Caregivers Guide to Technology
(All Ages)

Current events have thrust the use of technology (laptops, tablets, smart phones, etc.) more sharply into focus for caregivers. We are experiencing a whole new world of parenting and educating children. For many this can be an overwhelming experience. As caregivers it is our job to help our children learn appropriate guidelines and boundaries for navigating in cyberspace, but it can be difficult to know where to start. Below are some helpful hints for caregivers:

Know What You are Working With- To the best of your ability, familiarize yourself with the different forms of digital communications (e-mails, instant message, etc...) and the various apps and social media sites your child frequents or would like to join. A simple online search will often give you information that can be helpful in determining if a particular app or site is appropriate for your child. Pay attention to age recommendations and topics of safety around particular apps.

Establish Agreements for Use- Establishing some shared agreements about guidelines and expectations can help everyone feel comfortable and safe with the decisions around the use of technology and social media. Ideas for guidelines include:

- **Time Limits:** How much time will be dedicated to on-line learning vs. recreational time?
- **Acceptable Content:** Discuss in advance what you consider to be appropriate content/sites/apps based on your family's values and expectations. Bring to your child's attention that even with careful use and monitoring, it is still possible to sometimes stumble upon content that is not intended for children. Discuss how you would like them to handle such discoveries such as bringing it to your attention without concern of reprimand.
- **Location:** Where in the home may technology be used? Will it only be allowed in shared spaces for closer monitoring?
- **Privacy:** Many individuals incorrectly assume that what they send via text, messenger, email, post online, etc. is private. Even when you have the strictest of privacy settings, nothing in the digital world is 100% guaranteed private. Encourage children to keep their identity private and to not share personal information (any part of their address, phone number, or where they attend school). Discuss expectations about respecting family privacy when children are engaging in virtual classrooms.
- **Safety Concerns:** Predators also have access to technology and will use it as a means of "baiting" potential victims. They may pose as a person of the same age as your child to gain their trust and access personal information. Let them know that they do not have to respond to messages that make them feel scared or uncomfortable. Keep the lines of communication open and encourage them to come to you or another trusted adult if something is happening that they are concerned about.

(Handout is for informational purposes only and is not intended to and should not be relied upon or construed as medical/mental health advice)