

# Forum discusses Net predators

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One in four students believes it is OK to chat online with strangers. One in 10 sees nothing wrong with meeting face to face with the strangers he or she meets in cyberspace.

These are just some of the alarming statistics a local group specializing in child-abuse prevention shared with an audience of about 25 people Wednesday night at a forum on the growing dangers of online child predators.

Santa Barbara-based CALM, Child Abuse Listening and Mediation, has been around for 30 years, but added its cyber unit just two years ago.

Speakers advised parents against allowing children to keep computers in their rooms. They also discussed red flags, such as when a kid minimizes his or her

screen when a parent walks by.

"If your child is receiving gifts, and you don't know where they are coming from," beware, said Dianne Gonzales, who works at the FBI's cyber unit in Los Angeles. "They are trying to break the link between parent and child."

Predators often target children who know more about computers than their parents, and who are frustrated because they feel they have no one to talk to. Ms. Gonzales urged parents to encourage their children to inform them of inappropriate exchanges.

The presenters also showed videos in which students talked of being beguiled by online "friends" who turned out to be perverts.

For more information, call CALM at 965-2376, or visit its Web site: [www.calm4kids.org](http://www.calm4kids.org).

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