KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE

Frontline RESPONSE

Potentially Dangerous Apps

Snapchat
Messaging app that allows for the exchange of photos or videos that are meant to disappear after they are viewed; need to be 13 to sign up but can enter any birthday when registering; images can be screenshot by the recipient, so the notion that content is disappearing creates a false sense of security; Snap Map displays your location on a map in real time.

Whisper
Social media platform that allows users to post anonymous questions or confessions overlaid over photos; prevalence of inappropriate sexual conduct and aggressive behavior; sharing secrets can lead to bullying or extortion; has a private direct message feature that could be used for predatory grooming.

TikTok
Social media platform where users post videos; need to be 13 to sign up but can enter any birthday when registering; harmful content includes discussions of sexual encounters and positions, dangerous physical challenges, stunts, and activity, raunchy adult humor, and substance misuse in social settings; predators can contact kids through direct messages and comments on videos.

Houseparty
Group video chat platform that allows users to chat live via video and text; there is no monitoring by administrators; app has a screen-sharing feature that can allow for exposure to inappropriate content by other users; biggest risk comes in the fact that it's not just who your child invites in, but their friends can invite others into the chat.

Ask.fm
Global social network where users can ask questions anonymously or publicly; biggest concern is the amount of anonymously posted content and the lack of any moderating by the site; potential harms include cyberbullying, exposure to sexual content, and the ability for predators to ask children to take conversations offline.

Kik
Messaging service that provides anonymity; videos, photos, and games are easily shared with no accountability and little trackability; allows chatting with strangers; one sexual offender called it a "haven for predators".

Instagram
Social media platform where users post photos; users are able to send direct messages; potential harms include cyberbullying, scamming and identity theft, and the ability of predators to create a vast network by taking advantage of Instagram's recommendation algorithm

*Frontline operates from the understanding that pornography and sexting are harmful to minors.

**This list is not comprehensive and does not cover every potentially dangerous app or website. Parents should do their best to understand current developments and trends.

***The best strategy is not to try to insulate your child from every harm, but to create a safe environment that encourages them to discuss what they encounter with you.

Keep Reading...

*updated August 2023

Vault Apps

Vault Apps

Apps that hide a user's content in a smartphone; can include photos, videos, text messages, Facebook messages, contacts, call logs, and other apps

Signs of Vault Apps or Dangerous Online Behavior

- Multiples of the same app (for example, two calculator apps)
- Child abruptly turning off a device, hiding a phone screen, or closing a device when you enter the room
- Refusal to share passwords or allow you to look at a device

Steps to Search for Vault Apps

1. Go to the App Store on the device
2. Search for "vault app", "hide photos", and "secret app"
3. If any of the options that pop up read "OPEN" next to it, it has already been installed (usually an app not installed will say "GET" next to it)
4. Examples – Secret Photo Vault, Private Photo Vault, Calculator# Hide, App Lock, Secret Photo Album, Vault, Secure Private Calculator, Safe Space, Safe Lock, Vaulty, Burner, Second Texting, Secret Calculator, Best Secret, Locker, Privault

Be Proactive

Indicators of Trafficking

- **Behavioral** - increased absenteeism from school/running away; anxious, fearful, hostile, or non-cooperative behavior; avoidance of eye contact; hesitant to answer questions or gives scripted answers; substance use; dissociation; self-harming behavior
- **Cell Phone** - many unsaved numbers; commercial sex ads; many dating apps; texting apps: "Text Now," "Google Voice," "Text Me"; hidden apps; provocative posts; mosquito ringtone (only young people can hear); minimal phone access (labor); many phones (sex)
- **Physical** - signs of trauma/abuse/injuries; medical or dental neglect; branding/tattoos; inappropriate clothing for age or weather
- **Property** - lack of ID documents or docs are in others' possession (false docs); multiple cell phones; lots of cash; hotel keys/receipts; sexual paraphernalia

Recommendations

- IOS users – utilize the Apple Family Sharing Plan and enable the "Ask to Buy" feature so that no apps can be downloaded without your authorization

- Android users – go to Parental Controls in the Google Play store and require a password for app downloads

- Bark - monitors texts, email, YouTube, and 30+ apps and social media platforms for signs of issues like cyberbullying, sexual content, online predators, depression, suicidal ideation, threats of violence, and more

- Ever Accountable - scientifically-backed software that helps the whole family avoid porn and other dangers on the internet with the power of accountability