

Cyber Harassment/Cyberbullying



Effective: September 8, 2015

Brief summary: Provides protection to children from bullying and harassment by electronic means directly to a child or via social media, making cyber harassment of a child a criminal act.

Highlights:

- Makes cyber harassment of a child a criminal act.
- Includes the use of electronic communications directly to the child or through an electronic social media service.
- Includes threats to inflict harm as well as making seriously disparaging statements or opinions about the child's physical characteristics, sexuality, sexual activity, mental or physical health.
- Cyber harassment is a third degree misdemeanor.
- Juveniles who engage in this behavior are subject to a diversionary program.

How this impacts advocates:

While Pennsylvania already had an existing harassment statute, this did not include harassment using electronic means. This statute provides a criminal remedy for bullying using electronic means either directly to a child or via social media.

How this impacts survivors:

Children previously were not afforded protection from cyber harassment, but are now provided protection under criminal statute. This sends a clear message that bullying via electronic means is a serious matter and that both physical and emotional safety of children is important. 🌈

For more information:

www.legis.state.pa.us and type "2015HB229"