CAUTION!

The rapid spread of technology has reached our children. While there are many benefits to using technology, it can also be potentially harmful or dangerous if misused. Children's internet and technology use should be educational and closely monitored.

Does your child use a smartphone, or have access to apps on a smartphone? If so, please be sure that you are educated about the apps they use. The following apps have the **potential** to be used inappropriately. Many of these apps have also been used in cases of cyberbullying. If your child is using any of the following apps, please become familiar with the app yourself, and have a conversation about how to use it appropriately.

Tinder is a "dating" app that allows users to see the profile picture of other users who are in the <u>same geographic area</u>. Users can then swipe the photos they like and if the person they swipe swipes them back, they go from there. This app can potentially connect your child with a total stranger who may or may not be the person they're depicting and that other person can narrow down to within a frighteningly small radius exactly where your child is.

YikYak can actually be relatively harmless and entertaining. In a nutshell this app allows users to post anonymous messages to a board that can be seen by anyone in the same geographic location. Has been linked to cyberbullying cases.

Ask.fm is a question/answer app that allows users to interact anonymously if they choose. Some cyberbullying cases have been linked to this app. If this app is on your student's phone, open it and look around on a regular basis. It allows users to interact with strangers.

SnapChat is one of the well-known teen apps. The short version is that it allows users to send picture messages that delete themselves after a few seconds (unless the recipient takes a screenshot).

KiK is a messaging app, like instant messaging. KiK is very popular with students. It would be prudent to check your child's usage of this app regularly to be sure it is used appropriately.

Down: This is an extremely inappropriate app for students. It's almost exclusively used to find anonymous sex. This should NOT be on a student's phone!

Whisper: Another app that lets people post messages anonymously. Like the others, it can have the potential to lead to bullying situations. If your kid has it, open it. Look around regularly.

Similar to YikYak, **Firechat** is an app that allows users to post to public message boards anonymously. Connecting to people you don't know can be interesting and educational. However anonymous message boards have a tendency to turn into cyberbullying. If your child has it, monitor it closely.

Cuddlr: This is an app for people who would like to find complete strangers in their area to "snuggle with." The app lists some ground rules like not going to a stranger's house and that cuddling means cuddling, but they obviously can't enforce that.
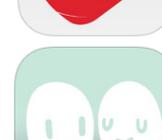
Lastly, **disable location services** for apps as some apps allow complete strangers to see your child's location.
Find more information at: www.yourbestfamily.com/creating-a-family-tech-plan.html
Adapted from Ryan Smith, LPC, LMFT (www.yourbestfamily.com/cautionapps)