

APP

WHAT IS IT?

THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR?

Instagram



Instagram is a photo snapping, editing and posting app that has become very popular with youth. The product allows users to take a photo or short video, apply a "filter" to enhance or modify it, and then instantly share it with other Instagram users as well as people on Facebook, Twitter and other services.

You might want to ask your youth if he or she is familiar with the *privacy settings* and have a brief talk about the appropriate use of photo sharing. Instagram can also display a map of where your photos were taken, but this too can be toggled off and on and it's a good idea for youth not to disclose their physical location. While the app can be a fun way to view posts around the world around topics like #fashion or good, *it also easily provides a way to view posts about self harm*. For example, "#ana" brings up posts from many youth who are encouraging each other to stay anorexic in order to lose weight.

Yik Yak



Popular on high school and college campuses, this is an app that allows users to post text-only "Yaks" of up to 200 characters. *The messages can be viewed by the 500 Yakkers who are closest to the person who wrote the Yak, as determined by GPS tracking.*

Many of the "yaks" shared are information about events on campus or clever jokes, but Yik Yak has also caused trouble on many campuses because users are exposed to and are contributing sexually explicit content, derogatory language and personal attacks. *Since the posts are instant and anonymous, it makes it easier for youth to post bullying and explicit comments about their peers.*

Vine



Vine is a video creation app where all the videos are 6 seconds or less. The videos or "vines" as they are called play in an endless loop. The videos are shared with other Vine users who you follow and can be shared on Facebook or Twitter. Many of the videos are silly and lighthearted, but as you look around Vine you can also easily find content that is not appropriate for youth from drug use to nudity and similarly to Instagram,

While teens could use Vine as a creative tool, we recommend its use with caution due to the content that can easily be found. Vine has a download age restriction of 17 showing that its known to have content which is not appropriate for youth.



An instant messaging app with over 100 million users that allows users to exchange videos, pics and sketches. Users can also send YouTube videos and create memes and digital gifs.

Youth using the app for sexting and sending nude selfies through the app is common. The term "sext buddy" is being replaced with "Kik buddy." On other apps such as Vine, it's common to see comments that say "Kick me at ____." *Kik does not offer any parental controls and there is no way of authenticating users, thus making it easy for sexual predators to use the app to interact with minors.*

Omegle



Omegle's tagline is "Talk to strangers!" and is primarily used for video chatting. When you use Omegle, you do not identify yourself through the service. Instead, *chat participants are only identified as "You" and "Stranger."* However, you can connect Omegle to your Facebook account to find chat partners with similar interests. When choosing this feature, an Omegle Facebook App will receive your Facebook "likes" and try to match you with a stranger with similar likes.

Although the website claims to moderate the conversations, the video connection with the random stranger is immediate, creating ample opportunity for youth to be exposed to unwanted sexual material.

Snapchat



This app allows a user to send photos and videos to anyone on his/her friend list. The sender can determine how long the receiver can view the image and then the image "destructs" after the allotted time.

While it's typically used by youth to share funny photos with each other, it's also popularly used for sexting because youth think it is the safer way to share explicit images. However, *the receiver can take a screenshot and share the photo with others. Also, a lot of images from Snapchat get posted to revenge porn sites, called "snap porn."*

Whisper



Whisper is an anonymous confession app. It allows users to superimpose text over a picture in order to share their thoughts and feelings anonymously. Even though you post anonymously, it displays the area you are posting from, and users can send you a private message. You can also search for users posting within a mile from you.

Due to the anonymity, youth are sharing personal *vulnerabilities* that someone looking to exploit them *could take advantage of*. A quick look at the app shows post such as “*I’m bullied at school for being fat*” or “*I’m so lonely*.” And while some of the comments seem supportive, *it’s impossible for youth to know the true intentions of the person on the other side of the screen*. Sexual predators can use the app to locate kids and establish a relationship—**one man** in Seattle, was charged with raping a 12-year-old girl he met on this app in 2013.

Down



This app, which used to be called “Bang With Friends,” is connected to Facebook. *Users can categorize their Facebook friends in one of two ways: they can indicate whether or not a friend is someone they’d like to hang with or someone they are “down” to hook-up with.*

Although identifying someone you are willing to hook-up with doesn’t necessarily mean you will actually hook-up with them, it can make youth feel pressured to participate in sexual activity even if they’re not comfortable with it. Also, because of the classification system, it can make youth feel left out or unwanted, which can lead to anxiety and low self-esteem.