

Electronic Aggression

New Technology and Youth Violence

Young people are using new media technology, including cell phones, personal data assistants, and the Internet, to communicate with others in the United States and throughout the world. New communication avenues, such as text messaging, chat rooms, and social networking websites (e.g., MySpace and Facebook), have allowed youth to easily develop relationships, some with people they have never met in person.

New technology has many potential benefits for youth. It allows young people to communicate with family and friends on a regular basis. New technology also provides opportunities to make rewarding social connections for those teens and pre-teens who have difficulty developing friendships in traditional social settings or because of limited contact with same-aged peers. In addition, regular Internet access allows young people to quickly increase their knowledge on a wide variety of topics.

However, the recent explosion in technology does not come without possible risks. Youth can use electronic media to embarrass, harass or threaten their peers. Increasing numbers of teens and pre-teens are becoming victims of this new form of violence. Although many different terms-such as cyberbullying, Internet harassment, and Internet bullying-have been used to describe this type of violence, electronic aggression is the term that most accurately captures all types of violence that occur electronically. Like traditional forms of youth violence, electronic aggression is associated with emotional distress and conduct problems at school.

In September 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) convened a panel of experts to discuss issues related to the emerging public health problem of electronic aggression. The panel included representatives from research universities, public school systems, federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations. A special issue of the Journal of Adolescent Health summarizes the data and recommendations from this expert panel meeting.

The following resources provide additional information on electronic aggression, youth violence prevention, and safe schools

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