

Non-Technical Presentation Proposal  
Internet Safety Technical Task Force  
Public Meeting at Harvard Law School

\*Please submit completed form as a pdf to [jtatlock@cyber.law.harvard.edu](mailto:jtatlock@cyber.law.harvard.edu) with “Presentation” as the subject, no later than August 16, 2008. Please note that although the internal review committee will consider each submission carefully, a limited number of invitations to present will be issued, time permitting and based on relevance to the scope of the ISTTF’s inquiry. The committee reserves full rights to make decisions in its sole discretion. If the reviewers are interested in or have questions about your proposal, we may request additional information.

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Topic and title of proposed presentation:

Addressing Youth Risk Online in the Context of Youth Risk

1). Please briefly tell us what aspect(s) of youth on-line safety your presentation will address:

Initiatives to address youth risk online must be grounded in research insight into those online risks and effective risk prevention approaches used to address other areas of youth risk. Research in the areas of online sexual predation and cyberbullying reveals that the young people who are at greatest risk online are those who also demonstrate significant psychosocial concerns in the real world.

It is also essential to understand the significant limitations of Internet safety approaches that are grounded in highly fallible technical-based systems. Years ago, filtering software was touted as the technology that “would protect our children online.” Along with the widespread adoption of filtering technology there was a lack of focus on teaching young people how to surf safely to avoid accidental access. Recent research from the Crimes Against Children Research Center has revealed an increase in accidental exposure that could have been prevented through safe surfing practices, despite an increase in reliance in filtering. Do a search on “bypass Internet filter” and this will reveal many techniques young people can use to intentionally bypass the filters.

Technical approaches to require greater parental involvement in registering on social networking sites will similarly shift our focus from the importance of educating parents of the need for ongoing involvement in their children’s online activities – and developing education, prevention, and intervention efforts for those more at risk young people whose parents cannot be counted on for such involvement.

My work in the field of cyberbullying has resulted in the development of a proposed approach to address youth risk online in a manner that will be research-based and grounded in effective youth risk prevention. My presentation will outline how this can be accomplished. In every state there is already an active focus on youth risk prevention in the context of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act and the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative. These programs involve professionals with significant understanding of effective youth risk prevention. Unfortunately, these individuals often do not have sufficient understanding of how these risks are translated online. But it is clear from the research that the young people they already work with are the ones who are at greatest risk online. It is necessary to expand the mission of these groups to address youth risk online and to expand the membership to include people with understanding of youth culture online and Internet crime issues.

Further it is necessary to consistently measure the concerns and to identify risk and protective factors. In the real world, this is done in the context of the CDC Youth Risk Behavior survey. A new youth risk online survey must be developed. (I propose CACRC be responsible for this.)

The current youth risk prevention approaches rely on research-based best practices. There are no research-based best practices in the area of youth risk online. I will share an approach to achieve a similar level of accountability.

Lastly, the fact that the CACRC recently published an article that called into question many of the current Internet safety messages should raise significant concerns. There is a critical need to facilitate the transfer of research insight into the messages and approaches that are used to prevent and respond to youth risk online.

I am the director of the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use - <http://csriu.org>. I have degrees in special education and law and taught “at risk” children, practiced computer law, and was an educational technology consultant before focusing my professional attention on issues of youth risk online and effective management of student Internet use. I am author of two books. *Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats: Responding to the Challenge of Online Social Cruelty, Threats, and Distress* (Research Press) and *Cyber-Safe Kids, Cyber-Savvy Teens, Helping Young People Use the Internet Safety and Responsibly* (Jossey Bass).

2). Please explain how your topic is relevant to the scope of the Task Force’s inquiry:

The current work of the task force appears to be focused on pursuing additional technological solutions. This appears to be in accord with the agreement the AGs entered into with MySpace. While there will always be a role for technology protections, and the protective practices of sites, more will be necessary to effectively address the concerns of the young people who are at the greatest risk online. This presentation will provide guidance on a comprehensive, research-grounded approach to do so.

