

The Oakland Press ([theoaklandpress.com](http://theoaklandpress.com)), Serving Oakland County

---

News > Local News

## OAKLAND COUNTY MOMS: Cyber bullying – What Every Parent Should Know WITH VIDEO

Thursday, October 21, 2010

By Lisa Lagrou

Special to The Oakland Press

---

The Rochester Auburn Community Coalition invited Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard to speak about the dangers of cyber bullying. I attended the informal symposium and found it to be very valuable from an information standpoint. Cyber bullying has been getting a lot of publicity lately. Because of my association with kids' websites and being an advocate on cyber safety, it was refreshing to hear the take on cyber attacks from a law enforcement view.

I'm used to hearing cyber bully accounts from a teacher or parent's point of view. Bouchard's subject knowledge was outstanding and this shouldn't be a surprise given his department's background in keeping up with technologically advanced criminals.

Sheriff Bouchard's polished PowerPoint presentation began with the very definition of cyber bullying.

\*Cyber bullying is the use of phones, computers or any other digital technology to send or post harmful material.



Bouchard then listed examples of harmful material which included: threatening messages, posting sensitive information, pretending to be someone else and excluding people.

Sheriff Bouchard broke down the various attacks and differentiated the types of harassment. "Flaming" is categorized as using abusive language. Harassment involves repeated attacks and denigration is the use of gossip to deteriorate a subject. Other forms of cyber attacks go far beyond teasing. They include using tactics like impersonation and trickery to obtain personal information to perpetuate scams.

Bouchard extended the message that cyber bullying affects anyone that uses a computer. He was adept at identifying attacks that affect any user of technology beyond "kids on facebook" or in other social networking groups. Most people associate attacks as kids picking on each other but he cited numerous cases of identify theft, stalking, and other crimes that his departments regularly investigate.

Frightening statistics were cited with regard to teenagers. 79% of teens post personal pictures on social networking sites. 61% of teens reported posting their personal addresses online.

Computers and cell phones aren't the only danger to the safety of teenagers. Bouchard noted that many parents are unaware their child can have direct access to predators with their own personal gaming devices. The abuse isn't limited to teens either. Bouchard stated that a recent study showed that 42% of 4th graders report being bullied and girls are twice as likely to be victimized.

The danger to teenagers is enhanced by the fact that they are less attentive to internet safety. Sheriff Bouchard said that teens are also "less resilient" in getting out of bad situations and less willing to rely on assistance. For Bouchard, the reason is clear. Teens fear that if they report cyber attacks, they will reveal evidence of their own online wrong-doings. Bouchard also noted that teens leave themselves wide open to attacks because of their openness with sharing passwords or having easily identifiable passwords.

Sheriff Bouchard offered some key advice if you or your child is falling prey to attacks:

\* Have cyber bullying conversations and a plan in place before an attack \* Don't respond to the bully \* Don't retaliate against the bully \* Save all of your evidence by taking "screenshots" of incriminating activity \* tell an adult \* file a police report

Bouchard raised some interesting issues as far as the responsibilities of schools in regards to cyber bullying. Schools can monitor school computers and do searches of their computers for evidence of attacks but they aren't allowed to monitor cell phones or personal devices. Bouchard also went on to say schools in the district can't include pictures of students and use full names of students or personal student information on any of the district websites.

There are many signs to look for if you feel your child is being preyed upon or using their computer inappropriately. These include:

\* Watching to see if your child "closes" their windows when you enter the room \* Noticing your child emptying their caches or clearing their computer history \* Knowing your child's passwords and internet habits \* Notice the moods of your child and look for anxiety after they've been online

Bouchard summed up the symposium with an important, yet sobering thought. "My parents, when we were home and the doors were locked, the guard was down and we were safe. This generation and forever more, parents are never able to say 'the kids are home, we have nothing to worry about.'"

Please visit our **directory** of helpful links on cyberbullying.

---

URL: [http://www.theoaklandpress.com/articles/2010/10/21/news/local\\_news/doc4cc06de38d1db434973937.prt](http://www.theoaklandpress.com/articles/2010/10/21/news/local_news/doc4cc06de38d1db434973937.prt)

© 2010 theoaklandpress.com, a **Journal Register** Property