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## New Trend - Tech-Savvy Sex Predators Using Cell Phones to Contact Kids

*By Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning*

As parents know all too well, many teenagers won't go anywhere without their cell phones. In fact, 79 percent of teens ages 13 to 19 have one, according to a 2008 study by Harris Interactive. Cell phones make it easy to stay in touch with family and friends 24/7. Unfortunately, sexual predators also see a cell phone as another tool they can use to contact kids.

One of the first questions predators ask our investigators posing as underage girls online is, "Do you have a cell phone?" Cell phones tell predators that teens may have text messaging or a digital camera, and the predator can try and message them or coax them into sending nude or sexually-graphic photos. Predators will also call teens on their cell phones to verify age and identity.

As predators become more sophisticated, it's critical for us to take an active role, understand technology, and use the resources and tools available to help protect our children. Remember cell phones are basically a computer you can put into your pocket. Many parents monitor their children's online activity at home; they should do the same with a cell phone.

Lots of service providers offer parental controls and filtering tools that can block harmful content from the Internet and limit who and when your child can call or text. If your child mainly uses the phone to check in, pick a phone without a camera, texting or Internet access or have those features turned off by your provider. Take your child's phone and look through it, see who he or she is sending messages to and read them, and encourage your children to talk to you if they receive unwanted or uncomfortable texts.

Predators will continue to use the latest technology to prey on children, and it's important that our laws keep up. My office is partnering with Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh and Sen. Tom White on the Child Protection Bill (LB 97). This bill expands the crime of online enticement to include communications through electronic devices other than computers, like cell phones.

Keeping our kids safe is my top priority and by working together, we can protect our children from Internet predators. For more information, visit [www.safekids.ne.gov](http://www.safekids.ne.gov).