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## TV special to show parents how to protect kids online

Edmonton...The Alberta government is encouraging parents to watch ACCESS TV on May 18, at 9 p.m. to learn what they can do to make their children's online experiences safer.

*"Children, Sex & the 'Net – what every parent should know"* is being presented by the Alberta government as part of its commitment to preventing the sexual exploitation of children and youth. The Alberta government's new website on Internet luring prevention will also be featured during the program. Getwebwise.ca includes sections for parents, teens and children and provides useful information and advice on using the Internet safely. Alberta Children's Services has committed \$350,000 to support public awareness activities on preventing the sexual exploitation of children.

"In this age of cyber surfing and chat rooms, it has become increasingly easier for predators to enter into our homes and prey upon our children. It's very scary," says Alberta Children's Services Minister, Heather Forsyth. "If you are going to be teaching your kids not to talk to strangers on the street, you should also be teaching them not to talk to strangers online."

"Parents can take an active role to help protect their children from online sexual predators," said Alberta Solicitor General Harvey Cenaiko. "This program will provide them with the tools they need to reduce the risks."

*"Children, Sex & the 'Net – what every parent should know"* aims to educate parents about the dangers the Internet poses and how they can protect their children. The program features a Canadian documentary that tells the story of two young people who met predators online and came very close to a dangerous entanglement. The documentary is followed by a discussion with local experts who will be providing useful safety tips for parents.

Preventing child sexual exploitation is a key priority area under the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative. The initiative is a collaborative partnership of government ministries working together on issues affecting children and youth. For more information on the work underway, please visit [www.child.gov.ab.ca/acyi](http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/acyi).

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## **Tips for parents**

1. Place computers in a high-traffic area so that you can monitor your child's Internet use.
2. Teach children how to get out of websites quickly and discuss things they see or read that make them feel uncomfortable.
3. Get to know your child's online friends, not just their offline friends.
4. Remind your kids to behave online as they would in public. Explain to them they should never write anything in an e-mail that they would not want the world to read.
5. Set up rules agreeing upon what time of day, how long, and what areas your child can access online. Signing an Internet family safety contract outlining your household's Internet rules can be helpful.
6. Maintain open lines of communication with your child regarding their Internet use. Ask them where they go and what they do online and get them to show you.
7. Get to know chat room and web related slang. Ask your child to explain it to you.
8. Remind your children that everything they read online may not be true. An offer that seems "too good to be true" likely is.
9. Pay attention to your child's behaviour: Are they quickly closing the computer screen when you pass by? Are they giving up their nights and weekends to be on the computer? Are they becoming introverted and not wanting to spend time with friends and family? Are they getting phone calls from people you don't know?
10. Set an example for your children by following the rules you set out for them. Be careful of what personal information you give out and what files you download.

## **Statistics on children and Internet use**

- 1 in 4 youth say someone they have met only online has sent them pornography.
- 3 in 20 youth say they have received an e-mail from a stranger that bothered or frightened them.
- 1 in 2 youth say they have received unwanted sexual comments online.
- 1 in 8 youth who met with an Internet stranger in person described the meeting as "a bad experience."
- 2 out of 5 youth say their parents never check in on them while they are online.
- 4 in 5 secondary school students have received pornographic junk mail and did not tell their parents about it.

### Sources:

Young Canadians in a Wired World, the student's view; prepared by Environics Research Group for the Media Awareness Group and the Government of Canada; October 2001.

Online Victimization: A report on the Nation's Youth; prepared by the Crimes Against Children Research Centre; June 2000.

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