Technology Guideline for Parents
Prepared by the Pennsylvania State Police
Southeast Computer Crime Unit

At the request of numerous school administrators the Pennsylvania State Police, Southeast Computer Crime Task Force, created this technology guideline as an informational handout for parents/guardians of teenagers and young adults. By taking responsibility for your children's use of technology and reinforcing positive decision making skills, parents can greatly minimize any potential life altering consequences made by teenagers and young adults.

Before allowing your child the use of a computer, digital camera and handheld (cell) device educate yourself about *all* the functions the device can perform. You should know what the device can do and how to do it yourself. *(You wouldn't allow your child to drive an automobile without the proper supervision and education on the potential dangers of operating a vehicle in a careless manner!)*

<u>**Communicate**</u> with your children and remind them on a <u>***daily basis***</u> of the life altering consequences that could occur as a result of a single poor decision while using one of the technologies at their finger tips. Topics for communication:

- Minimize providing identifying information – real names, date of birth, age, SSN, e-mail addresses, cell phone numbers, home phone and address, school name and extra-curricular activities.
- Get involved with and know the services your children use. Learn how to e-mail, Instant message, set up your own social networking site, learn how to send a text message and how to record a video or picture with a cell phone. If you don't how to do any of these get your child to show you or a young adult at your work place.
- Learn how to use monitoring software and computer filters to block out objectionable material.
- Explain the potential dangers of a face-to-face meeting with another computer or cell phone user. If you allow an arranged meeting, accompany your child, and ensure the first meeting is brief, in a public place and that the parents of the other child are also present.
- Never respond to cyber-bullies or e-mails, instant messages or text messages that are threatening, obscene or of a sexual nature.
- Never take or allow anyone to take nude pictures/videos of you or friends. Explain that when a digital picture is sent via a computer or cell phone it is out on the internet **FOREVER!!!** You can never get it back.
- If you receive a nude picture or video of someone from school don't forward it. Tell a parent or adult. Parents/adults should notify the police immediately.
- People online or texting may not be who they seem. It is easy for someone to misrepresent him/herself. Someone indicating they are a 12 year-old girl/boy may be a 40 year-old man.
- Everything you read online is not always true and offers that are too good to be true are probable scams.
- Set rules and guidelines for computer and cell phone use by your children. Monitor time online and excessive use of computers and cell phones late at night. Children are often up late at night texting each other with cell phones that are in bedrooms.
- Computers are not babysitters and parents should not have a false sense of security because your child is "just using the computer." Your child will find and could get into much more trouble online than outside.
- Keep the computer with internet connectivity in a family or common area. Don't give children internet connectivity in bedrooms.
- Explain to your children as a parent you should know all "online friends" and all "friends" from buddy lists and names in phonebooks located on cell phones, just as you know all friends who enter your home. Because these online friends are also (indirectly) in your homes and your child's bedroom.