

Courtesy of the Amarillo Globe News and Richmond Register

Be aware of new form of bullying

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With summer unofficially over and children back in school, we hope their year is off to a great start. Unfortunately, bullying can ruin it.

Thanks to technology, it can be hard to always see bullying, especially online. Children who are cyberbullied have a harder time getting away from the behavior. It can happen 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Parents need to be aware. Just because you don't see it, doesn't mean it's not happening. With new social media apps appearing daily, it can be hard for parents to keep up with it all.

Here are a few tips:

Know the sites your children visit. Ask where they're going, what they're doing and who they're doing it with.

Tell your children that as a responsible parent you may review their online communications if you think there is reason. Installing parental control filtering software, or monitoring programs, is one option, but do not rely solely on these tools.

Ask for their passwords, but tell them you'll only use them in case of emergency.

Ask to "friend" or "follow" your children on social media sites or ask another trusted adult to do so.

Encourage your children to tell you immediately if they, or someone they know, is being cyberbullied. Explain that you will not take away their computers or cellphones if they confide in you.

When cyberbullying happens, it is important to document and report the behavior. Cyberbullying often violates the terms of service established by social media sites and internet providers. Depending on the circumstances, law enforcement may need to be contacted.

Let's make this year great and stop all forms of bullying.