# Have you heard of SATURN?

## Overview

A popular social organizational app called Saturn has caught the attention of child safety experts nationwide over numerous major flaws in the apps security and the high potential for harm and misuse. Although Saturn posted on their website this week about the safety concerns, the response thus far has been inadequate and focuses only on users self-reporting "unusual accounts" vs changing any features in the app. Unless the developers of this app make major changes to the security features, it is advisable that parents and schools do not allow this app to be used by their students. There is very little need for this app, as many safe calendar apps and social media apps already exist.

## The App

- Students create profiles, join their school community, load their course schedules, get updates about school events/activities, and connect with other students both publicly and privately by using direct messaging.
- There are some functions that teachers can also use to disseminate information to students.
- Students connect their other social media accounts to Saturn, like Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, and even Venmo.
- The app has limited optional security settings and no parental control features.

## The Concerns - Predators

- The student "verification" process consists of self-reporting a school and birthdate, with nothing in place to ensure truthfulness. Although the app claims that students need to be verified using their school email address, you can join instantly with a phone number.
- The app connects to Snapchat and/or encourages students to create a Snapchat if they are not currently a user of that app so that it can use your photo and profile information from Snapchat (which also has safety concerns).
- CCA determined that it would be very easy for and adult to create a fake profile and gain access to a real student's personal information.
- Users can change schools at any time and with any frequency.
- This app provides an easy environment for adult/child relationships and grooming behaviors.

# The Concerns - Mental Health

- Stressors are a normal part of the back-to-school process, and this app has the potential to exacerbate that experience.
- This app is attractive to teenagers because it fuels their existing hyper-awareness of their friends' activities and locations both on and offline, giving them yet another thing to manage and keep up with in the landscape of social media and image.
- In the absence of adult oversight on the app and in the private chats, the likelihood of inappropriate content and cyberbullying incidents is high.

# Recommendations - Parents

- Talk to your kids about online safety and ensure that they understand the reasons behind your decisions to disallow certain apps. Although they might resist initially because of fear of being left out socially, it is more effective when parents and children collaborate as partners in safety.
- Consider using a safety monitoring service (i.e. BARK, iPhone Parental Controls, etc) if you are not already.
- Always be aware of what apps your child is using. Know how they work and what the potential benefits and dangers are of each.
- Contact CCA's Youth Services Coordinator, Savannah Rodgers, with any questions or if you need more information: srodgers@ccafl.org

# Recommendations - Schools

- Consider taking the official stance to prohibit the use of the Saturn app in your school.
- It is recommended that schools provide guidance to teachers so that they aren't using the app and creating false pressure for students to create accounts out of fear of missing important school information.
- Consider providing parent education regarding Saturn via your normal channels of communication: newsletter, email updates, and/or social media, etc.
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Community Coalition Alliance