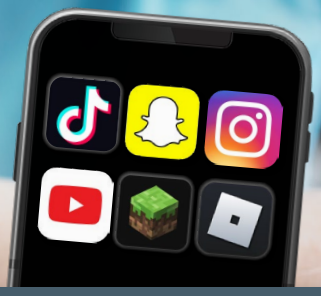
SOCIAL MEDIA pointers for parents



Trying to understand and regulate your children's use of social media platforms (SMPs) can be overwhelming. The decision regarding how and when to allow them to use SMPs is a personal one. The following information is designed to help families make informed decisions.

Begin and maintain an open dialogue. Have open and honest discussions with your children about their use of SMPs, including which platforms they currently have or want to use. Discuss your expectations as a parent and explain the controls and limits you will be setting.

Talk with your children about unsafe interactions with others, especially strangers, and tell your children not to accept requests or messages from strangers. Unfortunately, SMPs can serve as avenues for scammers, predators and bullies. Encourage your children to tell you immediately if something happens that makes them feel uncomfortable or puts them in danger.

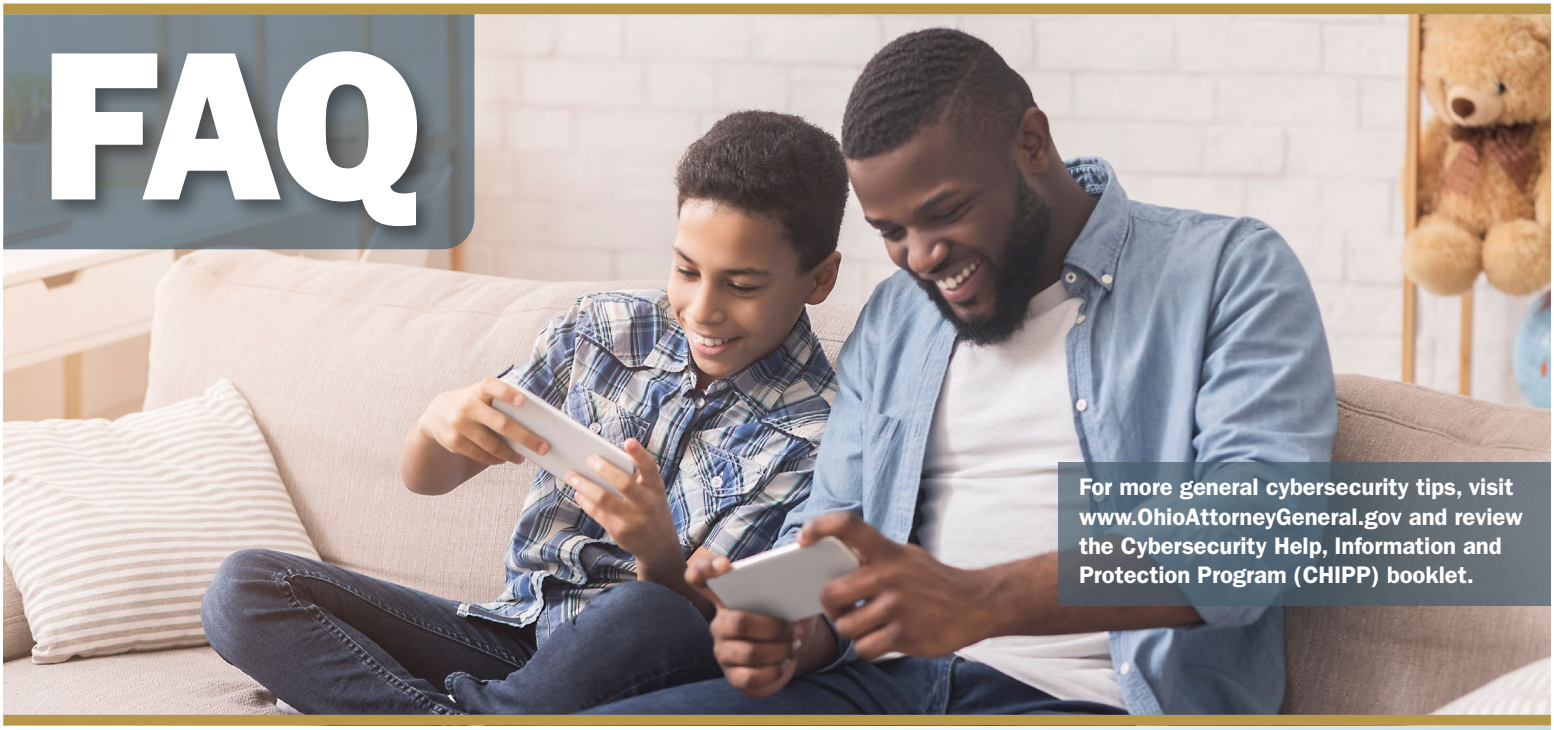
Learn about the social media platforms your children use. The more you learn about each SMP, the more insight you'll have about how the platform operates and what potential dangers, risks and challenges exist. Consider creating your own accounts to learn firsthand about specific platforms. Add your children as "friends" or "follow them" to help you keep tabs on what they're doing on social media. You may even want their login information to monitor their accounts.

Follow age requirements and guidelines. Many SMPs have age limits for joining; some may even offer a version for kids that has a stricter privacy and messaging settings. For example, settings may default to "private" on the kids' version but "public" on the adult version. Be sure your children are truthful about their ages when creating accounts since their age may prohibit them from joining an SMP or may qualify them for a kids' version with higher privacy settings.

Help set and monitor privacy settings. Privacy settings, which control what others can see about a user, are especially important for children. Many apps default to public profiles or public sharing; consider changing these settings to private. For example, you may need to adjust an app's "location settings" to prohibit others from knowing your child's whereabouts. Also, talk to your children about the importance of not revealing personal information in posts and user profiles, including photos that may contain identifiable information.

Understand how technology can help you. Devices and user accounts generally have various permission levels. For example, you may be able to set controls so that your child cannot download an app without your permission. Private content filters also exist that give parents the ability to control content or apps, set privacy rules, limit screen time and more. Keep in mind that some operating systems and other products and services, such as internet browsers, may already include parental controls; they just need to be customized for your needs.

FAQ



For more general cybersecurity tips, visit www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov and review the Cybersecurity Help, Information and Protection Program (CHIPP) booklet.

What is a social media platform (SMP)?

An SMP is any internet-based platform that allows users to interact, create, share or exchange information with others. Common SMPs for children include TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, BeReal and even certain gaming communities, such as Roblox and Minecraft.

Are all SMPs basically the same?

No, each SMP offers unique features and settings. Some are more messaging-based; others are photo-based. For gaming, users may be able to speak with one another. Other platforms allow direct messages (or "DMs"), which are private messages between users.

Are there any benefits to SMPs?

SMPs may allow your child to interact with their friends or family more easily or serve as a form of entertainment. Many of your children's friends likely have or will have various SMP accounts.

Why would I be concerned about my child being on an SMP?

Some argue that the use of SMPs may be correlated with mental health concerns. For example, children may become hyper-focused on receiving positive feedback on their posted content or may negatively dwell on the lack thereof. They may also engage in "social comparison" (comparing their life on social media to that of others) and may struggle to differentiate between what is real or not regarding misinformation, physical appearances or realistic expectations.

Concerns about cyberbullying and "stranger danger" on social media also persist. Strangers may try to build relationships to get money, personal information or even graphic images from a child. For example, "sextortion" is when a child sends someone a revealing picture that the bad actor then threatens to reveal unless a payment is provided. Children should be taught to report these interactions to a parent or other trusted adult immediately (even if they're embarrassing to the child). Anytime a stranger is direct messaging (DMing) your child, it should raise a red flag.

Do SMPs collect data on my child and share that data?

They might. The federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act prohibits collecting personal information from children under 13 years old but doesn't prohibit data collection or sharing for kids older than that. Additionally, SMPs serve relevant content to children based on the data profile the SMP has created for each individual user.

How can I keep my child safe on social media?

It's essential that parents and children understand the SMPs that they're using. Families should talk openly about how children should use SMPs and how to report inappropriate behavior. Also, consider setting rules in your house about where your children are allowed to have their devices and how many hours per day (and which hours) your children can be on their devices.

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For additional resources, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) offers free online publications to help keep kids safe online. To contact the Ohio Attorney General's Consumer Protection Section, call 800-282-0515.