

February 5, 2019

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL HIGHLIGHTS SAFER INTERNET DAY

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today recognized 2019 Safer Internet Day and offered advice to parents and educators to help students practice safe online habits and to identify signs of online grooming.

As part of this year's Safer Internet Day theme, "Together for a Better Internet," Raoul urged parents and educators to help children and teens be vigilant of predators who utilize social media or online games to "groom" children into engaging in sexual interactions. Raoul encouraged parents and educators to talk to children and teens about their online followers and posts, and promote safety and respect on the internet. Families and educators can learn about [safe online habits on Raoul's website](#).

"In order to protect children and teens from predators online, it is important that parents and guardians have ongoing conversations with them about their online interactions," Raoul said. "Young people who have been victimized may not report out of fear of punishment, shame or disbelief, so it is important that parents and guardians maintain an open dialogue about healthy online relationships."

Raoul said predators are increasingly using social media to groom children and teens by befriending them and gaining their trust in order to solicit sexual images. Predators manipulate young people into keeping the online relationships secret – sometimes using threats of blackmail. Attorney General Raoul offered guidance to parents and teachers to help children avoid being a victim of online grooming:

- Encourage children to choose appropriate screen names and profile pictures;
- Instruct children and students to use privacy settings to restrict access to their online profiles;
- Remind children to only to add only people they know in real life;
- Ask children about the people they communicate with online, and educate them about how to make safe decisions regarding who is appropriate to friend;
- Teach children that no one should be asking them to be their online boy/girlfriend, send nude photos, or to meet offline; and
- Urge children and teens to seek help from a trusted adult, even if they felt they've done something wrong.

Raoul also said young people may be experiencing online grooming if someone online:

- Asks you not to tell your parents or guardians about your friendship;
- Asks you not to share what you chat about online with your parents or guardians;
- Requests that you create a new account (unknown to your parents) for private messaging;
- Wants you to spend less time with your friends;
- Wants to discuss topics involving sex with you;
- Wants to share images or videos involving sex with you;
- Requests inappropriate photos or videos of you;
- Privately asks for personal information about you including: age, location, gender, clothing sizes;
- Sends (or wants to send) you gifts or money; and
- Threatens to hurt or embarrass you, if you don't do what they want

Attorney General Raoul's office provides training to students, teachers, parents and law enforcement authorities across the state as part of his work leading the Illinois Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC), which investigates child exploitation crimes and trains local law enforcement agencies

statewide to investigate these crimes. Raoul's ICAC task force has been involved in more than 1,600 arrests of sexual predators, provided Internet safety training and education to more than 921,000 parents, teachers and students, and trained more than 25,000 law enforcement professionals to investigate and prosecute internet crimes.

For more information or to access resources, please visit [Raoul's website](#) or contact the Attorney General's Internet Safety Specialists at e-info@atg.state.il.us.