Protecting Children from Objectionable Content on Wireless Devices

Kids today use wireless devices to access information and entertainment in a variety of new and expanding ways. With that expansion, though, comes increasing concern among parents and caregivers about content that may be inappropriate for children, especially with almost all mobile phones providing access to the internet.

Parents can begin addressing such concerns by understanding the types of content and applications children can access from their particular devices. What's available varies depending on the level of sophistication of the device and the services purchased from your wireless provider.

Most wireless devices are used to exchange messages, including instant and text messages, as well as photos, videos and email if your service includes internet access. Users can request, purchase and receive content from websites and various other sources.

Additionally, regardless of age, consumers may receive offers for free downloads or use of applications. Free offers are often for one-time use, but may come with terms and conditions that include options with agreements to pay fees for continued usage.

Types of content that can be downloaded and purchased include images, games (including those used with popular gaming systems), music and ringtones, and web video programming.

What you can do

Here are practical steps you can take to help protect your children from viewing objectionable content on wireless devices:

- Know and understand the capabilities of their wireless devices and what types of content and applications are available (either included or for an extra fee) under your service plan.
- Ask your wireless service provider about filtering software or other parental controls that can be installed on wireless devices.
- Talk to your children about how they use wireless devices. Ask them what they are sending and receiving or downloading, and from where.
- If your children access websites from wireless devices, know what sites they are accessing and what's associated with them, particularly social networking and chat sites and apps.
- Monitor the bill. Content or application purchases made from a wireless device and not included in your regular service plan should appear as separate items on your bill. (See our consumer guide on Understanding Your Phone Bill: www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/understanding-your-telephone-bill.)

More about Online Safety

For more online security tips and resources, check out OnGuardOnline (https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0038-onguardonline).

Consumer Help Center

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at
www.fcc.gov/consumers.

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