

## Protecting Your Child in an IM World

Children must know the potential dangers of Instant Messaging to understand why they need to be cautious about how they use it.

**Set up rules for Instant Messaging and explain the reason for each rule to your child.** Remember, while you can monitor the family computer's use at home, keep in mind that kids have access to the Internet in a variety of other places – at the homes of friends, at school, at public libraries, etc. **You can protect your child by:**

### Setting limits for the use of IM.

- **No IM during homework time – IM can have a negative effect on grades and facilitates cheating.**
- **No late-night IMs. Fewer children are online late at night.**
- **Place a time limit on the use of IM.**



### Reviewing his or her IM profile.

- **The profile should contain no personal information.**
- **That means no real names, no age, no photos, no telephone numbers, no address – nothing that can identify your child for an Internet predator.**
- **The profile should not link to a Web site.**
- **The IM screen name should not be the child's real name.**

### Monitoring cellular IM links.

**To further limit your child's exposure to predators and other inappropriate individuals, you may want to set rules for your child's use of Instant Messages on his or her cellular phone. Your child's friends can make contact by phone, or leave voice mail.**

If your child already has an IM link to his or her cell phone and it was obtained without your permission, the Internet Service Provider (ISP) or cellular service provider may be in violation of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). You can request that the provider stop collecting data on your child. You can also stop the IM service.