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During Media Literacy Week, Parents and Educators Can Work to Prevent Cyberbullying “Right from the Start”

(New York, NY – October 31, 2016) – Cyberbullying can have devastating consequences in the lives of young people, as several high-profile tragedies have shown:

- 12-year-old Rebeca Sedwick had been brutally cyberbullied by classmates before taking her own life. In the days leading up to her death, she was sent online messages that read “Why aren’t you dead?” “You should die.” “Wait a minute, why are you still alive?” “Go kill yourself.”
- Hannah Smith was 14 when she hanged herself after being harassed about her looks on the website Ask.fm.
- 15-year-old Jordan Lewis committed suicide by shooting himself in the chest, after being cruelly taunted by classmates online and off.

During [Media Literacy Week](#), the national initiative [Right from the Start in the Digital Age](#) is raising awareness about the importance of starting early to prevent and protect children from destructive online behaviors such as cyberbullying. The Hispanic Information and Telecommunications Network (HITN) is a strategic partner on this initiative to increase visibility and reach among Hispanic families.

Visit www.rightfromthestart.co to download the position paper explaining the mission and vision of the national initiative in Spanish and English, to access free curricula activities, and to view our Social Media Tool Kit for more ways to help spread the word about teaching digital citizenship at a young age.

BACKGROUND

With everyone from politicians to [celebrities](#) using harassment and name-calling online, it has become even more important to lay the groundwork for children to develop both safe and responsible digital citizenship skills. Cyberbullying reaches its highest level in middle school, starting early to change the tendency of cruelty online among adolescents is critical. [Right from the Start in the Digital Age: An FHI 360 National Initiative](#) aims to prevent and protect children from cyberbullying and to create responsible and safe digital citizens from a young age.

“Young children are tech savvy but not necessarily media literate,” says Barbara Sprung, Co-Director, Educational Equity at FHI 360. “They might know how to use the device but they don’t truly understand its purpose and power. The challenge for parents and educators is how to convey abstract concepts of safety, permanence and privacy in terms that young children can understand. “

“We feel that it is vitally important to present this position paper—now available in a Spanish language translation—as well as accompanying curricula activities to help parents and educators encourage good digital

citizenship and prevent cyberbullying right from the start,” says Merle Froschl, Co-Director, Educational Equity at FHI 360.

STATISTICS

Statistics about device usage among young children:

- Cell phones, tablets and other digital devices have become part of the daily lives of young children. By grade three, 18 to 20% of children report they have their own cell phone (Englander, 2011).
- 38% of children under the age of two are now using smartphones, tablets and e-readers at the same rate as children eight and under were two years ago (Common Sense Media, 2013).
- Among five- to eight-year-olds, mobile media usage has risen from 52% to 83% (Common Sense Media, 2013).
- In some areas, kindergartners are issued tablets on the first day of school.

Statistics about online among teens and tweens from Pew Internet:

- Fully 95% of all teens ages 12-17 are now online and 80% of those online teens are users of social media sites.
- 88% of social media-using teens have witnessed other people be mean or cruel on social network sites. 12% say they witnessed cruel behavior “frequently.”
- 19% of teens have been bullied in the past year in some form – either in person, online, by text, or by phone.

About Right from the Start in the Digital Age

[Right from the Start in the Digital Age](#) is a national initiative headed by Educational Equity at FHI 360. In 2013, FHI 360 initiated a new funding program to spur innovative ideas throughout its international and domestic programs. It was aptly named the Catalyst Fund, and Educational Equity at FHI 360 was awarded a grant to move the issue of good net citizenship onto the national early childhood education agenda. With the expert advice of a broad range of educators and parents, FHI 360 launched its national initiative, featuring a position paper, during National Media Literacy Week in November 2015. This year, FHI 360 has released a Spanish language version of the position paper, as well as downloadable curricula activities, in conjunction with this year’s National Media Literacy Week starting October 31.

- To download our [Social Media Tool Kit](#) with sample tweets, posts, and resources to share about cyberbullying and digital citizenship, visit: <https://rightfromthestart.co/social-media-tool-kit/>
- To download your free copy of the position paper in Spanish and English, as well as free curricula activities for children in grades K-3, visit our website: <http://www.rightfromthestart.co>

About Media Literacy Week

[Media Literacy Week \(#MediaLitWk\)](#) in the U.S. is being held October 31 – November 4, 2016. The mission of Media Literacy Week is to highlight the power of media literacy education and its essential role in education today. Sponsored by Trend Micro and hosted by the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), Media Literacy Week already has the support of numerous partnering organizations and dedicated, passionate media literacy experts and practitioners across the nation. Media Literacy Week is designed to bring attention and visibility to media literacy education in the U.S. Inspired by Canada’s Media Literacy Week now in its 11th year, NAMLE is leading the efforts to create an annual media literacy week in the U.S that showcases the work of amazing media literacy educators and organizations nationwide and drives conversation that creates positive social change. Visit their website for more information and events: <https://medialiteracyweek.us/>