NDIT to provide free anti-malware software to K-12 schools

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North Dakota Chief Information Security Officer Kevin Ford announced today that anti-malware software is available to all K-12 schools in North Dakota at no cost. NDIT is able to provide installation, licenses and self-service access for schools due to enhanced capabilities and a unified, statewide approach to cybersecurity strategy. Previously a small fee was required per device; however, that requirement is being removed due to increased threats tied to the pandemic and more widespread virtual learning.

K-12 Information System Security Officer Steve Palmer from the Governance, Risk, and Compliance Office (GRC) within NDIT said, “This software provides crucial end point protection for electronic, school-owned devices that are susceptible to malware attacks that are flourishing in the pandemic environment.” Palmer added, “Schools are encouraged to contact us so we can work with them to schedule installation of the software on devices prior to teachers and students receiving them.”

Key features include:

- Proactive anti-malware that prevents unknown software from running until verified as “good,” a huge upgrade from the traditional signature-based anti-virus software which allowed malicious or infected software to run, compromising and destroying data, until eventually detected.
- Cutting-edge technology that delivers a unified experience for prevention, detection, investigation and response.
- Capable of operating on Windows, Mac, Linux and Chromebook devices and easy to install.
- The software provides continuous protection regardless of whether students take devices home or are on their school district network.

Schools interested in obtaining the free software can make requests through their IT Coordinators or by contacting the NDIT Service Desk at 800-774-1091. The software is also available to cities and counties; however, schools are being given priority due to the potential of classes being offered virtually or in a hybrid model this fall.

“With the use of these advanced security tools, we’re disrupting industry norms,” said Ford. “Government organizations are often ‘soft targets’ for attackers. We are offering state-of-the-art capabilities to protect students and teachers in anticipation of the increased use of virtual environments this fall.”

This effort also builds on an ongoing statewide cybersecurity awareness campaign. NDIT has published numerous tips and timely alerts on the Cybersecurity and Fraud Resources page at NDResponse.gov. Additionally, four PSAs have been published on NDIT’s Facebook page to provide practical tips for all North Dakotans to be #NDSmart and #CyberSmart.

About GRC:

The GRC Office is responsible for managing cyber risk on the state-wide STAGEnet network, and helps organizations align their business needs with their cybersecurity and IT compliance requirements.

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