post rumors, threaten, post a harmful picture, pretend to be someone they are not, create a hurtful webpage about their target and more.

Cyberbullying can be more menacing than traditional bullying and can be harder to stop. Once information is on the internet, it can be very difficult to remove. Studies have found that children with disabilities such as learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, and autism spectrum disorders are more likely to be bullied than their peers without disabilities and are often seen as an easy target.
Signs Your Child is Cyberbullied:
• unexpectedly stops using their device(s)
• appears nervous or jumpy when using device(s)
• appears uneasy about being at school or outside
• appears to be angry, depressed, or frustrated after texting, chatting, using social media, or gaming
• becomes abnormally withdrawn
• avoids discussions about their activities online

Signs of BEING the Cyberbully
• quickly switches screens or hides their device
• uses their device(s) at all hours of the night
• gets unusually upset if they can’t use device(s)
• avoids discussions about what they are doing online
• seems to be using multiple online accounts, or an account that is not their own

In general, if a child acts in ways that are inconsistent with their usual behavior when using these devices, find out why.

(Cyberbullying Research Center)