

10 APPS

EVERY PARENT NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT



Gone are the days where the only social media apps were Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. There are now millions of social apps available to download, many of them deemed inappropriate, but still available to young children and teenagers. Considering the increasing rate of digital crimes, parents need to be diligent in checking their children's social media accounts and phone apps to ensure that their children are kept safe.

This is an updated list of apps that kids and teens are using now and we are sharing risks associated with them. As always, please remind your child not to share any personal information with anyone online, even if they think they know them.

If you have any questions about how to keep your child safe online, you can contact our office at 336-318-6698.

TikTok

A new app popular with kids that lets users create and share short videos. The app has "very limited privacy controls" and users can easily be exposed to cyberbullying and explicit content. Tik Tok has just updated their app so that users under 16 cannot receive or send private messages. This can obviously be avoided, though, if users falsify their age.

Snapchat

One of the most popular social media apps in the world, Snapchat lets users take and share photos and videos that expire after 24 hours. But, it's a myth that Snapchats go away forever. Data is data: Whenever an image is sent, it never truly goes away. (The person on the receiving end can take a screenshot of the image before it disappears.) Snapchats can even be recovered. After a major hack in December 2013 and a settlement with the FTC, Snapchat has clarified its privacy policy, but you should remain wary...

- It can make sexting seem OK. The seemingly risk-free messaging might encourage underage users to share inappropriate images with their "friends".
- There's a lot of questionable content curated by Snapchat. Snapchat's Discover feature offers articles, videos, and quizzes from magazine publishers, TV networks, and online sources mostly about pop culture, celebrities, and relationships. Content can contain sexual nature and violence.

Secret Photo Albums

There are countless apps on the app store, such as Privault, that when you look at it on the homepage, it seems like a calculator app, but the app functions as a secret storage hub for photos and videos.

Best Secret Folder: Specifically meant to hide photos and videos. According to app store descriptions, it features password protection, decoy videos and alarm settings, making it difficult for parents to access.

Yubo

A new app similar to Chatroulette, Meet Me, and Monkey, this app lets users connect via video with people from all over the world. While the app has many different safety features, it still poses a threat to children. The app shows a user who enters a birthday under 13 a message that says 'Sorry, it looks like you're not eligible for Yubo', but thanks for checking us out'. However, there is still the potential that they could go back in and enter a false birth date to access the app. Children 13-17 are placed in an entirely different "community" on the app and don't intermix with adults who use the app. However, there is still the danger of adults falsifying their age to be placed in the child-only community.

Therefore, it's important to help your child understand why these restrictions are in place so they don't come across inappropriate content or connect with the wrong people.

Location Sharing – Although you don't need to share your location to use the app, it is an integral part of the way the app is used. If you have locations enabled, you can find friends nearby. Your location is then shown to another potential 'friends' along with your name and age.

Inappropriate content – Although the app is rated 12+ (in App store) anyone can sign up and post inappropriate content that breaks Yubo's community guidelines. So, it is important to talk to children about what they may come across on the app and how to report it. The makers of Yubo have implemented safety features to make it safer for children to live stream on the app but it still poses a risk in light of the increase of online sex offenders using this tool to groom children and the potential that children may share too much personal information with people they've never met in real life.

WhatsApp

A messaging app that allows texts, video calls, photo sharing, and voicemails with users worldwide. You must have a phone number to create a WhatsApp account, but there are many ways to create an account using a "fake" phone number, which is why parents should monitor their child's use of WhatsApp even if they don't have cell service.

Kik

Police say kids can bypass traditional text messaging features using this app. Kik gives users unlimited access to anyone, anywhere, anytime. The CEO of Kik reportedly released a statement stating that Kik would be taken off the app store, although there's no clear date for when it will shut down and it is still currently available to download.

Tinder

A dating app that focuses on a "swipe left/right" feature with the main purpose of the meeting and "hooking up". Once you swipe right on someone and match with them, you are open to communication with them, via private messages. There is an age restriction, but children can easily falsify their age and profile. Tinder also curates matches based on location, creating a potentially dangerous situation for kids and teens by matching them with users who are close-by.

Bumble

This app is very similar to Tinder but requires women to make the first contact. Kids and teens can create fake accounts and falsify their age, making the dangers the same as Tinder.

Plenty of Fish (POF)

A very popular free dating app and website that encourages chatting with strangers. It allows users to browse profiles based on location, but users' messages are open to anyone who has an account. Like other dating sites, POF has a minimum age requirement of 18, but it would be very easy for a kid or teen to falsify their age and profile.

Ask.FM

This app lets users ask and answer questions anonymously and is known for cyberbullying and sexual content. Similar apps to be careful of are YOLO, Tellonym, and LMK: Anonymous Polls.

This is only a short list of apps that may be harmful to children and teens. If you have heard your child talking about a specific app that you think may be dangerous, please reach out to us at 336-318-6698 so we can notify the public. You may also contact your child's school's SRO.

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