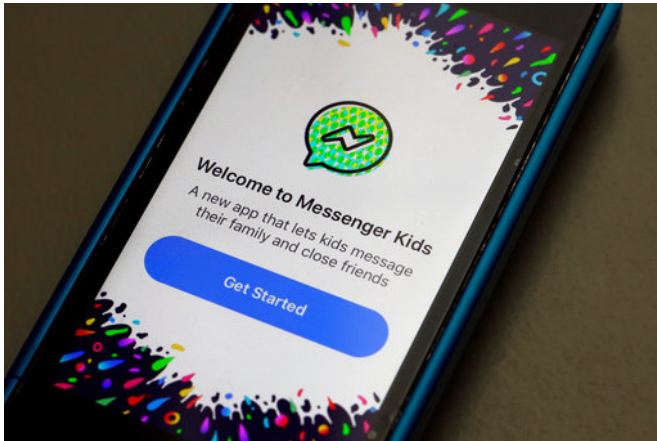


Child experts file FTC complaint against Facebook kids' app

3 October 2018, by Barbara Ortutay



In this Feb. 16, 2018, file photo, Facebook's Messenger Kids app is displayed on an iPhone in New York. The Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and other groups are asking the Federal Trade Commission on Wednesday, Oct. 3, to investigate Facebook's Messenger Kids for violating the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA. (AP Photo/Richard Drew, File)

Children's and public health advocacy groups say Facebook's kid-centric messaging app violates federal law by collecting kids' personal information without getting verifiable consent from their parents.

The Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and other groups asked the Federal Trade Commission on Wednesday to investigate Facebook's Messenger Kids for violating the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA.

The complaint says the app does not meet COPPA requirements because it doesn't try to ensure that the person who sets up the kids' account and gives consent to have their data collected is the actual parent. In fact, the groups say, someone could set

up a brand new, fictional account and immediately approve a kid's account without proving their age or identity.

Facebook said Wednesday it hasn't yet reviewed the complaint letter. The company has said it doesn't show ads on Messenger Kids or collect data for marketing purposes, though it does collect some data it says is necessary to run the service.

But the [advocacy groups](#) say the privacy policy of Messenger Kids is "incomplete and vague" and allows Facebook to disclose data to third parties and other Facebook services "for broad, undefined business purposes."



In this Feb. 16, 2018, photo, Facebook and Facebook's Messenger Kids app icons are displayed on an iPhone in New York. The Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and other groups are asking the Federal Trade Commission on Wednesday, Oct. 3, to investigate Facebook's Messenger Kids for violating the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA. (AP Photo/Richard Drew, File)

Facebook launched Messenger Kids last December on iOS and has since expanded to Android and

Amazon devices and beyond the U.S. to Mexico, Canada and elsewhere. It is aimed at children under 13 who technically cannot have Facebook accounts (although plenty of them do).

Though the company says it has received a lot of input from parents and children's development experts in creating the app, groups such as the CCFC have been trying to get Messenger Kids shut down since it launched.

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