

Think of the Children! Recent FTC Enforcement of COPPA

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Introduction

Revisit the childhood nostalgia of watching cartoons. What kind of advertisements did you see? Sugary breakfast cereals, the latest toy, maybe an upcoming movie that promises fun for the whole family!

Within advertising law, there are special protections regarding children. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), protects children's online privacy by preventing marketers from collecting data on children under age 13.¹ COPPA's main directive covers websites directed at children under 13 years of age. It prohibited operators who manage the website from collecting data.² There are processes operators can follow to collect children's data; however it puts the burdens on parents because children do not have capacity to understand privacy concerns.³

Parents had the right to review the types of personal information collected from their child, delete that information, and prevent further use or collection.⁴ For example, operators must obtain verifiable consent from parents before collecting or using personal information.⁵ Such consent can be withdrawn at any time, and parents can request deletion of their child's data.⁶ Any information collected from children must remain secure with proper data retention and deletion protocols.⁷ If operators had to collect children's data for the child to participate in an event they may not collect more than was reasonably

¹ <https://www.ftc.gov/legal-library/browse/rules/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule-coppa>.

² <https://trustarc.com/resource/coppa-protecting-childrens-privacy-online/>.

³ <https://trustarc.com/resource/coppa-protecting-childrens-privacy-online/>.

⁴ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/04/22/2025-05904/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule>.

⁵ <https://trustarc.com/resource/coppa-protecting-childrens-privacy-online/>.

⁶ <https://trustarc.com/resource/coppa-protecting-childrens-privacy-online/>.

⁷ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/04/22/2025-05904/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule>.

necessary to carry out the event.⁸ There was a safe harbor provision for some industry groups to gain approval for self-regulatory guidelines, but by and large website operators had to abide by these rules.⁹

COPPA became effective in 2000 during the early days of the internet.¹⁰ It has now been over 20 years, and the new generation has been raised in a world where the internet is integrated deeply into the fabric of society. COPPA has undergone several revisions in attempts to modernize and continue its goal of protecting child privacy in a changing online environment.¹¹ Although there are new challenges, the current FTC has litigated several high-profile COPPA lawsuits and seems committed to protecting children from harmful internet content throughout the second Trump administration.

This article analyzes the recent COPPA amendments made last year. It then discusses COPPA enforcement under the second Trump presidency including major cases that the FTC has litigated. Such cases provide insight into how businesses can comply with recent amendments. Finally, this article will discuss the future of COPPA and its enforcement.

FTC Strengthens COPPA Under the Trump Administration

The FTC in 2025 finalized changes to COPPA that limited companies' ability to monetize children's data.¹² These new requirements strengthened parents' ability to control what data third parties can collect and use regarding their children.¹³ Parents must now opt in to third-party advertising, targeted advertising, and other disclosure to third parties.¹⁴ This means that websites

⁸ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/04/22/2025-05904/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule>.

⁹ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/04/22/2025-05904/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule>.

¹⁰ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/04/22/2025-05904/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule>.

¹¹ <https://www.ftc.gov/legal-library/browse/rules/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule-coppa>.

¹² <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/01/ftc-finalizes-changes-childrens-privacy-rule-limiting-companies-ability-monetize-kids-data>.

¹³ <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/01/ftc-finalizes-changes-childrens-privacy-rule-limiting-companies-ability-monetize-kids-data>.

¹⁴ <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/01/ftc-finalizes-changes-childrens-privacy-rule-limiting-companies-ability-monetize-kids-data>.

and other online service providers subject to COPPA are required to obtain parental consent prior to disclosing their children's personal information.¹⁵ The rule also limits the retention of personal information for only as long as reasonably necessary to fulfill a specific purpose.¹⁶ Data cannot be stored indefinitely.¹⁷

The FTC changed key definitions of what can be considered personal information.¹⁸ Biometric data like facial recognition data are now included in the definition.¹⁹ Facial recognition to open your phone for one thing, but many consumers would feel uneasy knowing that a website had their child's voice or fingerprints saved. The definition of online contact information was amended to include mobile telephone numbers.²⁰ The COPPA Safe Harbor programs are now required to publicly disclose their membership lists to increase transparency and accountability.²¹

Upon review of nearly 300 comments regarding COPPA's changes, the FTC decided against implementing requirements that limited the use of push notifications directed at children without parental consent.²² The commission voted to approve publication of the new adjustments

¹⁵<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/01/ftc-finalizes-changes-childrens-privacy-rule-limiting-companies-ability-monetize-kids-data>.

¹⁶<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/01/ftc-finalizes-changes-childrens-privacy-rule-limiting-companies-ability-monetize-kids-data>.

¹⁷ <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/01/ftc-finalizes-changes-childrens-privacy-rule-limiting-companies-ability-monetize-kids-data>.

¹⁸ Larisa Kupinszky Gamberg, *Little Data, Big Requirements: Is Your Business Ready for COPPA's Amendments?*, INFOLAWGROUP LLP (Apr. 29, 2025), <https://www.infolawgroup.com/insights/2025/4/29/little-data-big-requirements-is-your-business-ready-for-coppas-amendments>.

¹⁹ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/04/22/2025-05904/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule> *see also* Larisa Kupinszky Gamberg, *Little Data, Big Requirements: Is Your Business Ready for COPPA's Amendments?*, INFOLAWGROUP LLP (Apr. 29, 2025), <https://www.infolawgroup.com/insights/2025/4/29/little-data-big-requirements-is-your-business-ready-for-coppas-amendments>.

²⁰ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/04/22/2025-05904/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule>.

²¹<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/01/ftc-finalizes-changes-childrens-privacy-rule-limiting-companies-ability-monetize-kids-data>.

²² <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/01/ftc-finalizes-changes-childrens-privacy-rule-limiting-companies-ability-monetize-kids-data>.

in a 5-0 decision.²³ Operators were given until April 22, 2026 to fully comply with these new regulations.²⁴

Despite the new administration’s shift in priorities, the FTC has remained particularly active regarding the protection of youth privacy and online safety for children.²⁵ Within the last six months, the FTC has prosecuted three child-related cases involving Disney, Apitor, and Iconic Hearts. Each of these cases demonstrate the agency’s concerted and continual effort to enforce children’s data privacy rights under COPPA.²⁶

Setting the Standard for COPPA Enforcement in *U.S. v. Disney*

On December 31, 2025, a federal judge approved a settlement that required Disney to pay \$10 million.²⁷ The FTC alleged that the company allowed the personal data of children who viewed “kid-directed” videos on YouTube to be collected without notice or parental consent as required by COPPA.²⁸ The complaint also alleged that children may have been exposed to content not meant for them through autoplay.²⁹

The Disney policy governed over 1, 250 YouTube channels and required “audience designations” on channels.³⁰ The FTC found that certain “child-directed” videos uploaded to

²³ <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/01/ftc-finalizes-changes-childrens-privacy-rule-limiting-companies-ability-monetize-kids-data>.

²⁴ <https://www.infolawgroup.com/insights/2025/4/29/little-data-big-requirements-is-your-business-ready-for-coppas-amendments>.

²⁵ <https://perkinscoie.com/insights/blog/privacy-law-recap-2025-ftc-enforcement>.

²⁶ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

²⁷ <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/12/court-approves-order-requiring-disney-pay-10-million-settle-ftc-allegations-firm-enabled-unlawful>.

²⁸ <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/12/court-approves-order-requiring-disney-pay-10-million-settle-ftc-allegations-firm-enabled-unlawful>.

²⁹ <https://consumer.ftc.gov/consumer-alerts/2025/09/disney-settles-charges-it-violated-childrens-online-privacy-protection-law>.

³⁰ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

Disney’s “not made for kids” (“NMFK”) channels retained the NMFK designation.³¹ YouTube’s “feature-disabling COPPA compliance mechanisms” were not engaged such that YouTube collected the personal information of watchers to implement targeted advertisements on Disney’s behalf.³² Disney then ran its own targeted advertisements on these incorrectly marked videos.³³ Targeted advertisements broadcasted on child-directed content without parental consent is a COPPA violation, as it relies on the collection of persistent identifiers used to recognize specific users across websites.³⁴

This is the type of information COPPA seeks to protect.³⁵ Disney also agreed to implement “comprehensive internal controls” to ensure future compliance with COPPA.³⁶ Disney must now implement a “mandatory audience designation program” to review the designations of videos uploaded to YouTube.³⁷ As a result, this case has set the standard for COPPA enforcement by the FTC and marks the growing enforcement priority of agencies in the United States.³⁸

Iconic Hearts and FTC’s Interpretation of “Child-Directed” Content

³¹<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/12/court-approves-order-requiring-disney-pay-10-million-settle-ftc-allegations-firm-enabled-unlawful>.

³² <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

³³ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

³⁴ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

³⁵ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

³⁶ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

³⁷ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

³⁸ <https://www.mclane.com/insights/2-75-million-record-settlement-with-disney-and-california-doj/#:~:text=On%20February%202011%2C%202026%2C%20California,Specifically%2C%20the%20California%20DOJ%20alleged>: (Noting that the California Attorney General obtained a similar settlement from Disney for violations of the CCPA in early 2026 following actions taken by the FTC.)

The FTC, with the help of the DOJ, also filed suit against Iconic Hearts Holdings in September 2025. Iconic Hearts Holdings is the operator of the Sendit anonymous messaging app.³⁹ The complaint alleged that Iconic Hearts unlawfully collected the personal data of children, misled users by sending messages from fake “people”, and tricked consumers into buying subscriptions that promised to reveal the identity of those who sent anonymous messages.⁴⁰ The complaint describes the app as one designed specifically for the use of children and young teenagers.⁴¹ Iconic Hearts themselves have stated that it is for users aged 12 and up and has described the app as “the primary destination where every social interaction for gen alpha can happen.”⁴²

This directly supports the assertion that Iconic Hearts was intended for children.⁴³ The FTC found several ways in which Iconic Hearts possessed the knowledge of children using its messaging services, as they collected, stored, and maintained the personal information of users under the age of 13.⁴⁴ According to the complaint, in 2022, over 116,000 users reported birthdays that reflected an age under 13. It also alleged that Iconic Hearts received complaints from parents who referenced their children were under the age of 13.⁴⁵ In light of these findings, the FTC argued that Iconic Hearts should have complied with COPPA by obtaining parental

³⁹<https://www.ftc.gov/legal-library/browse/cases-proceedings/232-3029-iconic-hearts-holdings-inc-us-v>.

⁴⁰ <https://www.ftc.gov/legal-library/browse/cases-proceedings/232-3029-iconic-hearts-holdings-inc-us-v>.

⁴¹ https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/IconicHeartsComplaint.pdf.

⁴² https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/IconicHeartsComplaint.pdf *see also* <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

⁴³ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

⁴⁴ https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/IconicHeartsComplaint.pdf *see also* <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

⁴⁵ https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/IconicHeartsComplaint.pdf.

consent before collecting such information.⁴⁶ Although the case is currently pending, the FTC seeks permanent injunction, monetary judgement, civil penalty judgement and other relief to remedy the unlawful collection of children's personal data. *Iconic Hearts* marks an effort by the FTC to refine COPPA's scope by clarifying how the agency seeks to define and regulate child-directed services.

FTC Expanding Liability to Third Parties Under *Apitor*

In 2025, the FTC also reached a settlement with Apitor Technology, a robot toymaker.⁴⁷ Apitor sells toys to children aged 6-14 that are accompanied by a free app that allows users to remotely program and control the toys.⁴⁸ The FTC alleged that this app enabled a third party to collect geolocation data from children without parental consent, as the app required Android users to enable location sharing to connect to their toy.⁴⁹ Apitor had integrated into its app a third-party software called JPush which allowed the JPush developer to collect the location data of app users.⁵⁰ As a result, Apitor failed to notify parents that JPush was collecting this information and obtain parental consent as required by COPPA.⁵¹

Apitor ultimately agreed to pay a \$500,000 civil penalty and injunctive relief which required them to provide parental notice, obtain parental consent, place limits on data retention,

⁴⁶ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/09/ftc-takes-action-against-robot-toy-maker-allowing-collection-childrens-data-without-parental-consent>.

⁴⁹ <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/09/ftc-takes-action-against-robot-toy-maker-allowing-collection-childrens-data-without-parental-consent>.

⁵⁰ https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/Apitor-Complaint.pdf see also <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/09/ftc-takes-action-against-robot-toy-maker-allowing-collection-childrens-data-without-parental-consent>.

⁵¹ <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/09/ftc-takes-action-against-robot-toy-maker-allowing-collection-childrens-data-without-parental-consent>.

and delete children's information when requested.⁵² This case represents the extension of liability to third party data collection and the outer bounds of COPPA enforcement. As a result, companies cannot evade COPPA liability with regard to the actions of outsourced third party services.

Businesses Must Audit their Labeling Practices, Monitor Third Party Data Collection, and Avoid Deceptive Targeting of Minors

The cases involving Disney, Apitor, and Iconic Hearts offer helpful insight into practices which are particularly vulnerable to COPPA exposure and risk mitigation strategies.⁵³ Businesses will need to take extra precaution regarding whether they possess the knowledge of children using their services, and whether they can avoid the collection of children's data.⁵⁴

Content directed at children should be properly labeled and accompanied by COPPA-compliant settings.⁵⁵ On YouTube, certain mechanisms such as comments, the ability to save, and targeted advertising are disabled for videos designated as "Made for Kids".⁵⁶ This is done specifically to prevent the collection of child data. This case highlights the importance of auditing content labeling practices in addition to compliance mechanisms to ensure they are functioning properly.⁵⁷ Internal review and flagging systems may also help prevent inappropriate designations that would give rise to COPPA violations.

⁵² <https://perkinscoie.com/insights/blog/privacy-law-recap-2025-ftc-enforcement>.

⁵³ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

⁵⁴ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

⁵⁵ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

⁵⁶ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

⁵⁷ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

The Iconic Hearts Lawsuit provides valuable insight on how the FTC may evaluate whether a particular site or service is child-directed.⁵⁸ Although it was clear that the collection of birthdate information indicated knowledge of users whose ages were under 13, the FTC also looked to public statements, app store designations, user complaints, and marketing taglines to determine whether the services provided were child-directed.⁵⁹

Businesses should be aware of the age-related data they may inadvertently collect through complaints and consider the overall impression made by their marketing tactics or public messaging.⁶⁰ The Apitor case highlights the importance of vetting any vendors or third-party partners specifically with regard to their public-facing privacy policies.⁶¹ The services of all parties involved must be COPPA compliant.

It is important to note that the FTC has clarified that it will not bring enforcement actions against “operators of general audience sites and services and mixed audience sites and services that collect, use, or disclose personal information for the sole purpose of determining a user’s age...” if they comply with the following conditions:

1. They do not use or disclose information collected for age verification for any other purpose other than the verify the user’s age.
2. The information is not retained for longer than necessary to verify the user’s age and the information is promptly deleted.

⁵⁸ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

⁵⁹ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

⁶⁰ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

⁶¹ <https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/what-recent-ftc-enforcement-actions-reveal-coppa-risks/>.

3. They disclose the obtained information only to third parties the operator has taken reasonable steps to determine can maintain confidentiality, security, and integrity of the information.
4. They provide clear notice to parents and children that the information has been collected for age verification purposes.
5. They employ reasonable security safeguards.
6. They take reasonable steps to determine that their method of age verification is reasonably accurate.⁶²

Future of COPPA

The FTC intends to make COPPA enforcement a priority in 2026.⁶³ As part of this plan, the FTC kicked off 2026 with a workshop discussing its future plans for how age verification would play a role in privacy compliance.⁶⁴ Researchers, industry representatives, consumer advocates, academics, and government regulators gathered on January 28th 2026 to discuss the importance of age verification, the capabilities of tools that estimate ages, deployment, and how age verification and COPPA intersect.⁶⁵ The workshop came in direct response to the several major COPPA enforcement cases throughout 2025 such as the Disney case discussed above.⁶⁶

FTC Chair Andrew Ferguson stated in his welcome remarks, “As Congress considers whether to adopt additional legislation to protect children online, which it has been doing for

⁶² https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2026/02/ftc-issues-coppa-policy-statement-incentivize-use-age-verification-technologies-protect-children?utm_campaign=ftc_issues_coppa_policy_s&utm_content=1772052424&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook,linkedin,twitter.

⁶³ <https://iapp.org/news/a/ftc-shares-insight-into-its-childrens-privacy-priorities>.

⁶⁴ <https://iapp.org/news/a/ftc-workshop-details-age-verification-tools-regulatory-efforts>.

⁶⁵ <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/events/2026/01/age-verification-workshop>.

⁶⁶ https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/age-verification-workshop-transcript.pdf.

some time, the FTC must use every tool at our disposal, chief among them COPPA and the COPPA Rule, to empower parents for the first and best line of defense to protect children online.”⁶⁷

The FTC feels that current legislation is insufficient and it must take matters into its own hands to protect the children. It is a commonly stated phrase that the law is often too slow to keep pace with technology. With the addition of age verification technologies to COPPA in 2025, the FTC is taking a proactive approach to determine how to use these new powers.

The first panel featured various government officials discussing the general regulatory landscape and why age verification matters.⁶⁸ From a regulator’s perspective, COPPA is the only federal law protecting children’s data. However, state privacy laws are getting increasingly comprehensive and can offer similar or higher protection for children’s data.⁶⁹ Some states even have legislation requiring age verification.⁷⁰ Hopefully a state can create a solution to a longstanding contradiction inherent to COPPA.

Operators cannot collect data about children under the age of thirteen. But to confirm whether the user is of age or not, you must use age verification technology of some sort. Unfortunately, many of these technologies work by collecting data on the user. To find out if the person is underage, you may use a technology that collects their data. If they are underage, by merely confirming their age a website may have violated COPPA. That system doesn’t make sense, as the FTC discussed in their workshop.

As a follow-up to the workshop and potential solution to this contradiction, the FTC issued a statement on February 25, 2026, that with certain conditions met it would not enforce

⁶⁷ <https://iapp.org/news/a/ftc-workshop-details-age-verification-tools-regulatory-efforts>.

⁶⁸ <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/events/2026/01/age-verification-workshop>.

⁶⁹ <https://iapp.org/news/a/ftc-shares-insight-into-its-childrens-privacy-priorities>

⁷⁰ <https://iapp.org/news/a/ftc-workshop-details-age-verification-tools-regulatory-efforts>.

COPPA on operators collecting information that is used for age verification.⁷¹ These conditions include having reasonable safeguards for the data collected, only using the data for age verification, and having clear notices to parents and children that data is collected for age verification purposes.⁷² Allowing some data collection for age verification is only a temporary solution, as the FTC intends to continue reviewing how to properly incorporate age verification mechanisms into COPPA and may publish an additional amendment on this issue into the Federal Register.⁷³ Given the complexity of the situation, it is likely there will be a long time before a better solution is reached. However, issuing a press release with even a temporary fix a mere few weeks after the original workshop shows the FTC is committed to COPPA and is willing to quickly adopt to the new challenges various technologies such as age verification brings.

One possible solution could come from the United Kingdom, where there is no broad verification requirement for all services where a user clicks “Yes, I am over 18” for every relevant website.⁷⁴ Instead, protections are applied based on the likelihood individuals under 18 will access a service.⁷⁵ Instead of looking at just an initial age gate, there is a whole process from start to finish to make sure there is age assurance.⁷⁶

⁷¹ https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2026/02/ftc-issues-coppa-policy-statement-incentivize-use-age-verification-technologies-protect-children?utm_campaign=ftc_issues_coppa_policy_s&utm_content=1772052424&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook,linkedin,twitter.

⁷² https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2026/02/ftc-issues-coppa-policy-statement-incentivize-use-age-verification-technologies-protect-children?utm_campaign=ftc_issues_coppa_policy_s&utm_content=1772052424&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook,linkedin,twitter.

⁷³ https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2026/02/ftc-issues-coppa-policy-statement-incentivize-use-age-verification-technologies-protect-children?utm_campaign=ftc_issues_coppa_policy_s&utm_content=1772052424&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook,linkedin,twitter.

⁷⁴ <https://iapp.org/news/a/ftc-workshop-details-age-verification-tools-regulatory-efforts>.

⁷⁵ <https://iapp.org/news/a/ftc-workshop-details-age-verification-tools-regulatory-efforts>.

⁷⁶ <https://iapp.org/news/a/ftc-workshop-details-age-verification-tools-regulatory-efforts>.

Instead of setting up a whole process for anyone who visits certain websites to click “Yes, I am over 18” the UK only require age checks for websites where there is actually a chance someone under 18 will visit. The United States should adopt a similar approach, as it would save costs by prevent some websites from developing pages that no children would ever use. That way only websites hosting inappropriate content such as drugs or nudity would be subject to these regulations and many businesses can have a simplified process.

The FTC having a workshop like this is a positive sign of forward-thinking process in helping define its role in the new COPPA landscape. However, COPPA has over the years evolved far beyond collecting children’s data for advertisers. There is now a directive to give parents the proper tools to protect their children from harmful content in general. With COPPA’s new definitions accounting for age verification technologies, everyone is struggling with how to wrap their heads around these new tools. Which ones should you use, which are better, why do we even need these tools? Corporations and the FTC alike are wrestling with these important questions. The FTC Chairman has made clear though that the FTC’s role in COPPA will be less of a powerful enforcer and more of a helpful educator helping users to decide for themselves.

Conclusion

COPPA has developed significantly from its roots as an early attempt regulate the growing internet. The law has now been involved in major litigation against some of the largest corporations in the world. It is more relevant now than ever as children spend more time online. There are also new technologies like age-verification and biometrics that the original lawmakers twenty years ago could not have accounted for.

The current FTC seems intent on creating strict COPPA enforcement, taking on major players such as Disney who were found liable for posting several videos meant for children on

YouTube without properly labeling them. These videos were not listed with proper child safety features. While it would be impossible to make every website 100% safe for all children, Andrew Ferguson stated that “Higher costs are no excuse for breaking the law or for relaxing standards complying with the law...” There are several other high-profile lawsuits actively being litigated for COPPA enforcement.

Corporations have until May of 2026 to enact the new COPPA changes. The results of the previous enforcements show basic lessons for COPPA enforcement like Disney improperly labeling its videos, or that the overall impression of your marketing and website should be considered when determining whether your content is child-directed. The FTC itself is unsure of how it wants to regulate and how to make sense of the current regulatory state. However, one message the FTC made clear is that it continues to take COPPA enforcement and protecting children over the internet seriously.