



The Megan Pledge

There are three parts of The Megan Pledge, a signed individual pledge, a group banner and a black and white polka-dot ribbons to wear and share. The pledge itself contains both statements and a set of promises. It is signed and witnessed and given to WiredSafety's Megan Pledge volunteer team.

The first name and last initial of the person taking the pledge, as well as their town and state are added to the roster. The pledge commits the person, individually, to take a stand against cyberbullying, to offer support to those being cyberbullied and to report it whenever they find it. They also commit to understanding that suicide is never an option, empowering them to be part of the solution, instead of the problem. They take the pledge for themselves. They take it for Megan. They take it for all others who have experienced the pain of cruel words and actions in cyberspace, on cell phones and through gaming devices.

The Megan Pledge is more than a pledge. It's more than a banner. It's more than a polka-dot ribbon. It is a movement. Empowering children, tweens and teens to be part of the cyberbullying solution instead of the problem, The Megan Pledge gives them concrete steps to take to address the rising cyberbullying epidemic. The Pledge gives them the chance to say "Enough!" when faced with cyberbullying by providing conflict resolution methods, anger management skills and support for the target. At the same time, it teaches students how to avoid becoming a cyberbully themselves, by either acting out or responding to an attack. Schools taking The Megan Pledge can create a "cyberbully-proof zone" for their students.

The Pledge is designed to be shared. After reciting and signing the Pledge document either in person or online, the student is committed to sharing what they have learned with others. They get a card to give to someone they care about, stating that they took the pledge for this person, would they take it for them. The black and white polka-dot ribbons worn tied at the wrist or looped and pinned on a shirt makes a statement.

The students are permitted to sew sequins on their ribbons to show how many they have recruited. The more ribbons the student shares with others, and the more students they can recruit to take the Pledge. It creates an atmosphere.

In polls of 45,000 students conducted by WiredSafety.org, at least 85% of middle school students reported being cyberbullied at least once in 2007. In some cases, the percentage of students reporting having been targeted by a cyberbully ran as high as 97% of middle school students.

Cyberbullying isn't limited to middle schoolers. Students as young as those in second grade are learning about cyberbullying the hard way, often before they know how to use the technologies effectively. They are forced to contend with mean messages, lewd language and threats. When asked to describe cyberbullying, second graders in Long Island, NY, explained that extortion, manipulated pictures, ID theft, hacking and text-bullying were commonplace. At the same time, they gave more than twenty reasons why children will not confide in their parents, when targeted.

If children, tweens and teens are being attacked and can't turn to their parents, where do they go for help? The obvious choice, their best friends, may not be the trustworthy confidant they were expecting. One young teen told Parry that "You never know if the cyberbully is really your best friend or worst enemy. You never know if your friend is just laughing at you behind your back when you turn to him for help." This creates an environment where the student has no safe place to turn, and no safe person to share their pain.

Take the Pledge, reach out, raise awareness, and visit Stopcyberbullying.org for more information.