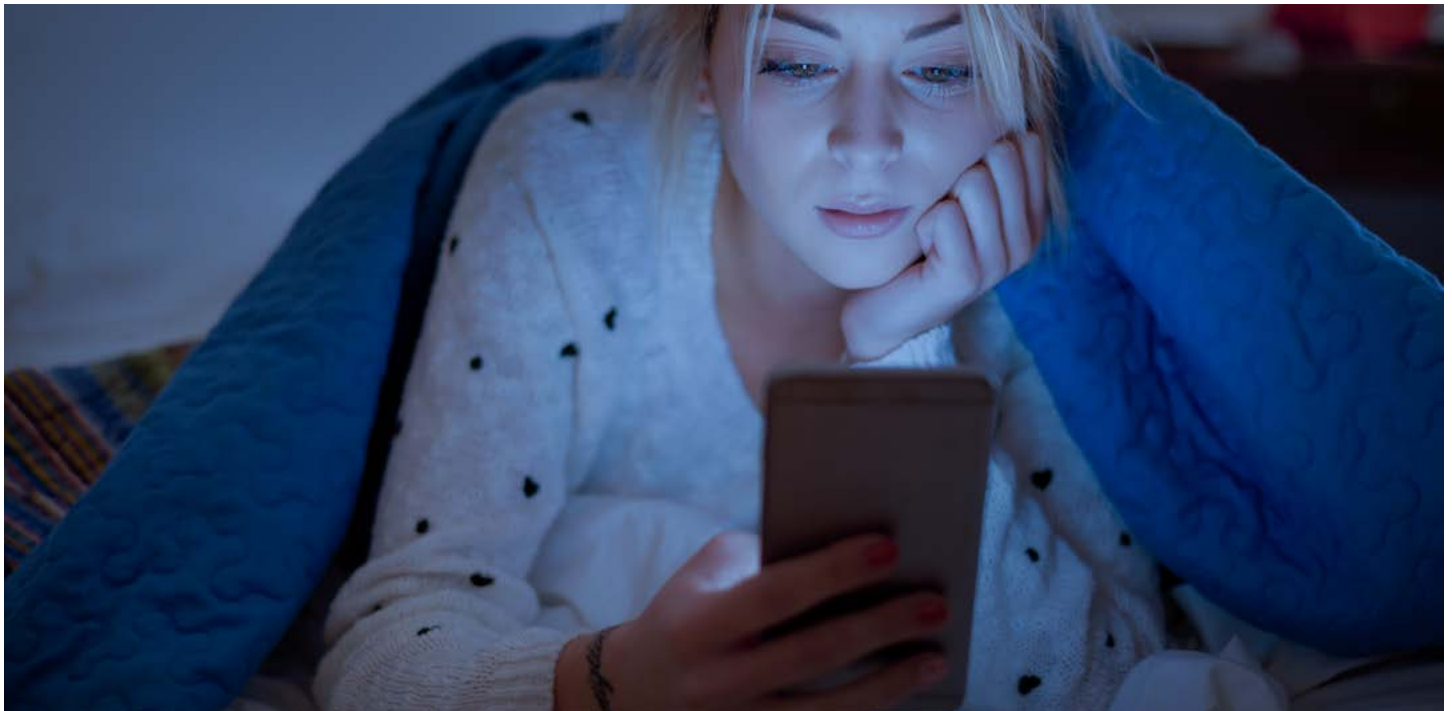# Potentially Dangerous Phone Apps

Introduction

'Apps' or Applications are computer programs that are designed to run on cell phones and tablets. Social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter are popular apps, however there are tons of apps out there that youth are using; some are safe and some are not. Below is a list of apps that can pose potential problems for youth in care.

Live Stream

BIGO LIVE

BIGO is a platform where youth can stream live videos of themselves for other users to see and comment on. They can also send "beans" or virtual gifts to other users that cost real money. BIGO contains a lot of mature content, including predatory or explicit talk in comments from other users.

Live.me

Live.me is a live streaming video app that allows users to watch or broadcast live-stream videos. This means that videos are recorded and seen by other users in "real time" or while things are actually happening. Once users post a video anyone on the app can see and watch their video. Live.me does not feature profiles on its homepage of users under 17 but that does not mean they cannot be found since Live.me uses geolocation of its users to organize videos. There is no way to control privacy settings or location.

Live Random Video Chat

HOLLA

The purpose of HOLLA is to connect with strangers. When users sign up, youth are instantly matched with a stranger to video chat with, and both users appear on camera. They can also enable location services to match with users geographically close to them. Reviews of this app indicate that nudity, masturbation, violence, and negative comments occur frequently on live video chats. Users can also easily lie about their age, and younger youth can be paired with older youth.

Houseparty

Houseparty is a live video and text chat application, that allows users to chat with 2-8 people at a time. All chats are unmonitored, and reviews of the app suggest that cyberbullying, sexual content, and chatting with strangers occurs over the application. The app has a setting so that all conversations can be turned to private mode, but if conversations are not private strangers can join any chat at any time. Caregivers should encourage youth to keep their settings private, to exit conversations if something inappropriate occurs, and to not say or post anything they wouldn't want peers, family members, neighbors, and strangers to see.

Jott Messenger

Jott Messenger allows its users to send messages without a data plan or a WiFi connection. It does this by relying on Blue-tooth networks and can only be used with people nearby, making it very popular for young people. Jott takes features from different social media sites and includes the "self-destructing" feature from Snapchat. It is important to remind youth that these pictures never really go away; never send anything you would not want everyone to see.

WeChat

WeChat is a free texting, video, and calling app. WeChat allows users to chat with strangers. There are also features for sharing your location with people nearby.

Kik

Kik is a messaging app and social media site rolled into one. It allows youth to message one another as well as connect to content on the internet. Users can connect with any other user, however new contacts must be approved by your youth and privacy settings can be turned on for the social media portion. Be sure to talk with youth about not accepting messages from people they do not know.

Look

The Look app is a free messaging app that combines live video with text messaging. Look is rated 12+ on the Apple App store for "Infrequent/Mild Sexual Content and Nudity". Users can also meet and connect with strangers.

Omegle

Omegle is a free online chat website whose slogan is "Omegle: Talk to strangers!" Users are connected to strangers in anonymous text and video chat rooms. **Emerald** is an Omegle alternative and is designed to connect users with people from all over the world.

Best Secrets Folder

This app lets you save photos, videos, and notes in an app disguised as a utility folder. For youth, this app is mostly used to hide inappropriate videos and images. The app goes through great lengths to keep others out: it is password protected, after 4 failed log-in attempts the app will take a picture of the person trying to access the folder and email the date, time, and location of the "intruder", and includes a record of log-in attempts.

Private Photo Vault

Private Photo Vault is another PIN or pattern protected photo and video folder. Like the Best Secrets Folder app it sends a photo and location of the person attempting to access the folder. However, caregivers should be aware that Private Photo Vault offers users the ability to give people a "dummy code" that when entered shows stock photos.

Secret Calculator

Secret Calculator is a working calculator that hides photos, videos and URL's. Like the other hidden photo apps mentioned here it is password, touch ID, or pattern protected.

Keepsafe Photo Vault/ Keepsafe Calculator

Keepsafe Photo Vault is another app to hide photos. They also have a decoy calculator version called Keepsafe Calculator-the app functions like a regular calculator but when the correct pin is entered the pictures are shown. The app uses "military grade encryption" to secure photos with a PIN, pattern lock, or fingerprint.

Spotafriend

Spotafriend is designed for teens to help them find friends nearby. Set up exactly like the dating app, Tinder, it shows teens users nearby that once matched can message one another. In its description on Apple, Spotafriend insists it is not a dating app, however it is rated 17+ to download because of Infrequent/Mild Sexual Content and Nudity, Infrequent/Mild Alcohol, Tobacco, or Drug Use or References, Infrequent/Mild Profanity or Crude Humor, and Frequent/Intense Mature/Suggestive Themes.

> **A Warning for Caregivers:** There are sites out there designed to scare care-givers into paying for information or "lessons" about apps and social media. Ask other caregivers if they use these sites and be sure you cannot find the information from a free source before paying.

Tango

The Tango app is a social network and messaging app mainly marketed for Android users. Like other social networking sites make sure location services are turned off, their profiles are on private, and make sure teens do not manually enter their location. Also talk with youth about not accepting calls or messages from numbers they do not know. There is a "popular people" section that showcases popular profiles that youth can click through that may contain some inappropriate content.

Tik Tok

Parents need to know that TikTok is a social network for sharing user-generated music videos. It used to be called musically. Users can create and upload videos, remix others' work, or browse content created by other users and by famous recording artists. However, as of 2019, in response to an FTC settlement, there's a separate section of the app for users under 13. That experience only lets users view curated videos: They can't comment, search, or post their own videos, and their data isn't collected. Because access to that area of the app only requires the user to enter a birthdate, the app is still recommended for older youth. Users often livestream via LiveMe - Live Video Chat, directly interacting with online audiences through chat. Because the app employs popular music, expect swearing and sexual content in the songs. Though the videos viewed during the review process only contained some tight and revealing clothing, some families have encountered sexually suggestive or even explicit material (CommonSenseMedia, https://www.commonsensemedia.org/app-reviews/tiktok)

Ask.fm

Ask.fm is a "question and answer" platform where users can post questions and other users can reply to their questions. Originally designed to help its users improve themselves by asking questions and helping 'shy' users by letting them post anonymously, the app has historically been used for cyberbullying. Ask.fm is currently going through a rebranding process trying to shake its cyberbullying reputation, but it still encourages users to set up a public profile and allows anonymous people to communicate with youth.

Whisper

Whisper is a sort of "confessional" where users can anonymously express themselves paired with an image. Users can then message and connect on a post. Users must be at least 17 to download. For younger youth who may not know how much information to share, this app could be dangerous-as predators could take advantage of the situations and feelings expressed by youth on the app.

YOLO: Q & A

There are many popular applications that allow youth to receive anonymous feedback from their peers. YOLO links with Snapchat and allows users to ask questions and give and receive anonymous feedback on what they have posted. Similar applications exist for Instagram and Facebook (**Lipsi**, **Sarahah**, **Tellonym**). These apps are often problematic for teens because anonymous feedback has created problems with cyberbullying.

Yubo

Also known as "Tinder for Snapchat," Yubo is mostly used as a dating app. Users create a profile and "swipe" through profiles of other users in their area. Users only have to be 13 to create a profile however there is no age verification like other apps so younger youth can create accounts. Yubo also links to other social media accounts like Snapchat and Instagram.

BitLife

BitLife is a simulation game that allows users create a profile that they will play from infancy to death. During the game, users can choose how to develop relationships with other pretend profiles, spend time, and make money. The choices users make determine their levels of happiness, health, and appearance. This app is problematic because, though youth don't actually engage in risky behavior, they can experiment with risky ideas (like making their character drink, take drugs, hook up with other characters, or commit crimes).

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