Internet Dangers

Internet dangers can be defined as anything that may cause harm to an internet user. This harm can come in many forms (e.g. physical, emotional, psychological, financial, social, and reputational). Many of the different types of internet dangers are outlined below.

Exposure to Inappropriate Content:
For more information on how to prevent this type of danger, see Filtering & Blocking Software

This type of internet danger results from a child viewing content which is inappropriate to that child's age or level of psychological development. The primary types of harm that can result from these dangers are emotional and psychological. Viewing inappropriate material can result in behavioral abnormalities. Some examples of this type of danger are:

- Pornography
- Graphic Violence
- Verbal Obscenities

Crime-related Dangers
For more information on how to prevent this type of danger, see Safeguarding Personal Information

This type of internet danger occurs when an internet user becomes the target of an online criminal. These criminals can cause harm in all of the forms mentioned above. A small list of the most common crime-related dangers are listed below.

Hackers: These are internet criminals who attempt to gain access to and manipulate restricted internet material. Hackers can expose private information in a harmful manner or manipulate computer data in a way that causes trouble for an individual.

Identity Thieves: These are criminals that operate both online and offline. The goal of an identity thief is to steal enough personal information from an individual to be able to assume that individual's identity. Once this has been accomplished, the thief can exploit the target's financial resources or engage in other illegal acts without risking his/her own identity. Identity thieves primarily cause financial harm, but the accompanying stress and frustration can also cause the target to experience emotional and psychological harm.

Internet Predators: Internet predators are criminals who seek to engage in sexual relationships with unconsenting individuals. Typically these predators seek to establish sexual relationships with underage individuals. This type of crime can be physically, emotionally, and psychologically harmful to its victims.

Cyber-bullying: This is a special type of bullying which occurs with the aid of the internet and other types of technology-based communication. This kind of bullying is especially pernicious because it can occur in a manner that is hard for parents or other adults to detect. Cyber-bullying can cause emotional and psychological harm and if it is accompanied with more traditional types of bullying, it can cause physical harm.

Privacy-related Dangers:
For more information on how to prevent this type of danger, see Safeguarding Personal Information

This type of internet danger occurs when private information about an individual is leaked over the internet. This type of danger can be caused by inexperienced or careless users, or it can be caused by the intentional invasion of an individual's privacy. These dangers can cause emotional, psychological, social, and reputational harm. Some examples of this type of danger are:

- Distribution of private photos
- Dissemination of private information over social networking sites (such as Facebook or MySpace)
- Accessibility of an individual's private journal entries
- Unwarranted access to an individual's web or online conversation history
- Unwarranted access to an individual's online accounts (email, school resources, etc.)
- Key-logging software

Software-related Dangers:
For more information on how to prevent this type of danger, see Viruses & Worms

This type of danger is caused by the unintentional installation of malicious software on an individual's computer. This includes computer viruses, worms, and other types of malware. This type of internet danger can cause harm to an individual's computer which would result in financial harm. Software-related dangers can also lead to privacy issues and potential identity theft.
While on the internet, it is important that users are always vigilant and cautious of the dangers described above.

Resources:

- Internet Dangers for Teenagers (http://www.gov.il)
- Cyberbullying (National Crime Prevention Council)
- What you should know about the dangers of the internet. (Indiana University South Bend)
- Internet Safety (The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children)