

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Legislator Spencer to Pokémon Go Users: “If you “Gotta Catch ‘Em All” Be Smart While Doing it!”

Centerport, NY – It seems that everywhere you go recently someone is talking about Pokémon GO, a new virtual scavenger hunt mobile app that allows players, young and old, to find and catch Pokémon characters in the real world. With this new craze seemingly taking over neighborhoods across the United States, Suffolk County Legislator William R. Spencer, M.D. would like to inform residents of potential dangers associated with the app and offer tips and best practices to stay safe while exploring.

“This app is motivating residents to get out and be active, which is a wonderful and much needed thing. But it is concerning that we have seen this come at the cost of the safety of some users,” said Legislator Spencer. “Remember to always play smart by being aware of your surroundings and use common sense safety measures to avoid precarious situations.”

Already since the app officially launched on July 6th, there have been numerous reports of accidents and crimes which have resulted in distracted and vulnerable players being hurt or taken advantage of by unscrupulous individuals. Players are traveling across miles, and even into unknown and unsafe places to catch their favorite characters. Before using the app, it’s important to make safety your first priority and take precautions to prevent injury or worse.

GENERAL THINGS TO BE AWARE OF BEFORE VENTURING OUT:

- Always remember it’s just a game and that you are playing in the real world.
- Plan your route, and let a family member or friend know where you will be going and when you will return.
- Be mindful that at this time anyone can download and play Pokémon GO. Criminals and predators have used the game to lure unsuspecting players into dangerous situations. **Children should play with a parent or guardian.**
- Prepare for the elements. Since you will be outside playing and it is July, make sure you stay hydrated, are wearing appropriate summer clothing, proper shoes, sunblock and a hat.
- Manage your battery life. Your phone is your primary communication device in the community. Be sure that you phone is fully charged when you go out, and that you have a phone charger/charging cord or portable battery charger with you so you can have it handy during times of extended gameplay.
- Manage your data usage. This app goes through data like crazy, so you must be wary of reaching your limit and incurring extra fees or having your data cut off before the end your usage cycle. The app also takes up a large amount of storage space on your phone.
- Manage In-App Purchases: Players can spend real money to enhance their gameplay by purchasing “pokécoins” a form of in-game currency which can be used for power-ups and other incentives. These

purchases can add up, ranging in cost from \$0.99 to \$99.99. If your child is playing, change your app setting so your credit card is not linked to their account, and in-app purchases are not available.

TIPS FOR WHEN YOU'RE PLAYING

- Play in pairs or as a group in well-lit areas to ensure your safety.
- Pay attention to the people around you. Don't interact with strangers.
- Remain alert at all times and stay aware of your surroundings.
- Do not drive or ride a bike, skateboard, hoverboard or other device while using the app.
- Do not go onto private property or go to areas you usually would not if you weren't playing Pokémon GO. This could be considered TRESPASSING.
- Do not go into places where it may be considered inappropriate and even disrespectful to play - i.e. a cemetery, a memorial site, the police station, a funeral home.
- Keep an eye on your stuff. You may find yourself in areas where there are a lot of people. Thieves may target players who are consumed in the game.
- It isn't advised to play the game at night, but if you are planning to do so, make sure you wear bright and reflective clothing so you are visible.
- If the police stop you for suspicious behavior, understand that community concerns are more important than your gameplay concerns. Be willing to listen and calmly explain what you are doing.

PROTECTING YOUR PRIVACY:

- Check your privacy settings and be aware that by downloading and playing the Pokémon Go app, you are agreeing to their terms and services and giving the app access to data and information contained on your phone.
 - According to the Pokémon Go privacy policy, the app can collect and potentially share personally identifiable information that a user's privacy settings allows access to. That can include email addresses, user names and other information such as, the type of browser and operating system used, and visited webpages and real-world locations. [\(USA TODAY\)](#)
- Never download 3rd party software apps that claim to enhance the Pokémon Go gaming experience. Installing these apps can leave your phone susceptible to viruses and give your sensitive data- i.e. name, address, email, calendar, and contacts to third parties.

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