



# DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

**Dale J Schmidt** Sheriff **Scott Mittelstadt** Chief Deputy

## Monitor Your Child's Cell Phone

Cell phones are an excellent tool that can be used for keeping in contact with our family and friends, checking our email, posting a picture on social media, reading what is happening in the news or checking on our favorite sports team. We have always been able to call 911 with our cell phones but now we can even text 911 in an emergency.

While there are many great uses for cell phones, there are also dangers such as texting while driving. Also, there are dangers for teenagers that many parents never dreamed of as technology continues to change and advance. Our children wouldn't know what to do without their phones but we as parents need to remember that their phone is a privilege that we give to them that we can also take away. It is our responsibility to stay current on the technology to monitor it so we can teach them responsibility and keep them safe.

So parents, do you know what to look for? If you don't, I encourage you to start researching and learning. In law enforcement investigations we often look for legal means to search cell phones of persons involved in criminal activity as it provides intelligence into their lives. We have technology that allows us to download cell phones to recover data, even data that has been "deleted" from that phone. It is incredible the information that we recover including text messages, photos, videos, GPS information, apps and so much more.

As part of these downloads, we routinely discover illegal activity including the purchase or sale of drugs, photos of drug/alcohol use and dangerous activity resulting from that use, young men and women being recruited for sexual encounters, nude photos of underage persons and other evidence of criminal activity. I can tell you that while it is helpful to our case to recover this information, we don't want this activity to start in the first place and we would prefer prevention before these activities occur.

In order for that prevention to take place, we need parents to closely monitor their children's electronic devices. You have probably heard about Instagram, but have you heard of Finstagram or Finsta? This is a second fake Instagram account so that information can be shared with some but hidden from others. Why would this be necessary if what they are doing is appropriate? That is a great question and you should find out. I could go on and on about what you could search for, but there are many resources online that can help. I urge you to do some research and find out for yourself. Install a child monitoring app on their phone that includes the ability to track them via GPS so you know where they are and what they are doing. Some people don't want to stay current with the technology that is out there, but as parents we have no choice if we want to keep our children safe from sex traffickers, drug dealers and other criminal and dangerous activity.

Remember that you get to set the rules and you are ultimately responsible for your child's actions. While your children may not always be happy about you "invading their privacy", it is necessary to keep them safe from the many harms that are out there. Monitor their phones closely and help us to keep Dodge County a safe place for all our children to live, work and visit.

