

## IMPORTANT ITEMS IN THE NEWS

### **Porn giant to stop running site in Florida due to age-verification law DeSantis signed**

“Adult” industry giant Pornhub in the new year will block its website in Florida after Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis signed an age-verification law in March protecting children from accessing pornographic material.

**Million Kids Insights:** *The change in Florida takes place on January 1, 2025. Florida is the 14th state that Pornhub (owned by Aylo formerly MindGeek out of Canada), RedTube and YouPorn have had to work with age verification laws. It started with Louisiana and the list includes: Arkansas, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Montana, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, Texas, Utah and Virginia. Believe it or not a similar bill was actually introduced into California, but no surprise the initial hearing was canceled. Pornhub will cease all operations in Florida and they have already ceased operations in Arkansas, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, Utah, Virginia and Texas. In other states, like Louisiana they have tried to comply with the laws by using a third party, LA Wallet, to do the age verification. The idea is that it provides privacy on the adult sites but Pornhub says that even with that mechanism in place their traffic in Louisiana went down 80%. People didn't want to show ID to anyone, and instead went to sites breaking the law and not requiring (possibly on the dark net).*

*Something also interesting in this Florida law is that as of Jan 1, children age 14 or younger are prohibited from creating or possessing a social media account. Any accounts already created will need to be terminated. Parental permission is required for those 14 and 15-years-old. Social media companies will be required to use a third-party age verification system and that system is not allowed to store the data. Within the law they did not name specific sites but instead named the processes which would qualify them to fall under this law. Examples include: users can upload content or view the content or activity of other users, 10% or more of the daily active users who are younger than 16 spend an average of two hours a day or longer, the site uses algorithms to analyze user data, and it includes addictive features. There is a preliminary injunction against this law and so it will not be enforced until a ruling is made. The hearing is scheduled for February.*

*With Pornhub, most people across the U.S. are in support of age verifications to access pornography. An August poll conducted by RMG Research showed that 83% of respondents favor a national age verification law to stop online pornography companies from exposing children to pornography. Fifty-eight percent of all respondents replied that they “strongly favor” the law, while 25% indicated that they “somewhat favor” it. By contrast, only a combined 14% were opposed to a national age verification law. Nine percent of the respondents answered “somewhat oppose,” while only 5% said they would “strongly oppose” the law. The remaining 4% of respondents were “not sure.”*

*Pornhub is the 19th most visited website in the WORLD (Google is number one). One PornHub executive was quoted as saying: "At some point, the adult industry will be normalized."*

[LINK TO FULL ARTICLE](#)

### **Gov Abbott unveils new campaign exposing horrific dangers of illegal immigration**

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott announced a new billboard campaign on Thursday to warn potential illegal immigrants about the "horrific" reality of human trafficking, violence and danger facing them if they attempt to illegally enter the U.S.

Abbott said the state is placing dozens of billboards with warnings in several languages throughout Mexico and Central America.

**Million Kids Insights:** *The billboards are written in Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic and they began going up December 18 in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico and along the Texas-Mexico border. They are intended to be quite graphic. One says in Spanish showing a little girl: "How much did you pay to have your daughter raped?" Another has a pregnant woman and says: "Your wife and daughter will pay for their trip with their bodies. Coyotes lie. Don't put your family at risk." and another reads: "Many girls who try to migrate to Texas are kidnapped". Other billboards are warning that those who enter Texas illegally will be arrested and face deportation. The idea is to be a warning to potential migrants and get them to reconsider making the dangerous journey. Governor Abbott said, "These billboards tell the horror stories of human trafficking. They implore those people in Central America to consider the violent, horrific realities of what will happen to the women and children they bring with them."*

*There are claims along the border of alleged "rape trees". The rapists are said to hang the garments of the women they have raped from the tree's branches (although local ranchers claim the trees are there, local law enforcement denies that the trees exist). However, what has been reported and verified is victims who say they were raped in stash houses on the southern side of the border.*

*Criminal investigations into the rape of foreign nationals, excluding Americans, were the highest on record in the border cities of Reynosa and Matamoros, according to state data from 2014 to 2023 obtained by Reuters through freedom of information requests. Experts in the area say that rape is sometimes used as part of the torture process to get money from those trying to migrant - especially those not using coyotes. A fee is demanded for permission to enter areas controlled by the cartel.*

*There have been additional reports of sexual assault occurring at the Darién Gap jungle of Panama linking Columbia to Central America. In October, 2023, Doctors Without Borders reported assisting 107 victims of sexual abuse, including 59 in one week. Three of the victims were ages 11, 12 and 16, the organization said. One victim said, "They say it is their land, that you have to respect it, and that whoever passes through there must pay. And if you pay or don't pay, they do it anyway. They'll abuse whoever they want. They have even raped men."*

*For Million Kids, what alarms us is how many of these people are then exploited even more by being trafficked once they arrive in the U.S. Whistleblowers are talking about sponsors not being vetted and children being sent to people who may not be related. 2025 may show an explosion of exploited victims as more and more of this comes to light.*

[LINK TO FULL ARTICLE](#)

### **Embattled Character.AI Hiring Trust and Safety Staff**

Character.AI, the Google-backed AI chatbot startup embroiled in two lawsuits concerning the welfare of minors, appears to be bulking up its content moderation team in the wake of litigation and heightened public scrutiny.

**Million Kids Insights:** *Over the years, Christmas has been an opportunity to gift children and young people with new electronic devices. The child is thrilled and within minutes they have opened the door to the world. The downside is that they have also opened the door to predators and those who are more concerned with profit over the well being of the child. It is so critical that parents have an open discussion with their children about the potential risks and that the parents are vigilant about monitoring their children's online interactions.*

*As we've shared in previous eblasts, Character.AI (aka c.ai) is being sued for allegedly encouraging kids to harm themselves, hurt their parents and in one case, the c.ai has been accused of causing the teen to take his own life. In the article by Futurism, they say they found c.ai bots — and entire creator communities — dedicated to perpetrators of mass violence, including bots that simulate school shootings, emulate real school shooters, and impersonate real child and teenage victims of school violence.*

*Bark.us, a company that helps protect children and provides child friendly devices, says: Some of the characters themselves are concerning, like one called "Toxic Boyfriend" that starts the conversation off with "Why are you always so annoying?" This highlights a similar issue found on fan fiction platforms like Wattpad, where fantasies of fictional characters can quickly trend toward glorifying harmful or abusive romantic relationships. But even seemingly wholesome characters can have conversations that turn dark or sexual. C.ai also has a group chat function and direct link to Discord which allows predators to access young people.*

*In a recent press release, Character.AI has announced they will roll out a specific model for teens which will limit certain responses or interactions, reducing the likelihood of users encountering, or prompting the model to return, sensitive or suggestive content. They will also make some changes including more parental controls, time spent notifications after an hour, and adding prominent disclaimers reminding users that the chatbots are not real people and what they say should be treated as fiction. They don't say when these changes will take effect.*

{LINK TO FULL ARTICLE}(<https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/other/embattled-characterai-hiring->

trust-and-safety-staff/ar-AA1wfoxi)

[LINK TO CHANGES FOR CHARACTER.AI](#)

### **DHS Says Children Being Trafficked 'Outside' Its Responsibility**

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is facing scrutiny after Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said the agency's responsibility for addressing child-trafficking ends once minors are handed over to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The audit revealed that from 2019 to 2023, ICE transferred over 448,000 unaccompanied children to the HHS. After their release from HHS custody, the agency faced challenges in tracking the whereabouts of many of these children. During this time, over 32,000 children missed scheduled immigration court hearings, with ICE unable to account for their locations.

The report reveals that the number of missing children may be even higher, as ICE did not issue Notices to Appear (NTAs) for 291,000 children, leaving them without court dates and outside the formal immigration system.

[LINK TO FULL ARTICLE](#)

### **Report: App Store Hosting Hundreds of Inappropriate Apps Rated Safe for Children**

Apple's App Store is hosting hundreds of inappropriate apps that are rated as suitable for children as young as 12, according to a new report. Nonprofit organizations Parents Together Action and Heat Initiative reviewed 800 apps in 24 hours and uncovered 200 apps with inappropriate content rated as "safe" for children 12 and younger, and in some cases as young as four.

[LINK TO FULL ARTICLE](#)