

Internet abduction prevention

The Internet is a valuable tool, but there are substantial risks for kids online. It's a place where a child can easily encounter a dangerous person who wants to become their new "best friend." In addition, kids can receive inappropriate spam or pornography; they may fall victim to identity theft; or open e-mail containing viruses.

From our files (names have been changed):

Juliana's story

Fifteen-year-old Juliana from California had spent the winter researching modeling agencies on the Internet. When she disappeared in February, she first erased all her e-mail and changed her screen name. Investigators knew that Juliana was traveling to meet someone she met online.

Fortunately, the FBI was able to track Juliana by the bus ticket she purchased. They located her part way through her trip to New York City to meet the predator who had promised her fame as a model and had sent her money for the trip. Juliana came home safely.

Todd and Jared's story

Todd (16 years) and Jared (15 years) spent lots of time together on the Internet. On the day they disappeared in January, one thing they took with them was the hard drive from Jared's computer.

Investigators discovered that Todd and Jared had planned to run away for some time.

Right before they left, Todd intentionally crashed his mother's computer so she wouldn't be able to find any of the e-mails that would reveal their plans.

Investigators located Todd and Jared three months later in New York City, where the 25-year-old man who had lured them had rented an apartment specifically for them. Fortunately, the boys returned home safely.

www.PollyKlaas.org



What you can do

- To build a family Internet safety plan, check out Internet Safety on www.PollyKlaas.org.
- Place the computer in an area that is accessible to the whole family, where you can observe your children's online activities.
- Enjoy time with your children while on the Internet together.
- Recognize warning signs like screen switching when you enter the room, phone calls for your child from strange adults, Internet use at odd hours of the night, a sudden influx of cash, or emotional withdrawal from family or friends.
- Create an environment where your child can confide in you without fear of being punished.
- Protect your children from online predators by monitoring chat room interactions.
- Help your child understand the greatest danger online—meeting a cyber buddy in person. If your child insists on a meeting, go with him or her, and arrange to meet in a public place.

For further information or help if your child has been lured by someone they met on the Internet, please contact the Polly Klaas® Foundation at 800-587-4357.

