



SUFFOLK COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY RACHAEL ROLLINS

March 16th, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope that you and your family are well and that you are staying safe during this unusual time. As you are well aware, the closing of schools because of COVID-19 creates many challenges. As a parent and guardian of three school aged children, I too, am worried about how to keep young people healthy, safe, and productive during a lengthy period of time away from school. I am writing today to encourage you to discuss the topic of online safety with any young person in your care.

It is likely that over the next few weeks, students will be spending much more time online. From school work to social media and gaming, we can expect an increase in the use of devices of all kinds. My office encourages you to set limits on the screen use and screen time of your children and to increase your conversations with them about the tools they need to have positive experiences when online.

Our program, STOP BLOCK TALK, has simple and memorable ways for students to navigate the risks associated with these platforms. There is guidance and resources on the materials included with this letter. We strongly encourage you to review them yourself and to discuss and share them with your children. In addition to these resources and reminders, commonsensemedia.org is an excellent website offering age-based appropriate picks for your specific family. All of these tools can lower risks, but please be sure to tell your children that if something happens that is confusing or makes them uncomfortable, they can come to you and speak in a safe space, free of judgment. Tell them you will love them no matter what, even if they feel something is their fault.

In my office, we see cases involving many online crimes that could have been prevented or stopped earlier. Most children involved did not tell anyone that something happened for fear of punishment, losing their device, blame, and more. Please tell your children that they can talk to you and you will help them through any difficult situation, online and in life. I thank you for making time to listen and addressing this with your children. Please stay healthy and safe. And if you are able, use this time to have meaningful, loving interactions with your children, family, and loved ones.

In solidarity,

Rachael Rollins
Suffolk County District Attorney