



July 14, 2016

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter on June 28, 2016, seeking additional information about the actions we take to stop abuse from being broadcast on Snapchat.

As your letter recognizes, any service that reaches hundreds of millions of people will sadly include a handful “who have an evil intent.” Those who use Snapchat to share images of nursing home abuse are guilty of a particularly noxious trifecta: their actions are evil, prohibited by our Terms of Service, and violate the law. We encourage anyone to report this type of content, both to us and law enforcement.

And we make it easy to make those reports. Your letter points out that elderly nursing home residents will likely not have access to Snapchat or know how to report an abusive Snap on their own. And therefore, as you accurately observe, “the responsibility would fall to a concerned third party, such as a relative or nursing home aide who sees the offensive post.” But you suggest that those third parties would not be able to report that abuse to Snapchat because Snapchat does not accept third-party reports.

Not so. The support message that you cite in your letter appears only when someone tries to report a safety concern on “behalf of someone else” who witnessed the abusive Snap. But where someone has viewed the Snap or Story themselves, then they are always free to submit a report directly to Snapchat. So, if a relative or nursing home aide sees content that exploits an elderly nursing home resident, they may quickly and easily report that to Snapchat. To do that, they would simply click “A Snap or Chat I’ve received,” or “A Story I viewed.” Once they did that, they would be directed to contact law enforcement if they “feel a crime has been committed,” and ultimately to report the matter to us through a form if they indicate that they “still need help”:



What is your concern with this content?

☐ It contained nudity ☐ It bullied me

☐ It was a threat ☒ It contained illegal activity

☐ I didn't want to see it

We take issues like these very seriously. If you feel a crime has been committed please contact your local law enforcement. Law enforcement may contact us directly. Please see our [privacy policy](#) for more information.

We recommend you [block](#) this account. Also, you may want to check your Snapchat [privacy settings](#). To prevent Snapchatters who you have not added from sending you Snap or Chats please make sure who can 'Contact Me' is set to 'My Friends'.

Check out our [Community Guidelines](#) and [Safety Center](#) for additional information and safety tips.

Still need help? **YES** **NO**

Your name \*

Email address \*

Your username

Your age

Please choose an option...

Username of the reported account \*

Age of the reported account

Please choose an option...

What information should we know? Please describe below... \*

As we said in our previous letter, we do not tolerate abuse on the platform. To the contrary, we terminate many accounts at their first offense, and we refer emergency situations to law enforcement directly.

Additionally, we are pleased to provide answers to your questions:

1. **How does a concerned third party report an abusive or criminal post to Snapchat under the current system? How will that be possible under the new system?**



Concerned third parties are able to easily report abuse through the prompts on our Support website whenever they see a Snap, Story, or Chat message that contains nudity, harassment, intimidation, a threat, or any illegal activity.

Additionally, anyone can contact our Trust and Safety team directly at [safety@snapchat.com](mailto:safety@snapchat.com) to report an issue or concern they may have.

We plan to offer the ability to report abuse through the Snapchat app directly. Our in-app reporting tool will not only make it easier for Snapchatters to enforce safety on the app, but will also provide a mechanism to preserve and flag the offending content with us directly.

2. **Your letter indicated, “[w]e also cooperate with U.S. law enforcement when we receive appropriate legal process.” What constitutes appropriate legal process? Please explain how you cooperate with law enforcement in greater detail.**

Our Law Enforcement Guide, which is publicly available at <https://www.snapchat.com/lawenforcement>, advises law enforcement organizations on the types of legal process that we will respond to, including subpoenas, search warrants, and emergency disclosure requests.

3. **Snapchat has been used in eighteen different instances of elder abuse since 2012 that are publicly known.<sup>1</sup> How many of those users have been terminated from using the platform over such elder abuse?**

The ProPublica report does not provide the usernames of the allegedly abusive Snapchat accounts. We’re therefore unable to determine the final disposition of those accounts.

4. **Will this new system allow users as well as non-users to report potential criminal activity and abusive photos? If so, please explain in detail. If not, why not?**

The new system will be a convenient in-app reporting mechanism. Of course, because only registered users may use the app, non-users will not be able to submit reports through this new system. But concerned third parties will still be able to submit reports as they do today: through the website or email.

5. **When will the new reporting system be completed and in use?**

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<sup>1</sup> See Charles Ornstein, *Inappropriate Social Media Posts by Nursing Home Workers, Detailed*, ProPublica (Dec. 21, 2015), <https://www.propublica.org/article/inappropriate-social-media-posts-by-nursing-home-workers-detailed>



We plan to offer in-app reporting for most major languages by the end of this year.

**6. Prior to the completion of the new reporting system, how should users report incidents of abusive or criminal behavior?**

As mentioned previously, users may report incidents of abusive or criminal behavior through our Support website and by email, and we also encourage them to report criminal behavior to law enforcement.

**7. What can Snapchat do to prevent abuse proactively, considering that most users, especially those who post offensive content, are unlikely to read the detailed Community Guidelines and Terms of Service?**

Tormenting anyone who lacks the ability to stand up for themselves is unacceptable anywhere. For content this vile, we would hope that no one would need to read our Community Guidelines— which clearly prohibit invasions of privacy and harassment—to know that this type of content is unacceptable and would be unwelcome on any platform. We continue to publicly reinforce those guidelines through our Safety Center (<https://www.snapchat.com/safety>) and enforcement actions.

**8. Please describe the actions Snapchat takes to monitor content and remove offensive material.**

We respect and defend the privacy of Snapchatter's communications. Given the billion-plus Snaps taken on a daily basis, it is also technically unfeasible to routinely monitor users' content. Once we do receive a report of abuse, however, we have a team of dedicated Trust and Safety professionals who work to ensure that our Community Guidelines and Terms of Service are enforced, and that issues of illegal activity are responded to swiftly and appropriately.

Thank you again for the opportunity to engage with you on these important issues.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CH' followed by a stylized flourish.

Chris Handman  
General Counsel