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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN PROVIDING INTERNET SAFETY TRAINING TO ILLINOIS EDUCATORS

***Training Modules will Include Focus on Growing Issue of
Cyberbullying and Sexting***

Chicago — The new school year will bring free training tools for Illinois teachers to keep their students safe on the Internet and deal with the growing issue of cyberbullying. Attorney General Lisa Madigan and the Illinois State Board of Education today launched an Internet safety training program for Illinois schools, previewing the program's new training modules.

On Tuesday, more than 365 educators throughout Illinois will participate in the Attorney General's first-of-its-kind Webinar to introduce educators to the benefits of the training program.

"Educators constantly tell me they need resources to educate their students on Internet safety issues," said Attorney General Madigan. "We've created this training program to address the real need to teach our children how to be safe when using vital technology."

"The Internet is a great source of information and certainly it's another educational tool for students and teachers but we also know that it can also lead to a range of dangerous situations," said Illinois State Board of Education member Melinda LaBarre. "We encourage as many Illinois teachers as possible to take advantage of this important Internet safety Webinar to develop their approach and skills toward teaching students the best practices for staying safe online."

The Attorney General's office created the training modules to provide teachers sorely needed resources to educate and inform students on Internet safety information aimed at three different grade-level groupings: grades 3-5; grades 6-8; and grades 9-12. Each grouping covers topics that young people face online everyday: online exploitation, cyberbullying, sexting and piracy. The modules include videos, activities and worksheets to assist educators with their Internet safety education efforts. Those interested can access the modules and the Webinar on the Attorney General's Web site at www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov by clicking on the "Internet Safety" icon.

The Attorney General's office is also working with Illinois Association of School Boards, Illinois Association of School Administrators, Illinois Principals Association, Illinois Library Association, Illinois High School Association, Illinois PTA and Illinois Education and Technology Conference to distribute the Webinar and modules to their members.

In November 2009, the Attorney General held a Cyber Safety Summit with school administrators, parents, law enforcement and the tech industry. The educators made it clear that they did not have the resources needed to address Internet safety issues students confront.

"Kids use of technology creates opportunities and challenges. We must address the challenges students face and ensure that they don't make decisions that have a negative impact on their lives," said Madigan.

According to a survey done by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, for teenagers between the ages of 12 and 17: 93 percent are online; 73 percent of teens have a cell phone; and 72 percent have a social networking page.

The Attorney General emphasized that while technology opens opportunities, it also creates risks and that cyberbullying and online harassment are now the most common online risks children face.

Cyberbullying comes in many forms but most commonly it is a child harassed or targeted by peers online or through other digital devices. Many students have been victimized by cyberbullying.

"Using social networking sites and text messages, bullies no longer have to taunt other kids in the hallway," said Madigan. "Bullies have instant access to a large group of students and teachers don't see the bullying."

According to the National Crime Prevention Council, more than 43 percent of teens have been victims of cyberbullying. In some cases, it has led to depression or even suicide.

Attorney General Madigan's Office has provided Internet safety training and education to more than 128,000 parents, teachers, and students, and more than 10,000 law enforcement officers, since 2006. In November 2009, she launched a new Web site developed to help children, teens, parents and educators learn about the dangers of cyberbullying. The "Stop Cyberbullying" Web site (www.ebully411.com) includes the latest news and statistics, frequently asked questions and a quiz to test online users' knowledge about cyberbullying. It also features an E-Info Hotline, which is a phone- and Web-based resource staffed by the Attorney General's Internet safety specialists, who can help victims and teach bullies to understand the impact of their actions. More information is available by calling the Hotline at 1-888-414-7678 or by e-mailing e-info@atg.state.il.us.

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