

## **Internet Safety Technical Task Force Project Plan**

April 16, 2008

### **I. Background.**

The Internet Safety Technical Task Force has been convened in response to an agreement between MySpace and 49 State Attorneys General. The agreement, announced on January 14, 2008, reads, in part:

“MySpace will organize, with support of the Attorneys General, an industry-wide Internet Safety Technical Task Force (“Task Force”) devoted to finding and developing ... online safety tools with a focus on finding and developing online identity authentication tools. This Task Force will include Internet businesses, identity authentication experts, non-profit organizations, and technology companies. ... The Task Force will establish specific and objective criteria that will be utilized to evaluate existing and new technology safety solutions.”

### **II. Scope.**

The Task Force is continuing to refine the scope of its inquiry, and will address this issue at its next meeting on April 30, 2008. Thus far, the Task force has determined that the scope of its inquiry is to consider those technologies that industry and end users can use to keep children safe on the Internet. The inquiry will address all minors, but the Task Force ultimately will seek to tailor recommendations for solutions to more refined subsets of age groups. The Task Force will consider youth safety on the Internet as a whole, rather than looking at one particular environment.

The bulk of the Task Force's attention will be given to issues concerning contact: preventing harmful contact with adults and preventing harmful contact with other minors. As a secondary matter, it also may address two content areas: preventing access to inappropriate content and preventing illegal content (such as child pornography). The feasibility and cost of technology solutions will also be considered by the Task Force. The Task Force acknowledges that much work has been done in these areas and will seek to build off of previous efforts.

The solutions to be considered include a broad range of technology tools and services. The Task Force recognizes also the importance of other solutions – such as social norms, law, policy, and market factors – and will situate technology-based solutions within the context of these other types of solutions. In the final report, the Task Force will place these technological approaches into a context that also includes related public policy issues.

### **III. Structure.**

The Task Force is comprised of those companies, NGOs, and academic groups that have agreed to join at MySpace's invitation. The Task Force is directed by John Palfrey,

danah boyd, and Dena Sacco, all of the Berkman Center for Internet & Society. The work of the Task Force will be supported by a Research Advisory Board and a Technical Advisory

Board. The purpose of these supporting advisory boards is to enable the Task Force to accept input from experts on these topics who are not members of the Task Force.

The Research Advisory Board will be chaired by the Berkman Center's danah boyd and will be comprised of scholars, professional researchers, and organizations investigating online safety-related issues through large scale data collection. Examples of this group include the UNH Crimes Against Children Research Center, Michele Ybarra, and the Pew and the Internet and American Life Project. This Board will work with scholars to assess existing threats to youth online safety to determine which are the most common, which are the most harmful, and which potentially can be addressed by technological solutions. It will aggregate what is known about the state of child safety online and the effectiveness of different legal, technological, and educational approaches to addressing it. It will take into account the existing research in these areas, as well as evaluate what additional research would be most helpful. Ultimately, the Board will produce a report for the Task Force that describes the state of the research. Pending funding, the Board will recommend that the Task Force commission additional research as appropriate. Both the report and any future research proposals will be presented to the Task Force and be referenced in the Task Force's final report. Additionally, both will be made publicly available.

The Technical Advisory Board will focus on the range of possible technological solutions to the problems of youth online safety, including identity authentication tools, filtering, monitoring, and scanning and searching. The Technical Advisory Board will consider the potential solutions introduced by the Task Force, those that emerge through the Research Advisory Board, and those introduced by the public. It will develop technical criteria for assessing the various solutions. This Board will reach out to a range of technologists who understand and can evaluate the different available technological approaches to online safety. The Board will accept proposals from a wide variety of vendors and will write a report for the Task Force addressing the different potential solutions. As with the Research Advisory Board, the Berkman Center will convene this ad hoc group over the coming months. It will be comprised of financially disinterested parties who are open to technological solutions to the Internet Safety concerns facing children.

#### **IV. Systems.**

##### **A. Reports.**

As set forth in the January, 2008 Agreement between the Attorneys General and MySpace, the Task Force owes quarterly reports to the Attorneys General, as well as a Final Report on December 31, 2008. The Berkman Center will draft the reports, with the first quarterly report to be submitted following the March 12, 2008 meeting. The reports will be circulated to Task Force members in advance of sending them to the Attorneys General for comment. The Berkman Center team will consider all comments from Task Force members.

### **B. Meetings.**

To undertake its work, the Task Force as a whole will hold a series of day-long meetings. Four of the meetings will be open only to Task Force members and those the Task Force invites to make presentations and/or to observe. Each meeting will involve a segment that is

open for the public to participate. We will publish minutes from each Task Force meeting on the web. The meetings will take place on the following dates:

- March 12, 2008 (organizational meeting, in Washington, DC)
- April 30, 2008 (first full meeting, in Washington, DC)
- June 20, 2008 (second full meeting, in Cambridge, MA)
- September 23, 2008 (third full meeting, in Cambridge, MA)
- September 24, 2008 (public session in Cambridge, MA)
- November 19, 2008 (fourth full meeting, in Washington, DC)

The open public meeting on September 24, 2008 is intended to provide a forum for all interested parties to present their views. The Berkman Center will solicit short written submissions from those who intend to attend the open meeting, in order to better keep track of attendees and their input.

Both the Research Advisory Board and the Technological Advisory Board will likely hold a few conference calls as needed to facilitate their work. They will report their progress to the Task Force formally at the meetings and informally as appropriate.

The Task Force may convene an additional meeting or calls to review technologies and the draft report close to the end of the calendar year.

### **C. Website and Online Workspace.**

The Berkman Center will create a public facing website for the Task Force, which will include a description of the Task Force, contact information for the Berkman Center team, and an FAQ section. The Berkman Center has created a private Listserv for the Task Force as a whole and will do so for each of the Advisory Boards. Postings to the Task Force's listserv are considered off the record and are not to be forwarded to those not on the list.

### **V. Communications.**

The Berkman Center will act as primary contact for the Task Force, both for press inquiries and for requests for involvement by interested parties. Task Force Members are welcome to forward press inquiries to the Berkman Center as appropriate. We ask that you copy all requests from interested parties seeking involvement in the work of the Task Force to us, so that we can act as a central clearinghouse for these requests and so that interested parties are not left out of invitations to participate.

**VI. Intellectual Property.**

Prior to the first full meeting on April 30, 2008, the Task Force will develop a process for sharing and protecting appropriate intellectual property. Task Force members will not be expected to accept proprietary information.