FAST FACTS: Parenting Across Generations- Troubles with Technology

Whether technology comes easy for you, or you feel overwhelmed by it, most parents and caregivers can agree that raising a child in the digital age is not always easy. So here are some helpful tips is raising a child in the digital word.

How old should a child before they have their own phone:

- In my clinical judgement, it depends on the maturity and responsibility level of a child. The older a child is the better, however the average age is around middle school.

- It is important to have rules already in place before you allow your child to have their own electronic device. This can include coming up with a contract both you and your child sign, so you can go back to it and review if rules are broken. Examples of contracts online include: www.verywellfamily.org and www.understood.org.

The importance of monitoring cell phone use and online and behavior:

- It is important to teach children and adolescents what safe and responsible online behavior is. This includes not sharing any personal information or pictures with anyone they don't know and what to do if they are being bullied online {called cyberbullying).

- Children and adolescents need monitoring. This means being aware of what they are doing and who they are talking to on a regular basis. Most devices have parental controls, that can be used to block access to inappropriate or unwanted sites.

- Don't assume your child won't engage in risky behaviors because they are a "good kid". Children and adolescents' brains are wired differently than adults, so they are more likely to act before thinking things through.

- Resources addressing online safety for children, adolescents, and parents can be found on www.kidshealth.org

When a foster child already has an electronic device in their possession as personal property:

If a child or adolescent already has an electronic device in their possession when they transfer foster homes, you still have the responsibility to make sure they are being used safely. You can ask for additional support through a child's County Case Manager in setting up rules and guidelines around electronic devices. While this is not always possible, try to do this before the child comes to live with you.

Plan on revisiting rules and the topic of internet safety on a regular basis:

One conversation isn't enough. It is important to continually revisit the topic of internet safety on a regular basis and follow through with consequences for breaking the rules. If there are no consequences, then it sends the message that the rules don't matter and aren't needed, which is farthest from the truth!

Information presented by:

Katheryn Alexander, MS, LPCC, EMDR graduated from the University Wisconsin-Stout with a Bachelor of Science in Human Development & Family Studies, and from Capella University with a Master of Science in Mental Health Counseling. Katheryn is an active member of both the American Counseling Association and Minnesota Counseling Association, as well as a MN Board Certified LPCC Supervisor. Katheryn has a long background in helping children, teens, and adults. Recently she has added the skills of an EMDR therapist as she expands her abilities to be of service to all.

To learn more about Foster Adopt Minnesota and our efforts to ensure each child will have a permanent family, call 612-861-7115 or visit www.fosteradoptmn.org.