SAFE TEXTING AND ONLINE SOCIALIZATION FOR TEENS

To help keep your teen safe online, teach them to...

LIMIT ACCESS TO PROFILES

- Set all accounts to maximum privacy settings. This will give you the most control possible over who sees your information.

- Even with privacy settings, your posts and profile may still be seen by others, including employers, college admissions officers, and the police. Consider what you post.

KNOW WHAT NOT TO SHARE

- Set screen names that don't reveal real name, age, gender, or address.
- Social Security number, street address, phone number, financial information (bank account or credit card numbers) should never be shared.

EVALUATE CREDIBILITY

- Not everything you read online is true. Check before you share or act on something you read.
- People online may not be who they appear to be or say they are.

KNOW THE CONSEQUENCES OF SEXTING

- Sending explicit photos or videos of a minor, including yourself, is considered distribution of child pornography. You may be prosecuted or labeled a sex offender.
- Once a photo or video is posted or sent, it can be distributed and then may be difficult to take down.

AVOID TEXT PITFALLS

- Ignore texts from people you don't know.
- Delete messages that ask for personal. information, even if a "free gift" is offered.
- Be wary of group chats. They are more likely to involve someone you don't know well, get your private information distributed, and enable cyberbullying.

IF SOMETHING DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT, TRUST YOUR GUT

- If something feels suspicious or creepy, even if you're not sure why, tell your parents.
- If someone is sending you sexual messages or nude photos, asking you to send nude photos, or trying to get you to do sexual things, go to www.cybertipline.com to make a report.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0002-parents

https://staysafe.org/teens/

https://www.nsteens.org/

New Jersey Children's Alliance

https://njcainc.org/

/njcainc @njcainc

@newjerseychildrensalliance

MOST DANGEROUS APPS FOR KIDS

Popular apps that may warrant greater caution and monitoring

Ask.FM

The app allows users to ask any question they want either as an anonymous user or as themselves. However, some people tend to make inappropriate use of the app's anonymity feature by asking vulgar questions and even leave offensive comments. Some even start bullying other users by making derogatory remarks.

Roblox

This is an immensely popular open-world game built on user-generated content. A child can cross paths with inappropriate sexual content, profanity, alcohol, drugs, and more. Violence is also prevalent in Roblox, meaning users can kill and/or be killed. Using the chat feature, adult predators can also easily message children.

Holla

Holla is a video chat app that randomly connects users to strangers from across the globe. Signing up only requires a Facebook account or valid phone number. The location tracking feature can also be enabled to be matched with somebody nearby. However, violence, profanity, and nudity are pretty common on this app, which is why it's one of the worst social media apps for kids.

Whisper

Whisper is a confession app where anyone can make confessions while being anonymous. Users can communicate with any other Whisper user nearby. The app uses GPS location tracker to track nearby users. The app keeps the user's identity anonymous, but it does show the area from where the messages are being sent. As a result, an online predator can pinpoint the location of the victim.

Kik

Kik messenger users can send quick text messages, photos, and even sketches. However, the app lacks age verification can be dow, so it can be downloaded by kids who are younger than 13. Since users of any age can access the app, cyber stalkers, and even pedophiles can get the opportunity to find young kids and compel them into sending risqué photos or their personal information.

Yubo

Yubo is a social network app for "friendships", and allows for streaming and playing games with others. Users must use photo of themselves and identify their age, but age verification is done through an estimation of the age of the photo that is used, which can be misleading or faked. Location sharing is "an integral part of the app". Children using Yubo may be vulnerable to grooming, exploitation, bullying, and harassment.

Telegram

Just like Snapchat, Telegram's selling point is that it offers self-destructing messaging. This is exactly what makes the app dangerous for kids and teens – anyone can send inappropriate content and get away it. Additionally, usernames are public and can be searched by anyone, so your child may encounter strangers. The self-disappearing feature will make it nearly impossible for parents to keep an eye on what messages and being sent and received.

Monkey

Monkey is a website where users are matched with other users from all over the world to start a video chat conversation. There is no age verification, and there is abundant grooming, drug use, and sexual content in the video chats, and predators often meet kids on Monkey and then ask them for their contact info to continue the conversation on other chat apps.

MeetMe

The MeetMe facilitates introductions to strangers nearby, fostering connections with new "friends". The location-based matching feature of MeetMe can lead to face-to-face meetings with strangers, posing potential risks of physical harm, exploitation, or abduction.

Snapchat

This app allows users to send photos and videos that disappear after they're received. The disappearing messages feature might give your child a false sense of security, which people can exploit. Predators or ill-intentioned users can easily screenshot or save those 'temporary' messages and images, posing a risk for potential misuse or harm.

New Jersey Children's Alliance

Additional Resources

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

https://www.bark.us/learn/resources/

https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/resources