Software helps parents oversee children on Facebook

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A 10-year-old boy looks at a video on the internet. Internet security firm Check Point on Tuesday launched software that lets parents watch over offspring on Facebook without being "friends" at the online social network.

Internet security firm Check Point on Tuesday launched software that lets parents watch over offspring on Facebook without being "friends" at the online social network.

ZoneAlarm SocialGuard alerts parents to signs of trouble in a child's Facebook account without them being privy to all posts, comments, pictures, videos or other digital content shared between friends at the website.

The program scans Facebook profiles, communications and "friend" requests and uses algorithms to identify potential bullying, sexual

overtures, or talk of drugs, violence or suicide.

SocialGuard software runs unseen in the background, flagging suspicious activity and sending alerts to parents, according to its Redwood City, California-based creators.

"It's about protecting your kids from the social threats out there, while still respecting their privacy and fostering open communication," said Check Point vice president of consumer sales Bari Abdul.

"We are offering Facebook users a simple way to embrace social networking safely," he continued.

SocialGuard is crafted to detect hacked accounts, malicious links, online predators, and cyber-bullies, according to Check Point.

The software also checks to determine whether people contacting children online are being deceptive about their ages or if a stranger is trying to become a Facebook "friend."

"Parents are increasingly concerned, and rightfully so, about the dramatically increasing trend of criminals, predators and bullies targeting children over social networks," said analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group in Silicon Valley.

"SocialGuard provides a strong suite of tools that can effectively protect children from these types of social threats that are keeping parents awake at night."

Check Point cited a survey indicating that 38 percent of teenagers have ignored requests from parents to be friends on Facebook, and that 16 percent of children have only done so as a condition of using the social network.

SocialGuard was available online at zonealarm.com for $2 monthly or $20 annually.

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