

Facebook explores access for kids under 13

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Indonesian children log on a Facebook page at an internet shop in Kuta in the resort island of Bali in February 2012. Facebook is working on technology that would permit children under the age of 13 to use the social network site with parental supervision, people familiar with the effort said.

Facebook is working on technology that would permit children under the age of 13 to use the social network site with parental supervision, people familiar with the effort said Monday.

Facebook currently requires members to be at least 13, but the new effort is being made because many children lie about their age to get access Facebook and its 900 million members, a source told AFP.

A Facebook spokesman told AFP no decision has been made on any policy change.

But a statement from the spokesman said the California company was exploring ways to handle children using Facebook.

"Many recent reports have highlighted just how difficult it is to enforce age restrictions on the Internet, especially when parents want their children to access online content and services," the statement said.

"We are in continuous dialogue with stakeholders, regulators and other policymakers about how best to help parents keep their kids safe in an evolving online environment."

The effort by Facebook to allow younger children, first reported by the Wall Street Journal, would use technology to allow parents to determine who their children can friend and what applications they could use.

The report noted that that many youngsters lie about their age, putting the company in an awkward position regarding a federal requirement to obtain parental consent before collecting personal data.

The Journal said the move may exacerbate privacy concerns about the massive social network, but that the company has little choice but to look into ways to establish controls that would take into account the site's use by younger children.

A source familiar with the effort said Facebook would comply with laws in the United States and other countries on child protections. These laws vary for country to country, with some being similar to US law and others having no law on online use by minors.

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