



**School Safety
Center**

Social Media Bulletin

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(U) Social Media Alert for June 2024

The age for students to have their own smartphone is rapidly becoming younger and younger. By age 10 about 42% of children have a smart phone. By age 14 it increases to 91%. With the increase in smartphone use by children, the risk and danger for children on the internet increases. There are a number of apps that can be harmful to students and increase exposure to:

- Cyberbullying
- Inappropriate Content
- Online Predators

Staying up to date with technology trends and popular applications among children can help with monitoring and teaching them the importance of online safety. There are a number of apps that are popular among children that seem harmless, but without proper online safety education these apps can be dangerous.

- **Social Media Apps:**

- Snapchat

- Most adults are now familiar with Snapchat. Snapchat is known for disappearing messages. This can encourage impulsive behavior among children and a false sense of security, sharing inappropriate messages or images thinking they won't be caught due to the "disappearing" aspect. Serious issues such as cyberbullying and the spread of explicit content can be a result.



- Snapchat also provides a feature called "Snap Maps" that is advertised to share your location with your friends. However, if the user is not aware of the location services and has strangers added to their friends list, this increases the risk of online predators knowing exact whereabouts, especially for children. This also makes it difficult for first responders to track threats that come from these added users.

- Instagram

- Instagram is another common app that is known for posting photos and videos onto a feed. This can be dangerous for children with the risk of seeing inappropriate content and can impact mental health due to comparing themselves to personas online and the pressure to gain followers and likes on the platform.



- Instagram has the option to make an account public or private. Public accounts allow anyone to view and interact with the user's content, increasing the risk for online predators to gain information and interact with children. Making the account private prevents non-added users from viewing the profile.

- TikTok

- TikTok has become increasingly popular in the past few years. The app is known for users posting videos, including dances. However, there is a ton of inappropriate content such as, violence, sexual discussion, and viral trends that can put children in physical danger. There is also the potential for strangers to interact with children through messages or comments on videos.



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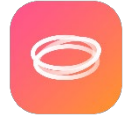
TIP LINE:

[844-723-3764](tel:844-723-3764) (844-SaferOH)

- **Chat Apps:**

- Hoop

- Hoop is a communication app that is targeted for kids as a way for them to meet other kids on the app by swiping through profiles that include the person's age, gender, and photos. The users can reach out to the different profiles and request the profiles connected social media usernames. While adults are able to use the app to talk to other adults, the app claims users over 18 won't be shown kids' profiles and vice versa, but guidelines like this can be easily bypassed in a lot of cases.



- Kik

- Kik is a free messaging app that promotes anonymity, either with people you know or strangers. There are chat rooms set up to specifically message with strangers. This increases the potential of an online predator reaching out and communicating with young users.



- Discord

- Discord is primarily a communication platform for gamers, but recently it has expanded into a broader community platform for people to share interests. There are risks with this app due to the lack of monitoring and can potentially expose children to inappropriate material and conversations.



- **Live Streaming Apps:**

- Live streaming apps allow users to view real time video and audio from another user. Most social media apps have a live stream function, but there are many apps where live streaming is the main purpose and allows one on one videos. Most of these apps have minimal monitoring and allows users to say or show whatever they want, and connect with complete strangers at random.

- Live.Me – shares the broadcaster's exact location with the viewers
 - Houseparty
 - Twitch
 - Yubo
 - BIGO Live
 - Holla
 - TikTok, Instagram, Facebook

- **Secret Storage Apps:**

- These apps are used to keep photos, videos, or other material private and hidden from others on a device. These apps likely are password protected and the icon often looks like an inconspicuous app such as a calculator.

- Calculator#
 - Privault
 - Secret Photo Vault

Educating students on the importance of online safety and how these popular apps can potentially put them in harmful situations can help limit the dangers that are associated with the apps. Also keeping an open line of communication with the students while being a resource for the kids to report any inappropriate or uncomfortable interaction or activity they come across online is essential for keeping a safe online environment for students.

Resources:

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/25/how-to-know-when-to-give-a-child-a-smartphone-what-are-the-alternatives.html>

<https://blocksite.co/blog/dangerous-apps-for-kids>

<https://www.bark.us/blog/dangerous-apps-kids/>

<https://americanspcc.org/the-10-most-dangerous-apps-for-kids/>

<https://www.safewise.com/dangerous-apps-for-kids/>

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