



Child Data-Harvesting Behind the Scenes

There is a growing concern in the business of selling child's information and the collection through School Photography Companies.

Pampa, TX, February 03, 2006 --(PR.com)-- Over the past few years a matter of great concern has been to alert parents to the issues of identity theft and the harvesting of child information schema.

A popular practice for schools today is to combine the student photo opportunity with the creation of a campus id or a safety id. Both the digital photo images with the student's bio information with address and other associated info is provided to a number of parties.

One company studied has several programs that capture student information and store the photos digitally. In that program various staff and partners are provided information of a CD-ROM or DVD-ROM for editing purposes. Data control is not a featured part of their program.

Parents are not asked for informed consent to create nor to distribute their child's information digitally. Many parents believe a photo is still an analogue process tied to just a negative (a chemical process only).

Parents are the only ones that can give legal consent for the gathering and distribution of their child's information. A recent law aimed at protecting children is COPPA, and the age covered by COPPA under age 13 (this excludes the school's limited local authority).

In some cases the information made available online. When the parent is notified at the beginning of a new school year of the schools local policies, they should be aware of notices that chose to default to the school especially in such matters that the student will receive a photo id and/or a safety id.

Various statements from industry photographers indicated that the images are officially only being kept available for 90 days (our research indicates longer in most all cases). When pressed for written declaration none were provided. A Canadian website provided some public information on their id cards and some other documentation was received from third parties during our three year study.

There is little a parent can do to stop a child's information from being used by others if a school circumvents parental authority as to the control and release of such digital information about a child to outside contractors.

An 18 billion dollar industry exists globally to buy and sell information about children. This market niche is legal. The greatest singular source of such information comes from school photo programs. Schools that do not get informed consent from parents risk legal jeopardy. In the United States every major firm's databases have been breeched by hackers at one time or another. There is no such thing as a safe unbreakable database.



Team Amber Alert advises parents that so called pre-amber alert databases do not speed up the amber alert process. Access and recovery of such material can and does take hours. Thus far ever such program has delayed information distribution.

Parents should only entrust their child's information for medical emergencies or when their child is missing. Every effort should be made to preserve a child's vital data for as long as can be done. Custody and control of biometric data, including but not limited to; the parents or legal custodian should only determine a child's photo, blood type, and fingerprints.

Many id creation firms and other photography studios often place children's photo on online accessible sites for employers, school officials and/or parent to access. Such site's content should be created only after a parent gives written permission.

Informed parental consent should include a full disclosure of potential risks and the waiver of responsibility that the photography firm is asking from the parents. Parents must realize the digital threat to their child's privacy is great and cannot be protected by the school once the information leaves the school property.

Already many students' information addresses are sold to credit card companies, sporting promotion firms and other ad-based companies. The singular most common source of this information is from school photography firms and the schools yearbooks.

Team Amber Alert has only endorsed one firm's ID product "Safe Kids Card Inc. product line that includes an Amber Ready CD ID™ card". These safety cards are not incorporated into any database. In an emergency they can provide information instantly by the parent or legal custodian provisioning law enforcement and search agencies. Safe Kids Card Inc. and their representatives never archive nor relay the information stored directly to the CD ROM. All files created are purged following the ID creation process.

Team Amber Alert warns parent of the security concern that exist with that firms ID cards. Team Amber Alert is promoting the COPPA laws be reformed to raise the age from 13 to 18. Schools need to enter the 21-century with security awareness appropriate to the existing threat against our children.

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