REFRIGERATOR NOTES
Promoting a Healthy Media Diet (6-12 years)

- Screen time including computer time, video games, I-pads, I-phones, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and watching TV can become addictive. Research indicates that the average 8-10 year-old child spends nearly 8 hours a day outside of school with some form of screen time. Tweens and teens spend more than 11 hours a day using screens. Excessive screen time can interfere with children's friendships, impact their physical fitness, contribute to obesity and lack of sleep, and decrease interest in reading and motivation for school success. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends 1-2 hours of screen time per day. How can parents help children dial back screen use to meet these recommendations?

- Here are some tips for reducing screen time, making that time a positive experience, and minimizing the negative effectives of screen time.

- Discuss with your children your household rules regarding the amount of screen time allowed each day. For children 6-12 years old, approximately 90 minutes per day, or less, is generally recommended.

- Plan when screen time will occur. Avoid screen time 1 hour before bed or during dinner.

- Don't put computers or TVs in your child's bedroom. Keep them in a public place where you can monitor their use. Have a rule that smartphones and handheld devices must also be used in public places, not in children's bedrooms.

- Help children understand that homework must be completed before screen time is allowed, unless screen time is related to research and homework assignments.

- Supervise and monitor the media content children are consuming. Know what type of computer games, videos, TV programs, and web sites they are using or watching. Decide which programs, games, or sites are healthy and which are off-limits. Websites such as Common Sense Media can be helpful to provide information about age appropriate media content: https://www.commonsensemedia.org/

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- Set up passwords so that children cannot download games without a parent password, and consider whether you want to set restrictions on website browsing on computers that children are using.

- Limit the amount of data you allow your child to have on devices. Explain to your child what programs use data (YouTube, streaming movies, sending video files) and discuss consequences for using more than allowed.

- Make a decision about when and how you want your child to have access to wifi. In this age group, it is recommended that children do not have access to the internet except on family computers.

- Take an active role in your children's media education by watching TV programs, YouTube videos, and movies with them and participating in their computer games so you can mitigate their effects and enhance their use as a way to promote communication and connection. For example, for promoting your child's social skills and empathy you can talk about movie characters who are sensitive, caring, and who are making good friendship choices. Some TV and social media programs can be a catalyst for a discussion about the effects of drinking, drugs, sexual activity, violence, prejudice, managing conflict and death. Discussions about the use of advertisements can help children understand messages about consumerism, food choices, gender roles, and other social issues.

- Teach your children the importance of being polite and having good media etiquette in all forms of social media. Discuss what kinds of things are okay to post on social media platforms; set guideline around posting pictures, videos, and status updates.

- Have rules that children do not share personal information on social media with anyone that they don't know. Explain that once information or an image or video is posted on the internet, it is not possible to retrieve that image.

- Understand that children in this age range do not have good long term judgement and planning and will often not be able to think through the long-term consequences of impulsive social media decisions. Monitoring and limiting their screen use is the best prevention strategy for this age.

- Talk to your children about the consequences for breaking the family rules around screen use. Monitor or track your child's screen time use. Praise and reward your child's healthy viewing habits and following the screen time rules.

- If your child is a victim of cyberbullying, take action and attend to your child's mental health needs. Stop the use of media platforms where the bullying is occurring, and report the incident to teachers or school counselors.

REFRIGERATOR NOTES (CONTINUED)
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- Model good screen use habits. Set some non-screen times for all family members, including parents. Dinner time, the hour prior to bedtime, and other times when family members are together are good times for this.

- Strive for balance between screen time activities and other activities involving social interactions, making friends, physical activity, reading, or other activities around the house. When children are "bored" and need to find other things do to, they often find creative ways to use their time. While screen devices have great benefits if used appropriately and as part of a healthy media diet, non-screen time is crucial for your child's social, emotional, physical and learning development as well as relationships with family and friends.

    See https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx for a tool developed by American Academy of Pediatrics to develop your own family media plan