

Attorney General Encourages Parents, Caregivers To Take Active Role With Online Precautions

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CHICAGO – In recognition of Safer Internet Day Feb. 6, Attorney General Kwame Raoul today encouraged parents and caregivers to talk to children about ways to protect themselves online and what to do if they end up in an unsafe online situation.

“Safer Internet Day aims to not only create a safer internet, but also a better internet, where everyone is empowered to use technology responsibly, respectfully, critically and creatively. Today and everyday is an opportunity to talk to children about safe and healthy online behavior,” Raoul said. “I will continue to advocate for online safety and to help protect children and young adults from the physical and mental health harms that result from dangerous online activity.”

Raoul explained parents, caregivers and educators play the largest role in protecting children online and helping them develop healthy online habits. He encouraged parents and guardians to have uncomfortable conversations with youth about online exploitation, which includes privacy violations, requests for explicit photos and sextortion – all of which can cause shame, fear, confusion and even suicidal ideation.

Attorney General Raoul said families can help children stay safe online by using a **SMART** approach:

- Set up children and youths’ devices, accounts and passwords.
- **M**onitor their online use and connections.
- **A**pprove their apps and games.
- **R**estrict their content and permissions.
- **T**alk to them often and teach them always.

Raoul also recommends teaching children to think critically about the content they consume, the followers they accept and information they share. He said children should also be encouraged to take breaks, not reshare inappropriate messages or photos that may embarrass or harm themselves, their peers or others, and to identify trusted adults who they can turn to in the event they need help and support.

Participating in Internet Safety Day is part of Raoul’s ongoing advocacy, research and litigation for a safer internet, specifically through social media. In March 2022, Raoul also announced a bipartisan, nationwide [investigation into TikTok](#) for providing and promoting its social media platform to children and young adults despite its use being associated with physical and mental health harms.

In October 2023, the Attorney General’s office [filed a lawsuit against Meta Platforms Inc.](#) (Meta), the company that owns and operates Facebook and Instagram, for its harmful business practices targeting children. The lawsuit highlighted Meta’s internal research that showed using Facebook and Instagram is associated with increased risks of physical and mental harms of young people, including depression, sleep deprivation, eating disorders and even suicide. Additionally, in December 2023, [Raoul joined 22](#)

[attorneys general](#) urging the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold the government's ability to work and communicate with social media companies to address the spread of dangerous content on their platforms.

Raoul's office, with a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, runs [Illinois' Internet Crimes Against Children \(ICAC\) Task Force](#) that protects children, in part, by providing internet safety education to tens of thousands of parents, teachers, students and law enforcement professionals across Illinois. The ICAC Task Force provides these trainings at no charge and will take every opportunity to provide actionable information and resources to all Illinois communities. To schedule a digital safety presentation, please visit [OnlineSafeOnlineSmart.com](#) or email e-info@ilag.gov.

The ICAC Task Force also receives and investigates CyberTips, or online reports of child pornography, from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Since 2006, the task force has been involved in more than 2,000 arrests of sexual predators.