

Message from the RLMS Counseling Office

Social Networking Websites

"It's 10 p.m. Do you know where your children are?"

Remember that phrase from your own childhood? It's still a valid question, but now, it comes with a twist: "Do you know where your kids are — and who they're chatting with online?"

Social networking sites have morphed into a mainstream medium for teens and adults. These sites encourage and enable people to exchange information about themselves, share pictures and videos, and use blogs and private messaging to communicate with friends, others who share interests, and sometimes even the world-at-large. And that's why it's important to be aware of the possible pitfalls that come with networking online.

Some social networking sites attract pre-teens — even kids as young as 5 or 6. These younger-focused sites don't allow the same kinds of communication that teens and adults have, but there are still things that parents can do to help young kids socialize safely online. In fact, when it comes to young kids, the law provides some protections — and gives parents some control over the type of information that children can disclose online. For sites directed to children under age 13, and for general audience sites that know they're dealing with kids younger than 13, there's the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). It requires these sites to get parental consent before they collect, maintain, or use kids' information. COPPA also allows parents to review their child's online profiles and blog pages.

Parents sometimes can feel outpaced by their technologically savvy kids. Technology aside, there are lessons that parents can teach to help kids stay safer as they socialize online.

Click on the link below for more information about talking to your children about the risks associated with Social Networking Websites, protecting them from dangers and how you can help them.

[Social Networking Sites: A Parent's Guide](#) (PDF) -

http://privacy.integrity.aristotle.com/downloads/onguardonline_socialnetworking.pdf