



Helping Families Thrive®

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Feedback on Recommendations on Public Consultation Paper for Internet Parental Controls

We welcome the Media Development Authority's efforts to facilitate the provision of Internet parental controls to aid parents to protect their children and moderate their children's Internet media consumption.

Focus on the Family has been actively involved in providing parent education through content development and programs on media discernment and parental involvement in media usage of their children. In our work with families in the area of marriage and parenting, we have found that even though the Internet can be an enabler, there are areas contributing to the breakdown of the family. The following points are but a sample of the vast research on the negative effects of pornography and violence on children, healthy relationships and marriage.

- There are 4.2 million pornographic sites¹ in the world with over 420 million web pages of porn for anyone, including children, to view.²
- Access and exposure to pornography affect children and young people's sexual beliefs. Pornography is related to maladaptive attitudes about relationships, more sexually permissive attitudes, greater acceptance of casual sex, sexual uncertainty, and less progressive gender role attitudes (male dominance and female submission). Children and young people learn from and may change their behavior due to exposure and access to pornography.³
- Prolonged exposure to pornography leads to the belief that promiscuity is the natural state, diminished trust between married couples, lack of attraction to family and child-raising.⁴

¹ http://familysafemedia.com/pornography_statistics.html

² "PORNOGRAPHY STATISTICS," Covenant Eyes – The Standard of Internet Integrity, <http://www.covenanteyes.com/2010/01/06/updated-pornography-statistics/>

³ Basically porn is everywhere. A Rapid Evidence Assessment on the Effects that Access and Exposure to Pornography has on Children and Young People, Miranda A.D Horvath, Llian Alys, Kristina Massey, Afroditi Pina, Mia Scally and Joanna R. Adler, The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England

⁴ Influence of Unrestrained Access to Erotica on Adolescents' and Young Adults' Dispositions towards Sexuality, Dolf Zillmann, Journal of Adolescent Health, Vol. 27, Iss. 2, Supp. 1, pgs. 41-44.



- Playing violent video games causes players to become more aggressive as the brains of violent video game players become less responsive to violence, and this diminished brain response predicts an increase in aggression.⁵

As such, Focus on the Family Singapore proposes the following recommendations.

1. SUBSCRIPTION PROCESS – Option 2: Opt-Out

Internet parental controls should be switched on by default at the point of subscription or renewal, unless instructed otherwise by the consumer. IASPs should inform subscribers of this default and will have to obtain the consumer's explicit decision to switch off the parental controls. Parents can still opt in for other additional value added services. This still places the onus on parental ownership, ensures parents are aware of the availability and emplacement of such controls and puts in a place a basic level of control for parents that otherwise may be indifferent.

2. CONTENT AND MODE TO BE FILTERED

With the prevalence of multiple devices in a household and an increased usage of mobile devices to access the Internet, we support the idea to provide network level Internet parental controls.

In addition to “adult content” as the default category to be filtered, other specific categories like (a) pornography, (b) extreme violence, (c) gore, (d) child pornography should also be included in the default if not already done so.

3. COST

IASPs should offer subscribers the basic default parental control functionalities for free with the subscription or renewal of Internet access packages. IASPs can choose to offer premium functionalities at an additional cost, albeit kept affordable for subscribers to encourage take up.

4. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need to have stronger commitment and collaboration between MDA, IASPs, and parents in Singapore to make the Internet safe for children. In addition to the provision of Internet parental controls:

- We propose that easy to understand and bite-sized parent and public education materials be sent to consumers to scale up the awareness and education of online safety, digital literacy and positive online behavior.
- Contact details and information of help centers, helplines, family life education organizations, counseling services be made available or sent to subscribers.

⁵ <http://scienceblog.com/45498/violent-video-games-reduce-brain-response-to-violence-and-increase-aggressive-behavior/>

Lastly, the Internet is a difficult place for adults to police, as such, we assert that parents must take the lead and ownership in modeling, educating and supervising their children's online habits and usage. Focus on the Family Singapore is committed to partnering with MDA to provide parent education through resources, programs and counseling to equip parents to navigate their children through the World Wide Web.

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