**Developing a Family Internet Plan**

* Talk with your children about their use of the internet and technology. Open communication allows for ongoing discussion about their usage as well as lays the foundation for discussion of other issues important for parenting.
* Consider making online activities a family activity. For example, have the computer and other devices in a centrally located spot in the house in order to better monitor activities. Talk as a family about what everyone has learned on the internet.
1. Make yourself aware of the benefits and risks of regular technology/internet use.
2. Use available **software to filter out inappropriate sites and monitor your child’s usage**. Some examples of such software include: Net Nanny ([www.net-nanny-software.com](http://www.net-nanny-software.com)), CyberPatrol ([www.cyberpatrol.com](http://www.cyberpatrol.com)), and iProtectYou ([www.softforyou.com](http://www.softforyou.com)).
3. Create a **“Family Pledge”** for online behaviors that include how much time should be spent online, acceptable chat room topics, and internet etiquette. Discussion should include clear rules for permissible **surfing** (browsing through discussion groups or information sources), removing the child’s access if they engage in **hacking** (destroying files or other materials on a computer system) or **flaming** (using abusive or offensive language on email or social media).
4. **Specify clear rules** prohibiting giving out personal information (school names, home address, phone numbers) and arranging face-to-face meetings with those met online, such as a bulletin board or chat room. In some cases, teaching children ethical use such as respecting confidentiality when accessing sensitive data online is important for parents to undertake. **Responsible use of technology** and the internet is the desired outcome.
5. Helping older children understand the difference among facts, biases, and opinions expressed on websites is important to **help them be critical users** of information found on the internet.
6. **View internet access like other privileges for children in the home**. Its use is based on showing responsibility and may be revoked. Once rules are clearly defined, parents can feel a little more at ease, knowing their children are on their way to becoming critical and savvy internet users.