May 28, 2020

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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

CA: AG Moody Seeks TikTok Privacy Info to Protect Children



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today announced she is seeking information from the chief executive officer of TikTok, requesting more information about how the China-based social media company ensures the privacy and security of children who use its video application. Attorney General Moody's concerns center on whether age verification tools on TikTok's application can be circumvented. If a child under the age of 13 can delete an account and obtain a new account on the very same device using a fake birthdate, specific protections for children may be evaded.

Under the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, parental consent is required before the personal information of users under 13 can be collected—making age verification an integral tool in protecting TikTok's younger users. It is also imperative that application operators provide parents with adequate guidance, information and tools regarding the use of children's personal information.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "As a mother, I have concerns about the risks our children face when they communicate online or download new social media applications. As the use of social applications, such as TikTok, increases with more children at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, and summer begins, it is paramount that robust security measures are in place and are enforced to protect and safeguard the privacy of children who may not be of the age to appreciate online safety risks. As potential security issues involving social media applications are brought to my attention, I will continue reaching out to these companies to learn more about the protections they have in place to ensure compliance with our privacy laws."

In the inquiry letter sent today, Attorney General Moody requests TikTok provide the following information:

- What tools are provided to parents to control and monitor a child's participation and secure a child's TikTok account;
- How parents are notified as to privacy policies regarding the collection of a child's information;
- How TikTok obtains parental consent before the information of a child is collected;
- Whether TikTok runs facial recognition software on or collects biometric information of users and how users are notified of this collection;
- What security measures have been implemented to ensure the privacy and security of children under the age of 13 and prevent the circumvention of age verification measures; and
- What other measures are being implemented to ensure compliance with COPPA.

To view the letter Attorney General Moody sent to TikTok, click here.

While the Attorney General's Office reviews the protections offered by TikTok, Attorney General Moody urges parents to be aware of how websites and social media applications collect and share children's personal information—particularly online contact information, telephone numbers, geolocation, photos and videos.

Under COPPA, parents have the ability to prevent the collection and sharing of this information for children under 13 and to request that collected information be deleted. These options allow parents to prevent a child's information from being shared with marketers or third parties that they may not know or trust.

Parents can follow these additional tips to protect a child's privacy online:

- Use strong passwords, including a combination of letters, numbers and symbols;
- Enable parental controls wherever possible, including on individual devices and wireless networks;
- Teach children not to share personal or identifying information online, including full name, age, home address or school name;
- Teach children to be responsible for online actions. Let them know that things posted on the internet can live on forever—potentially affecting future endeavors;
- Regularly check apps children may be using and read the Privacy Policy and Terms of Service for each; and
- Set and share rules about appropriate use of devices, such as set times for use, acceptable apps, and consequences for breaking the rules.

For more information on COPPA, visit Consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0031-protecting-your-childs-privacy-online.

To view the latest alerts and to stay up-to-date on emerging scams, visit the Attorney General's Consumer Alert webpage by clicking here.

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The Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division issues Consumer Alerts to inform Floridians of emerging scams, new methods used to commit fraud, increased reports of common scams, or any other deceptive practice. Consumer Alerts are designed to notify Floridians about scams and available refunds in an effort to prevent financial losses or other harm caused by deceptive practices. Anyone encountering a scam should report the incident to the Florida Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com. To view recent Consumer Alerts and for other information about avoiding scams, visit MyFloridaLegal.com/ConsumerAlert.