

# Enhancing Child Safety & Online Technologies:

FINAL REPORT OF THE  
INTERNET SAFETY TECHNICAL TASK FORCE

To the Multi-State Working Group on Social Networking  
of State Attorneys General of the United States

DECEMBER 31, 2008



**Berkman**

The Berkman Center for Internet & Society  
at Harvard University

## **APPENDIX A:**

### **Joint Statement on Key Principles of Social Networking Safety**



## Roy Cooper North Carolina Attorney General

For Immediate Release  
Date: January 14, 2008

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### **AG Cooper announces landmark agreement to protect kids online**

*Cooper led effort to forge national agreement with MySpace to make social networks safer*

**New York:** In a victory for social networking safety, Attorney General Roy Cooper and 49 other attorneys general today announced that MySpace has agreed to significant steps to better protect children on its web site, including creating a task force to explore and develop age and identity verification technology.

“We’re joining forces to find the most effective ways to keep young children off these sites and to protect the kids who do use them,” said Cooper. “This agreement sets a new standard for social networking sites that have been quick to grow but slow to recognize their responsibility to keep kids safe.”

MySpace acknowledged in the agreement the important role of age and identity verification technology in social networking safety and agreed to find and develop on-line identity authentication tools. Cooper and the other attorneys general advocate age and identity verification, calling it vital to better protecting children using social networking sites from online sexual predators and inappropriate material.

Other specific changes and policies that MySpace agreed to develop include: allowing parents to submit their children’s email addresses so MySpace can prevent anyone using those email addresses from setting up profiles, making the default setting “private” for profiles of 16- and 17-year-olds, promising to respond within 72 hours to inappropriate content complaints and committing more staff and/or resources to review and classify photographs and discussion groups.

Cooper commended MySpace for its willingness to make its site safer, calling it an industry leader and urging other social networks to adopt the safety principles in today’s agreement.

The agreement culminates nearly two years of discussions between MySpace and the Attorneys General. The Attorneys General were led by North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper and Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, co-chairmen of the multistate group’s Executive Committee consisting of Connecticut, North Carolina, Georgia, Idaho, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and the District of Columbia. Attorneys General from 49 states and the District of Columbia signed the agreement.

Under the agreement, MySpace, with support from the attorneys general, will create and lead an Internet Safety Technical Task Force to explore and develop age and identity verification tools for social networking web sites. MySpace will invite other social networking sites, age and identity verification experts, child protection groups and technology companies to participate in the task force.

The task force will report back to the attorneys general every three months and issue a formal report with findings and recommendations at the end of 2008.

MySpace also will hire a contractor to compile a registry of email addresses provided by parents who want to restrict their child's access to the site. MySpace will bar anyone using a submitted email address from signing in or creating a profile.

MySpace also agreed to work to:

- Strengthen software identifying underage users;
- Retain a contractor to better identify and expunge inappropriate images;
- Obtain and constantly update a list of pornographic web sites and regularly sever any links between them and MySpace;
- Implement changes making it harder for adults to contact children;
- Dedicate meaningful resources to educating children and parents about on-line safety;
- Provide a way to report abuse on every page that contains content, consider adopting a common mechanism to report abuse, and respond quickly to abuse reports;
- Create a closed "high school" section for users under 18.

"This agreement tackles some of the most risky elements of social networking, but we must do even more to keep kids safe online," said Cooper. "We'll keep pushing to find child predators and put them behind bars, and we'll keep urging parents to pay attention to what their kids are doing on the computer."

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## **JOINT STATEMENT ON KEY PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES SAFETY**

MySpace and the Attorneys General have discussed social networking sites safety measures with great vigor over several months. MySpace and the Attorneys General agree that social networking sites are a powerful communications tool that provides people with great social benefits. However, like all communication tools, social networking sites can be misused as a means to commit crimes against minors and can allow minors to gain access to content that may be inappropriate for them.

MySpace and the Attorneys General recognize that millions of minors across the world access the Internet each day, and that many of these minors create social networking profiles on MySpace and other social networking sites. Based on recommendations MySpace received from the Attorneys General and online safety advocates, and as a result of its internal safety and engineering teams, MySpace has implemented technologies and procedures to help prevent children under 14 from using MySpace and to help protect minors age 14 and above from exposure to inappropriate content and unwanted contact by adults. The Attorneys General commend MySpace for its efforts to address these issues. They also call upon other social networking services to adopt these principles.

MySpace and the Attorneys General agree that additional ways to protect children should be developed. This effort is important as a policy matter and as a business matter.

**PRINCIPLE:** Providing children with a safer social networking experience is a primary objective for operators of social networking sites.

### **I. ONLINE SAFETY TOOLS**

**PRINCIPLE:** Technology and other tools that empower parents, educators and children are a necessary element of a safer online experience for children.

**PRINCIPLE:** Online safety tools, including online identity authentication technologies, are important and must be robust and effective in creating a safer online experience, and must meet the particular needs of individual Web sites.

- MySpace will organize, with support of the Attorneys General, an industry-wide Internet Safety Technical Task Force (“Task Force”) devoted to finding and developing such online safety tools with a focus on finding and developing online identity authentication tools. This Task Force will include Internet businesses, identity authentication experts, non-profit organizations, and technology companies.
- The Task Force will establish specific and objective criteria that will be utilized to evaluate existing and new technology safety solutions.

- MySpace and other members of the Task Force will provide adequate resources to ensure that all reasonable efforts are made to explore and develop identity authentication technologies.
- News Corporation will designate a senior executive to work with the Task Force.
- The Task Force will provide the Executive Committee of the Attorneys General Social Networking Working Group (“Executive Committee”) with quarterly reports of its efforts and presentation of a formal report by the end of 2008. The Executive Committee will have continuing access to the Task Force and the designated senior executive of News Corporation.

## **II. DESIGN AND FUNCTIONALITY CHANGES**

**PRINCIPLE:** Development of effective Web site design and functionality improvements to protect children from inappropriate adult contacts and content must be an ongoing effort.

- MySpace and the Attorneys General share the goal of designing and implementing technologies and features that will make MySpace safer for its users, particularly minors. More specifically, their shared goals include designing and implementing technologies and features that will (1) prevent underage users from accessing the site; (2) protect minors from inappropriate contact; (3) protect minors from inappropriate content; and (4) provide safety tools for all MySpace users.
- The Attorneys General acknowledge that MySpace is seeking to address these goals by (1) implementing the design and functionality initiatives described in Appendix A; and (2) working to implement the design and functionality initiatives described in Appendix B.
- MySpace and the Attorneys General will meet on a regular basis to discuss in good faith design and functionality improvements relevant to protecting minors using the Web site.

## **III. EDUCATION AND TOOLS FOR PARENTS, EDUCATORS, AND CHILDREN**

**PRINCIPLE:** Educating parents, educators and children about safe and responsible social networking site use is also a necessary part of a safe Internet experience for children.

- MySpace will continue to dedicate meaningful resources to convey information to help parents and educators protect children and help younger users enjoy a safer experience on MySpace. These efforts will include MySpace's plan to engage in public service announcements, develop free parental monitoring software, and explore the establishment of a children's email registry.
- MySpace shall use its best efforts to acknowledge consumer reports or complaints received via its abuse reporting mechanisms within 24 hours of receiving such report or complaint. Within 72 hours of receiving a complaint or report from a consumer regarding inappropriate content or activity on the site, MySpace will report to the consumer the steps it has taken to address the complaint.
- For a two (2) year period MySpace shall retain an Independent Examiner, at MySpace's expense, who shall be approved by the Executive Committee. The Independent Examiner shall evaluate and examine MySpace's handling of these consumer complaints and shall prepare bi-annual reports to the Executive Committee concerning MySpace's consumer complaint handling and response procedures, as provided above.

#### **IV. LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION**

**PRINCIPLE:** Social networking site operators and law enforcement officials must work together to deter and prosecute criminals misusing the Internet.

- MySpace and the Attorneys General will work together to support initiatives that will enhance the ability of law enforcement officials to investigate and prosecute Internet crimes.
- MySpace and the Attorneys General will continue to work together to make sure that law enforcement officials can act quickly to investigate and prosecute criminal conduct identified on MySpace.
- MySpace has established a 24-hour hotline to respond to law enforcement inquiries. In addition, News Corporation will assign a liaison to address complaints about MySpace received from the Attorneys General. MySpace will provide a report on the status of its response to any such complaint within 72 hours of receipt by the liaison.

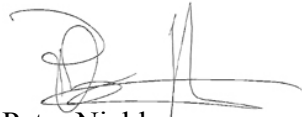
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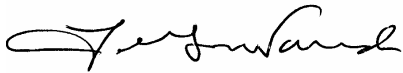
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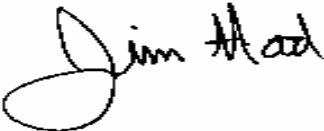
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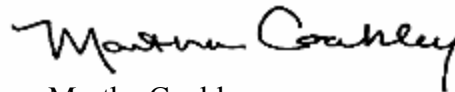
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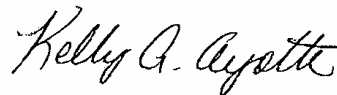
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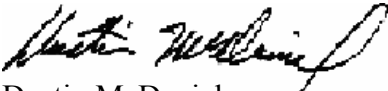


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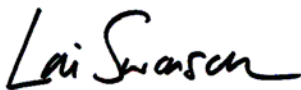
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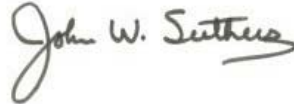
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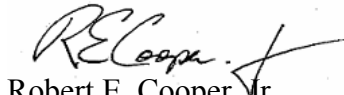
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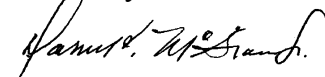
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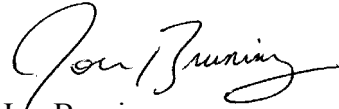
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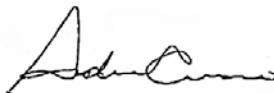
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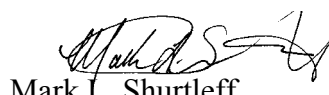
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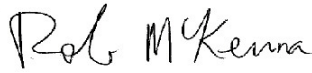
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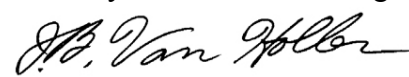
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## **APPENDIX A: DESIGN AND FUNCTIONALITY CHANGES**

### **Preventing Underage Users**

1. Browse function - limit to 68 years and below.
2. MySpace will implement “age locking” for existing profiles such that members will be allowed to change their ages only once above or below the 18 year old threshold. Once changed across this threshold, under 18 members will be locked into the age they provided while 18 and older members will be able to make changes to their age as long as they remain above the 18 threshold. MySpace will implement “age locking” for new profiles such that under 18 members will be locked into the age they provide at sign-up while 18 and older members will be able to make changes to their age as long as they remain above the 18 threshold.

### **Protecting Younger Users from Inappropriate Contact**

1. Users able to restrict friend requests to only those who know their email address or last name.
2. “Friend only” group invite mandatory for 14 and 15 year olds.
3. “Friend only” group invite by default for 16 and 17 years olds.
4. Users under 18 can block all users over 18 from contacting them or viewing their profile.
5. Users over 18 will be limited to search in the school section only for high school students graduating in the current or upcoming year.
6. Users over 18 may designate their profiles as private to users under 18, and users under 18 may designate their profiles as private to users over 18.
7. Limit search engine ability to crawl all private profiles.
8. Users under 18 cannot designate themselves as swingers.
9. Users under 16 are automatically assigned a private profile.
10. Users over 18 cannot browse for users under 18.
11. A user cannot browse for users under 16.
12. Users over 18 cannot add users under 16 as friends unless they know the under 16 user's last name or email address.

13. Personally identifiable information removed upon discovery.
14. Users under 18 cannot browse for swingers.
15. MySpace will not allow unregistered visitors to the site to view any search results related to mature areas of the site, profiles that are private to under 18s, or other groups and forums geared toward sexual activity and mature content.
16. MySpace will change the default for under 18 members to require approval for all profile comments.
17. MySpace will remove the ability for under 18 members to browse the following categories: relationship status, “here for”, body type, height, smoke, drink, orientation and income.
18. If users under 16 override their privacy settings, they are still only viewable by other users under 18.
19. When user posts images, they will receive a note including IP address of the computer that uploaded the image.
20. Add sender URL in mail for private messages.
21. Locate underage users (searching specific keywords, reviewing groups and forums, and browsing certain age ranges).
22. Profiles of Registered Sex Offenders identified through Sentinel SAFE technology are reviewed and, once confirmed, are removed from the site. The associated data are preserved for law enforcement.

### **Protecting Younger Users from Inappropriate Content**

1. Implementation of image policy for hosted images that employs hashing technology to prevent inappropriate image uploads.
2. Expand flag spam/abuse to allow categorization of flagged message.
3. Expand “Report Image” functionality to include a drop down menu that provides members with greater specificity on why they are reporting image. Categories to include Pornography, Cyberbullying, and Unauthorized Use.
4. Under 18s/under 21s cannot access tobacco/alcohol advertisements.
5. MySpace and Attorneys General commit to discuss with Google the need to cease directing age inappropriate linked advertisements to minors.

6. Events may be designated for all ages, for 18 + or for 21+.
7. MySpace will notify users whose profiles are deleted for Terms of Service Violations.
8. Groups reviewed for incest, hate speech or youth sex subjects with violators removed from site.
9. Members determined to be under 18 to be removed from mature Groups.
10. Posts determined to be made to mature Groups by under 18 members to be removed.
11. Any mature Groups determined to be created by under 18 members will be removed entirely and the user accounts may be deleted for violating the Terms of Service.
12. Users under 18 to be denied access to Romance & Relationships Forum and Groups.
13. Users under 18 will not have access to inappropriate parts of Classifieds (dating, casting calls).
14. Members may request to label Groups they create as mature.
15. Flagged Groups are reviewed and categorized by MySpace staff.
16. Members under 18 and non-registered users may not enter or view a Group page that has been designated as mature.
17. MySpace hired a Safety Product Manager.
18. Smoking/Drinking preferences blocked for under 18s/under 21s.
19. User accounts promptly deleted for uploading child pornographic images and/or videos and referred to NCMEC.
20. MySpace does not tolerate pornography on its site, and users determined to have uploaded pornographic images and/or videos flagrantly and/or repeatedly will have their accounts deleted.

### **Providing Safety Tools For All Members**

1. All users may set profile to private.
2. All users can pre-approve all comments before being posted.

3. Users can block another user from contacting them.
4. Users can conceal their “online now” status.
5. Users can prevent forwarding of their images to other sites.
6. MySpace adds “Report Abuse” button to Email, Video, and Forums.
7. Users over 18 can block under 18 users from contacting them or viewing their profiles.
8. All users can allow only those users whom they have proactively added to their Contact List to see when they are on IM and to contact them.
9. “Safety Tips” Available on every page of MySpace.
10. “Safety Tips” Appear on registration page for anyone under 18.
11. Users under 18 must affirmatively consent that user has reviewed the Safety Tips prior to registration. MySpace will require under 18 members to scroll through the complete Safety Tips upon registration. MySpace will also require under 18 members to review the Safety Tips on an annual basis.
12. Additional warning posted to users under 18 regarding disclosure of personal information upon registration.
13. Safety Tips are posted in the “mail” area of all existing users under 18.
14. Safety Tips contain resources for Internet Safety including FTC Tips.
15. Phishing warning added to Safety Tips.
16. Safety Tips for Parents provides links to free blocking software.
17. Parent able to remove child's profile through the ParentCare Hotline and ParentCare Email.
18. MySpace will have “Tom” become a messenger to deliver Safety Tips to minors on MySpace.
19. All users under 18 receive security warnings before posting content.

## **APPENDIX B: DESIGN AND FUNCTIONALITY INITIATIVES**

MySpace will continue to research and develop online safety tools. Based on recommendations MySpace received from the Attorneys General and online safety advocates, and as a result of the work of its internal safety and engineering teams, MySpace's current plans include the following initiatives:

### **Limiting MySpace Membership to Users 14 and Over**

1. Engage a third-party to build and host a registry of email addresses for children under 18. Parents would register their children if they did not want them to have access to MySpace or any other social networking site that uses the registry. A child whose information matches the registry would not be able to register for MySpace membership.
2. Strengthen the algorithm that identifies underage users.

### **Protecting Minors from Unwanted Contacts by Adults**

1. Change the default setting for 16-17 year olds' profiles from "public" to "private."
2. Create a closed high school section for users under 18. The "private" profile of a 16/17 year old will be viewable only by his/her "friends" and other students from that high school who have been vouched for by another such student. Students attending the same high school will be able to "Browse" for each other.

### **Protecting Minors from Exposure to Inappropriate Content**

1. MySpace will review models for a common abuse reporting icon (including the New Jersey Attorney General's "Report Abuse" icon). If MySpace determines that a common icon is workable and will improve user safety, it may substitute the common icon for the current report abuse icon MySpace places on each member profile.
2. Obtain a list of adult (porn) Web sites on an ongoing basis and sever all links to those sites from MySpace.
3. Demand that adult entertainment industry performers set their profiles to block access to all under 18 users.
4. Remove all under 18 users from profiles of identified adult entertainment industry performers.
5. Retain image review vendor(s) that can effectively and efficiently identify inappropriate content so it can be removed from the site more expeditiously.

6. Investigate the use of an additional image review vendor to provide automated analysis of images to help prioritize images for human review.
7. MySpace will (1) develop and/or use existing technology such as textual searching; and (2) provide increased staffing, if appropriate, in order to more efficiently and effectively review and categorize content in “Groups.” MySpace will update the Attorneys General concerning its efforts to develop and/or use textual searching on a quarterly basis. Upon implementation of textual searching, the Attorneys General will review its efficacy with respect to “Groups” for a period of 18 months.