

SAFE ONLINE

Brad Chambers' Plan to Protect Hoosier Children

There is nothing more important than protecting Hoosier children from the dangers and harms caused by the excessive use of digital and social media, as well as access to inappropriate material and pornographic websites.

Social media and other digital platforms can offer positive benefits for young people, including access to educational resources, strengthening connections and relationships with physically distant family members and friends, and building communities of shared interests. Increasingly compelling evidence indicates, however, that the benefits are being outweighed by the negative impacts on the healthy development of children's brains, their mental health, ability to succeed academically, and on their overall social development and well-being.

That is why I am proposing the **Safe Online** plan, which will protect Hoosier children online so they can lead safer, healthier and more fulfilling lives.

1. Require Stricter Age Verification

Although age 13 is generally the required minimum age for access to social media platforms, recent studies indicate roughly 40 percent of the nation's youth ages 8–12 report using social media. Currently, social media, gaming platforms and websites that distribute or display pornographic material simply require users to check a box or fill in a birth date with no way to verify and confirm the user's age.

As governor, I will lead the effort to require age verification for the use of all digital platforms that can have harmful effects on young Hoosiers including social media and gaming platforms, as well as websites that distribute or display pornographic material.

To do this, I will consult with online industry experts and the state legislature to determine the most reliable age verification system to ensure children are protected and parents are empowered to manage and monitor the online presence of their minor children.

Companies found in violation of the **Safe Online** plan's verification requirements will be subject to penalties.

2. Enhance and Expand Online Data Protections for Children

As governor, I will strictly limit the ability of online companies to collect, use or sell data related to users under the age of 18.

The Safe Online plan will limit geolocation tracking for verified youth social media accounts only to applications that allow parents or guardians to know the location of their children. This will help protect children from online companies collecting and selling data, as well as from potential predators who may have been able to access location data without the child's knowledge or awareness.

Additionally, the Safe Online plan will require verified youth social media accounts to be automatically set to "private" mode so unknown users cannot view a child's social media activity. This is aimed at preventing cyberstalkers and cyberbullies from using information on a child's social media account to potentially locate, insult, harass, bully or otherwise harm the child.

To further protect children from cyberstalkers, cyberbullies and predators, the Safe Online plan will mandate that verified youth social media accounts are unable to receive direct messages from unknown users and those they have not already accepted as a "friend" or "follower."

Companies found in violation of the **Safe Online** plan's data protection provisions will be subject to penalties.

3. Enforce Penalties on Online Companies That Fail to Prevent Hoosier Children from Accessing Pornographic Material

By implementing the **Safe Online** plan's age verification requirements, we will more effectively prevent children from accessing pornographic and other inappropriate adult content online.

Additionally, I will work with the state legislature to define the parameters and implement additional civil or criminal penalties for companies that do not take the appropriate steps to prevent children from accessing pornographic content online.

4. Ensure Age-Appropriate Education About Online Dangers

As governor, I will work with the Indiana Department of Education to ensure age-appropriate classroom instruction is being provided to educate children on not only the benefits, but also the risks and dangers associated with social media and other online activity.

The Gist

My **Safe Online** plan can make Indiana a national leader in the fight to protect the privacy, safety, health and well-being of Hoosier children as they navigate the online world during a critical phase in their mental and physical development.

The Pillars

1. Require Stricter Age Verification
2. Enhance and Expand Online Data Protections for Children
3. Enforce Penalties on Online Companies That Fail to Prevent Hoosier Children from Accessing Pornographic Material
4. Ensure Age-Appropriate Education About Online Dangers

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