

States Use App Store Controls to Keep Online Content From Minors

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New state age verification and parental consent laws are slated to take effect in 2026 to shield children from harmful online content, creating significant compliance obligations and heightened enforcement risk for both app developers and app stores.

As part of the continuing debate about how to best protect minors on internet platforms, the way apps reach users in Texas, Utah, and Louisiana is set to change this year, with California to follow in 2027. These states have shifted from statutorily prescribing standards for Internet platforms to the adoption of “App Store Accountability” laws that shift responsibility for children’s online safety to both app store owners and app developers.

For years, policymakers have argued over who should keep kids away from harmful online content. While some proposals put age assurance duties directly on every platform or website, industry warned that separate systems for each service would be unworkable and pushed to move age checks to a centralized layer, such as the device or app store. The new state laws reflect that shift, and California pushes it further by involving operating systems themselves.

Under these laws, app stores and operating systems must verify users’ ages and track parental consent, while developers must plug into those systems, assign age ratings, and enforce new restrictions for minors inside their apps. The result: new engineering work, new legal exposure, and uncertainty up and down the technology stack.

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