Parental controls for cell phones

Cell phones and all of the plans that go with them can be confusing. And as a parent it is tough to figure out how much to supervise you kids' cell-phone use. But the good news is, there are a lot of tools out there to help. Every cell-phone carrier has parental controls to help you watch over your kids as much or as little as you think is best. All cell phone providers have parental controls that are similar in terms of allowing the parent to
- block picture messaging
- block unknown phone numbers
- limit what time their kids can text or call
- filter web browsing, and
- use GPS tracking to keep tabs on their physical location

Below is a primer for the largest carriers. If you want even more information, here is a good place to start: http://internet-safety.yoursphere.com/2011/09/mobile-parental-controls-att-verizon-sprint-t-mobile/

Thanks, as always, for the incredible work and support you give to all our kids.

T- Mobile: http://family.t-mobile.com/safety-and-security

- Allows parents to track their children through GPS. The phone stores the child's locations for the past seven days and sends parents texts with their child's location. In addition, parents can set up certain times when the phone checks on their child's location and sends the results to the parent's phone or computer.
- Allows parents to block incoming and outgoing text messages and picture messages from certain numbers, as well as blocking email and instant messaging chat messages.
- Filter inappropriate content from phones. It blocks all 18 and over content on the children's phones, and it can stop children from searching for and viewing restricted content on web-enabled phones.
- Limit the number of minutes, texts, and data their children can use on their phone. An alert will be sent to the child and parent's phone when they are reaching their limit. The service also allows parents to control when their children can text and/or make calls from their phone. In addition, parents can designate "always allowed" numbers and "never allowed" numbers.
- Limit calls, texts, and application use when the phone is in a moving vehicle, however the application must be opened and set up every time the user starts driving.

AT&T: http://www.att.net/smartcontrols-SmartLimitsForWireless

- Limit the time of day their child's cell phone can be used, the number of texts per billing cycle, the amount of web browsing, and the dollar amounts for download purchases. It also allows parents to block inappropriate web content and specific numbers so that their children can't text or call a particular number.
- Block picture and video messaging from their children's phones
- Lets parents track their children's phone using the GPS technology. It runs 9.99 a month and is capable of tracking up to two phones. Parents can receive email or text notifications

when their children reach a certain area, i.e. school, or basketball practice. Keep in mind that your child must have a phone with GPS capabilities in order for this to work.

Sprint: http://www.sprint.com/landings/family/safety.html

- o Allows parents to block text messages, picture messages and calls from specific numbers or unknown numbers. It also lets parents deactivate the camera function on their child's phone
- o Allows parents to track their children through the GPS function on their phone. Texts and/or emails will be sent to parents to alert them to their child's location.

Verizon: https://wbillpay.verizonwireless.com/vzw/nos/uc/uc_overview.jsp

- o Set limits on minutes, messages, data usage, and purchases of VZ branded content, such as games and applications. Usage Controls will also allow parents to set limits on cell phone usage during certain times of day or days of the week. Lastly, it allows parents to block unwanted calls, text, picture and video messages from certain contacts or set up designated trusted contacts, which are always allowed to communicate.
- o Track the GPS feature on your child's phone. Family Locator sends parents alerts when their children arrive or leave a designated area that the parents define such as home, school, or soccer practice. The information can be sent to a cell phone or computer, and alerts can be customized to be sent every hour with the child's location.
- o Filter web content on their child's phone. There are four categories, 7+, 13+, 17+ and no filter. This gives parents the option to filter based on their child's age.

I-phone: http://www.commonsensemedia.org/advice-for-parents/how-set-parental-controls-iphone

- o Here are the things you can restrict:
- o Explicit song titles
- o The Safari browser
- o YouTube
- o The iTunes store
- o Installing apps
- o The camera