eSafety advice for schools on Momo challenge

How schools can respond to the Momo reports, and other hoax 'challenges'

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner is aware of media reports about a series of videos or challenges called Momo. The Office and its mental health partners provide the following advice to parents, carers and schools looking to support young people.

What is Momo?

Momo is a scary looking character that allegedly sets challenges for young people—through chat, videos or social media—asking them to do increasingly scary things, until it finally asks them to harm themselves and others.

Media reports have suggested Momo has been linked to "challenges" of self-harm by young people, and to death by suicide. There is no evidence this challenge exists, and this has been validated by the IT industry, academic and safety experts around the world.

The Momo image shown in media reports is a photo of an art sculpture. The sculpture does not have a program or challenge connected to it, and in fact the creator now claims the sculpture has been destroyed.

There are videos online showing people "taking the Momo challenge". These are scripted and staged, with acting and fake messages. They do look realistic and may scare young people and make them believe Momo is a real thing.

Images of Momo accompanied with a voice-over have also been reportedly spliced into existing video content, usually targeted at children. Images containing Momo may also be distributed along with other scary or threatening content to bully and harass young people.

What schools need to know

While Momo may not be a real co-ordinated movement, the reports about Momo and the images shown can still cause young people distress and make their parents understandably anxious.

Momo may be discussed in the school yard and online while it is getting media coverage. It may also be considered an 'internet urban myth' that circulates around schools, creating mischief for some and fear for others.

Any communication about Momo should be directed to parents rather than raising the issue with students who may not have heard or been exposed to it. Drawing students' attention to the issue may cause unnecessary worry or distress.

We advise keeping an eye on those who are more vulnerable and at-risk, and checking in with them about their interactions on and offline.

If a young person is presenting with signs of distress, we encourage you to follow your school's procedures for managing and supporting students at risk.

How to respond to worried parents

You can reassure parents that the Momo challenge does not exist and appears to be an urban myth. Any videos of people "taking the Momo challenge" are fake.

Parents who are worried about the Momo challenge can be directed to this advice at: www.esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/newsroom/media-releases/statement-esafety-advice-on-the-momo-challenge.

What should parents do to protect their children online

The Office encourages parents and carers to co-view, co-play, ask questions about the games and apps their children are using, and let them know you are there to support them if they are upset or uncomfortable about anything they see online.

Five top tips to help limit your child's exposure to harmful content online:

- Engage in your child's online activities – ask what apps, sites and games they're using and make sure they're age-appropriate.
- Use parental controls on devices to help limit what your child is exposed to.
- Let them know not everything they see online is real or true. In the case of "Momo videos" help them understand that people are making these to get more 'likes' because they get paid money for the 'likes' they get.
- Help them report and block upsetting content they see on social media sites or apps.
- Let them know they can come to you about anything upsetting they see online, and contact Kids Helpline or Headspace if they need further support.

Parents can visit www.esafety.gov.au/iparent for information and advice on keeping your child safe online.

Advice and support

If a life is in danger call Triple Zero (**000**) right now.

Support, information and referrals for all ages, including worried family and friends:

- Kids Helpline. **1800 55 1800**. Phone support is there all day, every day. Online support is open from 8am-midnight every day (AEST).
- Headspace and eHeadspace. **1800 650 890**. Open 9am-1am daily (AEST).
- Lifeline. **13 11 14**. Phone support all day, every day. Online support 7pm-4am daily (AEST).
- Beyondblue. **1300 22 4636**. Phone support all day, every day. Online support 3pm-midnight every day.
- Suicide Callback Service. **1300 659 467.** Phone support all day, every day, and follow-up calls.
- The family GP is a good starting point for anybody worried about their child's behaviour or health.