

December 22, 2017

The Honorable Senator Edward J. Markey  
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Richard Blumenthal  
706 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Senator Markey & Senator Blumenthal:

Thank you for your letter and for recognizing the steps we have taken to create a safer, parent-controlled, space for children to communicate with close friends and family. We appreciate this opportunity to respond to your questions and to share more information about Messenger Kids.

Research shows that parents are increasingly allowing their children to use tablets and smartphones, but often have questions and concerns about how their kids use them and which apps are appropriate. After talking to thousands of parents, associations like the National PTA, and other child and online safety experts in the US, we found that parents, families and experts believe there is a need for a messaging app that allows kids to connect with people they love but also has the level of control parents want. We built Messenger Kids to meet this need. We designed Messenger Kids to comply with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and have worked hard to protect the interests of children, including making Messenger Kids ad free.

Our responses to your specific questions appear below.

***1. Facebook has promised to make Messenger Kids a commercial free environment for children. Will the company commit that it will never change that policy and keep all its applications and services for children 12 and under advertisement free?***

We have no plans to include advertising in Messenger Kids. We have assembled an advisory committee of experts in child development, online safety, and media and children's health, and we will continue to work with them on an ongoing basis. We are committed to approaching all efforts related to children 12 and under thoughtfully, and with the guidance and input of experts and parents. The attached documents provide more detail on our approach and engagement.

***2. Will brand advertisers or any other third party be provided data regarding parents who have downloaded the new app? If yes, what information?***

No. We do not share any information about an individual child's or parent's use of Messenger Kids with advertisers or with other third parties for advertising purposes.

***3. The Messenger Kids privacy policy says information collected by the app - including kids' content and communications, activity, and device information is shared with "Facebook's family of companies."***

***a. Please specify such companies and for what purposes the information is being shared.***

***b. Similarly, information collected by the app is shared with 'vendors and service providers.' Please specify these vendors and service providers and for what purposes the information is being shared.***

Messenger Kids is provided by Facebook, Inc., which offers services like Facebook and Messenger, and also includes companies like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Oculus. You can find a complete list of the Facebook, Inc. family of companies here:

<https://www.facebook.com/help/111814505650678>. These companies share physical infrastructure, including data centers, content-moderation tools and reporting teams.

Operating on this shared infrastructure enables us to provide a better and safer experience. For example, when a child reports content using Messenger Kids, that report is sent to Facebook's community operations team, which uses its substantial operational and subject-matter expertise about handling online content to support services like Instagram in addition to Facebook. Access to technology that was built by Facebook to proactively detect certain types of online abuse made it possible for Messenger Kids to include extensive proactive detection that we know protects people. We have a highly-specialized Facebook Security team that is responsible for guarding against security risks across our family of apps. And when we provide services to Messenger Kids apps, that service is provided by cutting-edge, highly-efficient computer servers operated by Facebook.

In addition, parents told us they did not want to download a new, separate app to communicate with their children. Messenger Kids is designed to integrate directly with our Facebook service with our Messenger service, a messaging app for Facebook users who must be over 13. When a parent has set up a Messenger Kids account for their child and wants to use it to communicate with them, the parent does this using Messenger, while the child communicates using the Messenger Kids app. In order to manage the contacts that the child may communicate with using Messenger Kids, the parent accesses a control panel on Facebook. To accomplish these integrations, we need to use information we collect in Messenger Kids in other Facebook-operated services. Facebook — including our Messenger and Messenger Kids services — does not use information collected from Messenger Kids for advertising purposes.

We also use service providers to help us provide a safe and reliable service. For example, we may use content delivery networks, which help us make sure that people can send and receive images quickly. Our service providers must adhere to strict data confidentiality and security obligations, including that they only use the information we provide for the services we specify.

***4. Will any of the information collected from Messenger Kids be used once a child turns 13 and signs up for her own Facebook account? If yes, what information?***

We will not automatically create a Facebook account for Messenger Kids users, or automatically transition a Messenger Kids account into a Facebook account once a child turns 13. At some point, it's possible that we may allow children who used Messenger Kids to optionally transition some of their information from a Messenger Kids account (for example, their contacts on Messenger Kids) into another service.

***5. What cybersecurity is built into Messenger Kids? Is the app encrypted by default and will parents' use of Messenger also be encrypted if they have an account for their children? If no, why not?***

We have numerous security measures built into Messenger Kids including systems that monitor for suspicious activity. By leveraging infrastructure shared across the Facebook family, Messenger Kids benefits from security systems that are constantly being run to protect people.

We automatically encrypt communications between the Messenger Kids app on a child's device and Facebook servers, as well as between the Messenger app on a parent's device and Facebook servers. We do not use end-to-end encryption for Messenger Kids messages because we believe it is important for children and their parents to have the ability to report content to Facebook's community operations team for review, and for us to be able to use automated systems to detect and deter abusive behavior. We believe that this approach enables us to protect Messenger Kids communications while also ensuring that we can provide support and resources to protect children as they use Messenger Kids.

***6. Is Facebook collecting any information about device location? If yes, for what purpose and how will that information be protected?***

No. Messenger Kids does not ask for the Location Services permission provided by the mobile operating system and does not collect or use precise location information.

***7. Is there a setting for parents to prevent a child from going from this app to browsing the internet? Can live links be sent from kid to kid in Messenger Kids?***

Yes. Messenger Kids currently blocks link sharing and the application does not provide functionality to access the broader Internet, nor does it include a web browser. If a child is concerned about any content that he or she receives in Messenger Kids, the child can also report it, which also notifies the parent.

***8. Can a parent set the app to time out after a certain time period, and if so, would the child be able to override that shut-off?***

We intend to build time controls for Messenger Kids in 2018. We are getting early feedback on how parents and kids are using the app so we can determine what controls will best address their needs when it comes to managing screen time on Messenger Kids.

***9. Is there a minimum age to obtain a Messenger Kids account?***

We believe parents are best equipped to determine if and when their child is ready to have a Messenger Kids account, so we have chosen not to specify a particular minimum age.

***10. In what ways did Facebook work with child development experts to design the app? If no, why not? If yes:***

***a. How did your company address any concerns expressed regarding the suitability of digital communications applications used by young children?***

***b. What are the mechanisms in place, if any, to understand the impact on a child's development as a consequence of using Messenger Kids?***

***c. What kind of evaluation and testing has this development undergone and will Facebook make this research public?***

In addition to doing research with thousands of parents in collaboration with the National PTA and Blue Star Families, we engaged with more than a dozen expert advisors in the areas of child development, online safety, and children's media and technology who've helped inform our approach to building our first app for kids. Our team of advisors includes top experts currently and formerly from organizations such as the [Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence](#), [Connect Safely](#), [Center on Media and Child Health](#), [Sesame Workshop](#) and more.

The attached documents provide much more detail on our approach and engagement.

<https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/12/hard-questions-kids-online/>  
<https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/12/introducing-messenger-kids-a-new-app-for-families-to-connect/>

Thank you again for recognizing the steps we have taken to create a safer, parent-controlled, space for children to communicate with close friends and family. We truly appreciate this opportunity to share more information about Messenger Kids and our commitment to approaching all efforts related to children 12 and under thoughtfully, and with the guidance and input of experts and parents.

Sincerely,



Antigone Davis  
Global Head of Safety