

Bullying in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – 1/15/09  
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Through my work with the 4-H program, I have the great opportunity to spend the majority of my time with youth in the 5<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Many differences exist among this age group but there is one similarity I can count on, they all have a “facebook” page and I have found the best way to keep 4-H’ers updated on upcoming events is to “facebook them.” This method of communication can be a great way to keep up with friends and post messages to a large number of people but this worldwide access can also have a downside.

The concept of bullying is nothing new to teenagers and parents. With the advent of technology however, this behavior has moved to the virtual world and a new type of bullying has emerged called Cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying can involve sending mean or threatening messages or images, posting private or sensitive information about another person, and/or pretending to be someone else to in order to make that person feel bad, according to the website [stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov).

This form of bullying can be done through email, instant messaging, social networking web sites like Facebook and MySpace, blogs, or chat rooms and can be just as damaging as traditional forms of bullying. One reason is that traditional bullies stay at school and students can escape them by going into their homes at night. With the technology explosion, however, bullies are now chasing victims into their homes, often anonymously. Another difference between cyberbullying and traditional forms is that harmful information can be spread very quickly to a large audience and can happen any time, day or night.

There are some things that parents can do to help prevent cyberbullying. The following tips are provided from [stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov).

**Keep computers in a common room – not in your children’s bedrooms**

**Consider installing parental monitoring software** on your computers but do not rely solely on these programs.

**Get involved and stay aware of your child’s on-line activities.** Learn everything you can about the internet and what your kids are doing online. Talk to them about the sites they visit and the information they post on their personal web pages.

**Talk about cyberbullying and encourage your child to come to you if they see any of these behaviors online.** Stay calm and keep the lines of communication open.

*For more information about the 4-H program or other youth development issues, contact the Oconee County Cooperative Extension Office at (706) 769-3946 or stop by our office located behind the Oconee County Courthouse.*