

## Blue Whale Challenge: Tips and Resources

**What is the Blue Whale Challenge and why are professionals concerned?** This social media challenge is harmful to vulnerable adolescents and young adults and is a form of cyberbullying. After youth accept the link or tag to the Blue Whale Challenge, the group administrator (“the master” or “mentor”) hacks the user’s personal information, bugs the phone, and assigns the users a series of tasks over 50 days. The last task is for the user to kill him/herself. The group administrator threatens to release the user’s personal information or harm their families to bully young adults to engage in self-harm behaviors.<sup>1,2</sup>

### What can parents/guardians and educators do?

- **Provide guidance to youth about the challenge.** If you know that youth are engaging in the Blue Whale Challenge, share that you can help address the bugged device and send the message that adults are there to help. If youth express signs of distress, it is important to connect them to mental health professionals.
- **Monitor youth’s use of electronic devices.** Discuss with youth the websites, links, and social media apps they are using. Caregivers can monitor youth’s media use by looking through their browser and search history.
- **Know the warning signs of distress.** Observable signs of psychological distress include changes in behavior (e.g. outbursts or being withdrawn) or physical health (e.g. weight loss or gain; loss of appetite). Other warning signs of distress include hopelessness, sadness, boredom and depression. If you see signs of psychological distress, **ask youth if they are considering suicide.** Asking about suicide **does not** increase risk of suicide.
- **Have discussions with youth about distress.** When having conversations with youth, listen to their thoughts, remain calm, and be nonjudgmental. Avoid statements like “you should get over it.” Talk to community or school mental health professionals if you are concerned about a youth’s health or safety.
- **Call for help.** If someone makes an immediate threat to hurt or kill themselves, call 911. If a person shows warning signs of distress, but does not make an immediate threat, you can encourage him/her to: text CONNECT to 731731, call Maryland Suicide Hotline: 1-800-422-0009, or Baltimore Crisis Response hotline: (410) 433-5175.

### Additional Resources:

- Guidelines for parents on cybersafety/cyberbullying:  
<https://www.connectsafely.org/guides-3/> and  
[https://www.connectsafely.org/wp-content/uploads/cyberbullying\\_guide.pdf](https://www.connectsafely.org/wp-content/uploads/cyberbullying_guide.pdf)
- Prevention of cyberbullying:  
<https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/prevention>
- Guideline for parents on self-harm:  
<http://www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu/perch/resources/parenting-2.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> Storm, Darlene. "Schools in Alabama Warn Parents about Blue Whale 'suicide Game' App." *Computerworld*. 10 May 2017. Web. 17 May 2017. <<http://www.computerworld.com/article/3195834/security/schools-in-alabama-warn-parents-about-blue-whale-suicide-game-app.html>>.

<sup>2</sup> "Blue Whale Challenge App." *1Word1Voice1Life*. Web. 17 May 2017. <<http://www.preventsuicidect.org/about-us/news/#bluewhale>>.