Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)

The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) is a federal law enacted by Congress in 2000 to help protect children from harmful online content when they are using internet access provided by schools and libraries. CIPA applies to schools and libraries that receive certain federal funding through the E-Rate program.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted rules implementing CIPA in 2001 and updated those rules in 2011 to reflect new online safety requirements established by the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act.

What Does CIPA Require?

To receive E-Rate support, schools and libraries must certify that they have adopted and are enforcing an internet safety policy that includes technology protection measures such as filtering or blocking tools.

These technology protection measures must block access to pictures that are:

- Obscene
- Child pornography
- Harmful to minors (when accessed by minors)

Before adopting an internet safety policy, schools and libraries must provide reasonable public notice and hold at least one public meeting or hearing to discuss the proposed policy.

Additional Requirements for Schools

Schools participating in the E-Rate program must also certify that their internet safety policy includes monitoring the online activities of minors and educating students about appropriate online behavior, including:

- Safe use of social media and online communications
- Interacting responsibly with others online
- Cyberbullying awareness and prevention
- Digital citizenship and online safety practices

Internet Safety Policies

Schools and libraries subject to CIPA must adopt and implement policies that address:

- Access by minors to inappropriate content on the internet
- The safety and security of minors when using email, chat rooms, social media, and other forms of online communication
- Unauthorized access, hacking, and other unlawful online activities
- Unauthorized disclosure, use, or sharing of minors' personal information
- Measures designed to restrict access to content that is harmful to minors

Certification and Compliance

Schools and libraries must certify their compliance with CIPA as part of the E-Rate application process.

- CIPA does not apply to entities receiving E-Rate support only for telecommunications services.
- In addition, schools and libraries may disable filtering technology for adults engaged in bona fide research or for other lawful purposes, as permitted by law.
- CIPA does not require schools or libraries to track or retain the internet browsing history of minors or adults.

For information about E-Rate eligibility, applications, and CIPA compliance requirements, visit:

- E-Rate - Schools & Libraries USF Program: fcc.gov/general/e-rate-schools-libraries-usf-program
- Universal Service Administration Co.'s (USAC's) CIPA webpage: usac.org/e-rate/applicant-process/starting-services/cipa/

You can also contact the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) E-Rate Customer Service Center at 1-888-203-8100 for assistance with E-Rate and CIPA compliance requirements.

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at fcc.gov/consumers.

Alternate formats

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