Parent's Guide

Social Media Apps Your Children May Be Using

NEW MEXICO OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
HECTOR BALDERAS

Protecting Our Community One Child at a Time
NEW MEXICO ICAC TASK FORCE

Texting Apps

1. **Kik Messenger**

- A texting and social networking app that enables kids to text for free without it showing up on your child's phone bill. No message limits, character limits, or fees for the basic version. Very easy to connect with strangers through *Oink Text*, an app linked with Kik, by sharing one's Kik username to find other people to chat with. Can share pictures, GIFs, videos, and screenshots of messages exchanged.

2. **WhatsApp**

- A texting app that allows kids to send encrypted text messages, videos, photos, and audio messages without any fees. Connects with user's phone contact directory to automatically find other smartphone users who have Whatsapp. Has ability to share live location.

3. **GroupMe**

- A texting app that lets users send direct messages and group messages for free. Ability to send money, schedule events, send emojis, and GIFs. Some emojis available for purchase are adult-themed with sexy characters and alcohol use. Some GIFs involve scantily-clad people, drug use, and violent images. Pop-up notifications do not show content so it can hide what's really going on. No way to delete past posts.

4. **Omegle**

- Anonymous chat site that puts two strangers together in a chat room. Language is uncensored and requests for further personal information is common. Definite no-go for children. Can be a hunting ground for sexual predators who are looking for a sexual chat through videos or porn sites.

5. **OoVOo**

- Free app that kids can use to video chat with up to 12 people at a time even with different platforms (computer, smartphone, etc). Can send texts and make phone calls to domestic and international numbers. Default privacy option is for information to be public, unless changed.

6. **TextFree Unlimited**

- A way to unlimited text others through the computer if you don't have a cell phone or have been cut off from a cell phone. Gives users a random telephone number. Ad-intensive. App does not accept pictures.

7. **Tango Text, Voice, and Video**

- Free video, voice, and text chat. Can accept or decline using location settings to make phone calls. Can pop up in other's views if nearby. Default setting is public profile, will need to manually change to private.

8. **Skype**

- Video-calling site that is great for keeping in touch with family members or friends from far away. However, it can be used as an outlet to "sext" boyfriend or girlfriend.

9. **Facebook Messenger**

- A way to connect instantly with Facebook friends and non-friends. Can text, voice-message, video-message, send GIFs, emojis, and photos. Tons of third-party apps available to add on. Ability to see when others have read your message or vice-versa. Unless location feature is turned off, users can see where others are.

10. **Viber**

- Free calling, texting, and picture-sharing app. Automatically integrates contact list so you can see who else is using Viber. To contact non-Viber users, fee must be paid. Can have group messages with up to 100 participants. Stickers that are available for purchase, or are free, can be adult-themed.

11. **Line**

- All-in-one mobile social networking app that allows for chatting, sharing photos and videos, free texting, and calling. Hidden chat feature that allows users to choose how long they want their messages to last (anywhere from 2 seconds to a week).

Livestreaming Apps

12. **HouseParty – Group Video Chat**

- Video-focused social media app. Anywhere from 2 to 8 people can be in chat at once. Can lock chat so that no one else can join. If stranger tries to join, notification is sent so you can exit if you would like. Easy to take screenshots in chat. No moderation and is live so at any time, it could become inappropriate.

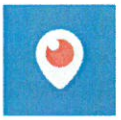
13. **LiveMe – Live Video Chat**

- Tool for broadcasting live-streaming videos and watching others'. Users must be 18 but many tweens and teens use this app. Potential for predatory comments, bullying, and viewing inappropriate content is high. Profanity and racial slurs are common, some users are scantily-clad, sexually-charged questions are frequent, and drug use is streamed live. Viewers can purchase coins to give as gifts to other users.

14. **YouNow**

- Live video streaming service that connects with Facebook, Twitter, or Google +. Kids can change usernames to something more anonymous than what is posted on their other social media accounts. Profanity is rampant. Can search with hashtags to find inappropriate content easily. Many teens broadcast themselves sleeping.

15. **Periscope**



- Live-broadcast video streaming app that connects with Twitter to show in their feed. Captures video of people in public places without their permission. Opens door to viewing of sexual content, violent material, strong language, drinking, and drug use. Anything goes.

16. **TikTok – Musical.ly**

- Social network for sharing user-generated music videos. Users can upload, create, and remix others' work, or browse content. Can directly interact with other users through a live chat. Lots of popular music, so profanity and sexual lyrics can be common. Some users may be scantily-clad or wearing sexually suggestive clothing. New Digital Well-Being settings introduced in August 2018, allow parents to set 2 hour time limits as well as a Restricted Mode that can help filter out inappropriate content. Many kids use this in the hopes of becoming famous and may do whatever it takes to get that status.

17. **HQ Live Trivia Game Show**

- Game app that is played for real prize money. 12-minute games are hosted live as thousands try to answer 12 multiple-choice questions on a variety of trivia topics. Players can comment in a live chat as game is played. Can also allow access to their contacts and see when friends are playing. If game is won, money is distributed through PayPal. Must have a PayPal account to play. Some crude humor by game show host.

Blogging Apps & Sites

1. **Instagram**

- Popular platform for sharing photos and videos that can be instantly enhanced with filters and cool effects. Can be shared across multiple social media platforms. Partially nude or sexually suggestive photos can be visible. Profiles are automatically public unless option to make private is turned on. Also ability to save other people's photos. Instagram Direct allows users to privately instant message each other. Live streaming option is available. Users can remove followers, block users, turn off photo commenting, mute followers, and like others' comments.

2. **Twitter**

- Free "microblogging" and social-networking site that leaves a long lasting digital footprint. Allows users to post 140-character messages on a feed. Updates appear immediately and deleted tweets can still be found. Private setting is best used. Can also be used as a promotional tool for products and celebrities. Mature content in some cases. Location can be attached to tweets with street name and city but users must opt into this feature. Feature available for private direct messaging.

3. **Tumblr**

- Raunchy microblogging site with tons of user-generated product ads, images/GIFs depicting drug use, pornographic images, and offensive language. Anything and everything under the sun can be found. Posts are public by default. "Safe Mode" exists but can easily change this setting on and off if wanted to.

4. **Ask.Fm**

- Q&A site that allows users to follow each other anonymously to ask and answer each other's questions. Question responses can be in video form and can be violent or pornographic in nature. Bullying is major concern on this site and several suicides have been linked to Ask.Fm.

5. **Pinterest**

- Photo-sharing site that can be used to find categorized recipe ideas, crafting, tattoos, photography, decoration, collecting, makeup ideas. Some posts can contain nudity.

6. **Reddit**

- An app for free speech where kids can find posts on credible, factual, silly, offensive, and weird topics. A voting system allows certain posts to rise to the top which are voted upon by no specific criteria. Includes a group chat and direct messaging feature. Pornography, violence, and foul language exist.

Secret Apps

1. **Snapchat**

- A popular messaging app that allows users to exchange photos, texts, videos, and calls. Snaps are only available to be viewed for whatever amount of time sender chooses but can be screenshotted and saved to receiver's photo library. Location can be shared on a world-wide map where users can view Snapchat stories from various locations. Snapchat friends can also share their location directly with certain people or request locations. App is infamous for being used for "sexting" purposes because photo deletes right away.

2. **Whisper**

- Social "confessional" app that gives users the opportunity to post whatever may be on their mind, which can then be paired with an image. These confessions are often sexual or are used as a way to meet others for sex. Strong language and sexual images exist. Encourages private communication between users. Not for children.

Be aware of apps that can be used to "hide" what is really installed on a child or teen's phone.

- Private Photo Vault
- Best Secret Folder
- Keepsafe Photo Vault
- Secret Calculator +
- Secret Photo Album
- Hide Photos, Video-Hide It Pro

***iPhones can have a "hidden" album. Androids can have albums that start with a "." where you can hide photos.**

Dating Apps

1. **Tinder**

- Photo and messaging dating app that shows photos of potential matches in one's area that are then swiped left "to pass" or right, to "to like." If 2 people swipe right on each other, they are then set up in a private chat room where they can message each other.

2. **Yubo (formerly Yellow) tried to rebrand itself– Tinder for Teens**

- "Tinder for Snapchat" Users can swipe right and left on profiles in their area that are automatically linked to their profiles on Snapchat and Instagram. Allows them to be able to follow each other if they like each other. Not for children.

3. **MeetMe (formerly called MyYearbook)**

- A way for users to meet new people, chat, video chat, and e-mail. Users range in age from 13 to 40+. Uses "lunch money" (credits) to do things to put them at the top for potential "secret admirers." Flirtatious in nature. Some user profiles contain pictures of themselves in their underwear or drinking alcohol. Not for children.

4. **Skout**

- Flirting app that is used to meet and chat with new people. Teen group and adult group are separated based on age. Teen's exact location is not revealed, only a general region. Teens cannot send pictures in private messages. Of course, age can be falsely altered to enter adult group. Profanity and suggestive pictures.

5. **Monkey – modern day version of ChatRoulette**

- Randomly connects teens in order to chat with other Snapchat users for 10-seconds. Can add more time or add person on Snapchat to continue to talk. Age and gender of potential friend is available to see before accepting chat.

6. **Hot or Not**

- Social app where users rate attractiveness of others based on their photos. No age verification process so any one can get on. If two users think each other is "hot" then they can message each other privately. No guarantee that anyone is who they say they are.

7. **Grindr**

- LGBTQ adult dating app that is used to connect with others for friendship, companionship, or sexual encounters. Location-based and ability to send private messages. Inappropriate images and language may exist.

Gaming Apps that allow Messaging

1. **Fortnite**

- New mobile version of a popular battle royale game that lets players engage with each other and play against each other through console and PC gamers. Cartoonish style and violence isn't bloody or gory. Random strangers can contact users in voice or on-screen text chats.

2. **Roblox**

- Game-creation website where users can design and upload their own games. Some games involve weapons and chatting feature exists where users can exchange inappropriate and predatory messages with younger players. Some YouTube videos show players making sexual advances on others by jumping their character on top of another's' and making sexual comments.

3. **Minecraft**

- Multiplatform sandbox adventure game that is relatively safe. They can explore the world and use building blocks to customize their own creations. Allows users to create whatever they can imagine which could lead to potentially offensive content.

Helpful Resources for Parents

www.netsmartz.org – An interactive, educational program of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) that provides age-appropriate resources to help teach children how to be safer online and offline. Designed for children ages 5-17, parents and guardians, educators, and law enforcement.

www.commonsensemedia.org- U.S. based nonprofit specializing in providing education and advocacy to promote safe technology and media use for children. Their website helps parents make informed decisions on appropriate movies, TV shows, games, apps, websites, books, and music.

www.connectsafely.org- U.S. based nonprofit organization dedicated to educating users of connected technology about safety, privacy, and security. Great resource for finding research-based safety tips, parents' guidebooks, advice, news, and commentary on all aspects of tech use and policy.

www.icactaskforce.org- website for the national Internet Crimes Against Children network of 61 coordinated task forces that represent over 4,500 federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies. Has an Internet Safety page with useful websites, PSAs, and links to general and video resources.

www.fosi.org- an international nonprofit organization that encompasses industry, government, and non-profit sectors. They promote the 3 P's (Policy, Practice, and Parenting). contains regularly updated policy briefs, filings, reports and data sets so that users can educate themselves with the latest information available.

Recommended Parent Monitoring Programs

www.safekidspro.com – Free to use. Real-time alerts and email alerts. Monitors up to 8 accounts at a time.

www.mmguardian.com – Free 14-day trial. Monthly subscriptions range from $1.99 to $3.99. Comprehensive reports, time limits, app control, location and tracking, web filters and safe browsing, call and SMS blocking, text monitoring, real-time alerts.

www.mymobilewatchdog.com- $14.99 a month per family. Up to 5 devices. Access text messages, photos, contacts, call log, block apps/websites, and locate your child, customized activity reports.

www.mamabearapp.com – Ranges from being free to $5.99 a month depending on plan and its functions. Family news, social media monitoring, text message monitoring, location sharing, speeding alerts, location and tracking.

https://families.google.com/familylink/- Family Link is an app from Google that allows you to set-up, manage, and monitor a Google account and Android device.

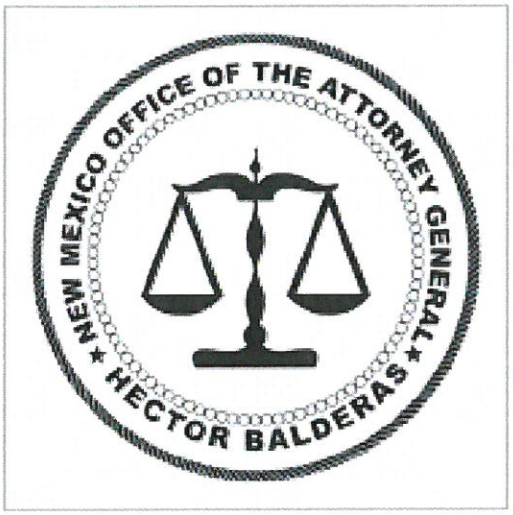
Note: Your service provider (AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, and T-Mobile) may have a program you can add on to your monthly bill to monitor devices under your plan.

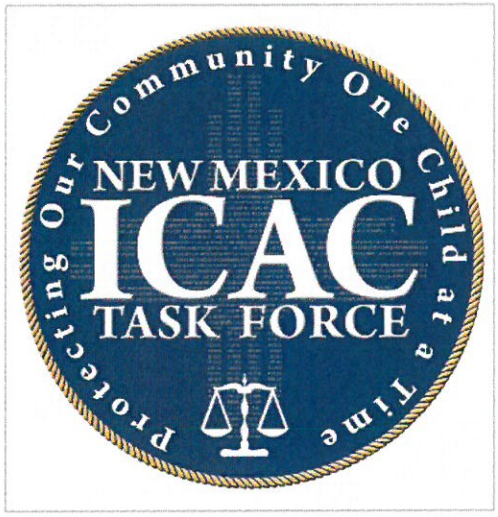
Alternative? Have kids change their privacy settings.

Start the Discussion

Questions to Ask Your Children:

1. Do you have any social media accounts? If so, what are they?
2. Are your accounts private or public?
3. Do you post private information such as your phone number or address?
4. Do you know who all of your "friends" are? Have you ever accepted a friend request from someone you don't know?
5. Do you know everything you post stays on the internet no matter if you delete it or not?
6. Is everything you post something you would want your grandmother to see?
7. Do you take quizzes or surveys on Facebook or elsewhere?
8. When was the last time you changed your passwords?





New Mexico Office of the Attorney General

Internet Crimes Against Children Unit

505-717-3500

www.nmag.gov

Cyber Tip Hotline

1-800-THE-LOST

(1-800-843-5678)

www.cybertipline.com