



SchoolMessenger®

SafeMail Guide

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Introduction

Although many districts now use Google Apps for Education or Microsoft Office 365 Education for student email, these solutions may not always be compliant with federal laws that require Internet protection for students (such as CIPA and COPPA).

SchoolMessenger SafeMail applies multiple layers of protection to help K12 districts address threats and keep students safe while staying legally compliant.

Automated Filter and Legal Compliance

The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) requires all K12 districts to ensure that minors are protected from content that is obscene, pornographic, sexually explicit, or otherwise harmful. Districts must also ensure the safety and security of minors when "using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications."

SchoolMessenger SafeMail provides the ability to flag inappropriate images within emails and documents in Google Apps and Office 365. It scans images, attachments, and video content, across a wide range of file formats. The filter also runs hourly checks for inappropriate content (via the text and pornography filters) added to Google Drive, calendars and Yammer.

In addition to CIPA compliance through pornography filtering, SchoolMessenger SafeMail also offers features that help bring district email systems in line with federal laws on student Internet safety.

A key feature is SchoolMessenger SafeMail's **Walled Garden Filter**. The filter is set up to limit emailing to within the school domain, effectively rejecting all emails sent to external sources. In addition, it can be configured so that students can only send or receive emails from sources on a predefined safe list. This prevents students under the age of 13 from sending personal information to outsiders while using district-provided educational tools – and it protects students when accessing email outside of school as well. This filter meets the requirements laid out in the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).

SchoolMessenger SafeMail also offers archiving configuration services to help districts meet legal requirements for data retention. Our team consults, determines, and configures archiving of both incoming and outgoing email to ensure each district's unique legal retention compliance requirements are met.

Since student Internet safety education is also a vital part of maintaining CIPA compliance, an integrated Internet Safety Module is part of the SchoolMessenger SafeMail system. It includes instructional videos, integrated tests, and customizable administrator-level tools for uploading optional district or school-level Internet usage policies or generating reports for evidence of completion.

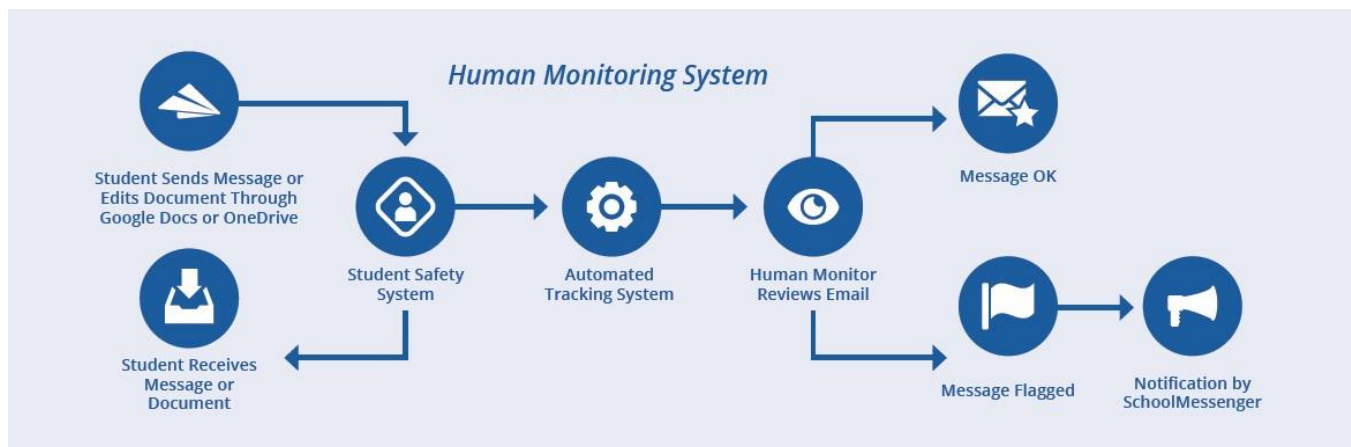
This module helps districts satisfy CIPA's Digital Literacy and Citizenship Classroom Curriculum requirement and take care of student Internet safety education in the most efficient way possible.

Human Monitoring

Students sometimes use email for personal communications that may contain harmful profanity, talk of suicide, planning of fights or crimes, and other troubling situations.

Our Human Monitoring System (HMS) is part of SchoolMessenger SafeMail. Our team of Human Monitoring Specialists review flagged content to determine whether it represents an issue of concern.

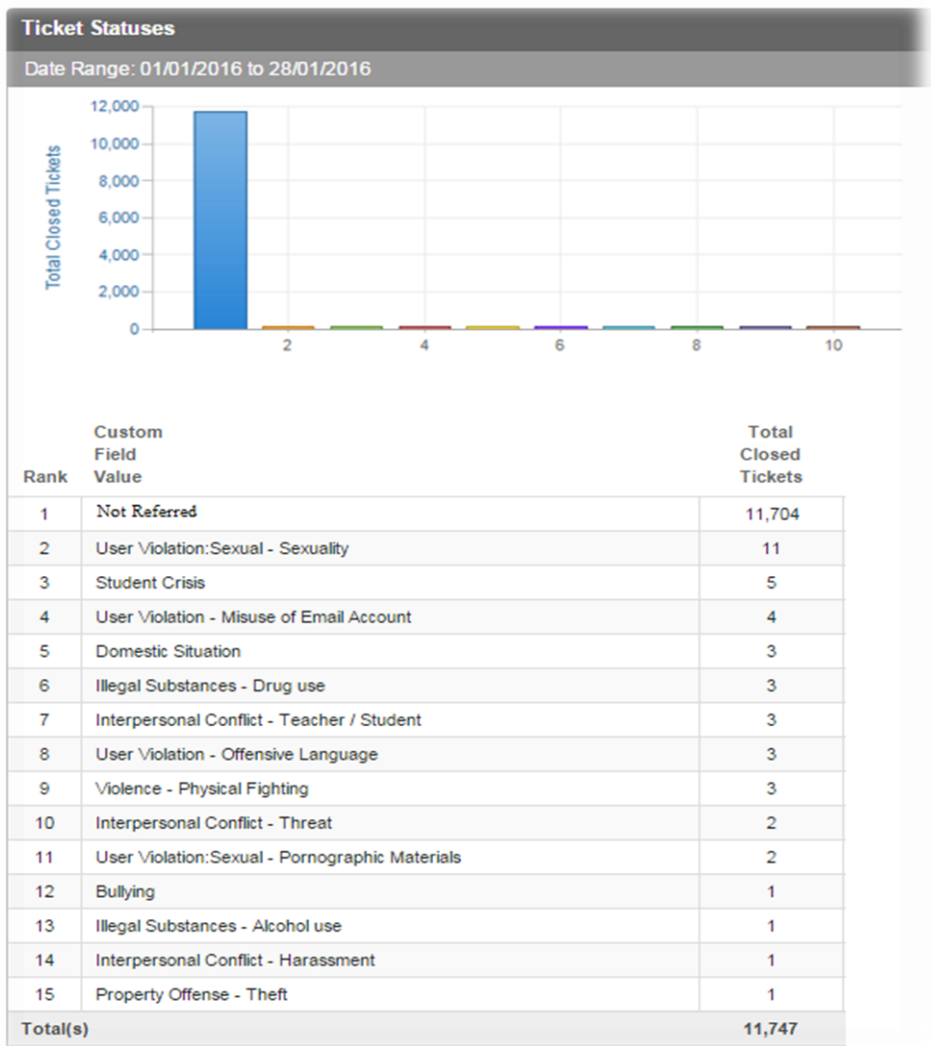
The HMS is designed to rapidly review flagged emails and take action on messages that require follow up. After sent and received emails go through Google or Microsoft's virus and spam filtering system, they are passed through SchoolMessenger SafeMail's filters. These filters scan incoming and outgoing emails against an in-depth database of predefined keywords and phrases in both English and Spanish, working proactively to identify profanity, verbal abuse, and potential harassment.



Emails and documents with attachments are then run through our Pornographic Image Filter, and flagged emails are reviewed by the Human Monitoring Team. Emails and documents are also reviewed for alarming words and phrases (i.e. “kill” or “rape”) and passed onto the Human Monitoring Team, who notify emergency contacts if anything of concern is found.

Reporting

Each month you will receive an email summary of the emails that have been flagged over the course of the month. The emails will be broken down to show how many emails have been flagged and how many emails have been referred to the district. For cases that have been referred to the district, you will also be able to see how many referrals were part of each issue category.



In the example above, you can see which emails were flagged and which were deemed to be of concern. In most instances our Human Monitoring team will determine that the email that has been flagged is not something that needs to be forwarded to the district. In the cases that referral is necessary, there are a wide range of possible issues that might be worthy of referral.

HMS Use Case

Here's an example of how a human monitoring situation may play out.

- A student sends an email to another student indicating they are considering suicide.
- The email is flagged by our HMS filter and relayed to a member of the Human Monitoring Team.
- The agent reviews the message and sees it as an urgent situation with the potential for immediate self-harm.
- The agent then calls the primary contact to inform them of the situation.
- The primary contact does not answer so the agent calls the secondary contact and is able to get a hold of the contact.
- The agent informs the contact of the situation.
- The contact is able to take action to ensure the student receives the support they need.

Frequently Asked Questions

Filtering

How does Filtering work?

SchoolMessenger's CIPA compliant SafeMail filters and detects content that is obscene, pornographic, sexually explicit or harmful to minors. While many other services only filter text, SafeMail's advanced system also flags inappropriate images within emails (e.g. BMP, JPG, TIF, PNG, GIF, WBMP, TGA, PCX formats) and, internal and external attachments (e.g. ZIP, DOCX, XLSX, PPTX), and video content (e.g. AVI, WMV, 3GP, 3GPP, MOV, MPG, MP4).

Our Human Monitoring filters look for potentially troubling words or phrases that might suggest problematic situations such as bullying, drug use, vandalism, domestic abuse and much more. Emails that contain keywords or phrases are scored and flagged for review by our Human Monitoring team.

How many words are filtered?

We have two filters in place. One filter is for objectionable content and the other is for our human monitoring. There are about 200 words on our objectionable content filter while the human monitoring filter contains about 1000 words or phrases that may be of concern.

Can we change which words are filtered?

Our filter lists have been compiled based on extensive testing and user feedback. If you would like to add a word or phrase to the filter, please let us know; we will make every effort to accommodate your request but we cannot guarantee we will be able to add the request to the filter.

What's the Difference between Active and Passive Filtering?

With active filtering, any flagged content is stopped from reaching its destination until it has been reviewed. Once it has been reviewed and deemed acceptable, it will then be allowed to reach its destination. With passive filtering, flagged content is sent to be reviewed but it is allowed to reach its destination immediately. The flagged content can then be reviewed and, if the item proves to be of concern, it is sent to the district contacts.

At SchoolMessenger we use passive filtering. Email conversations between users often entail a series of quick exchanges. With active filtering this chain is delayed and discourages student communication. We feel that passive filtering allows students to communicate more openly and thus increases the ability to locate items of concern.

Can we Limit Email for All Students?

Some districts are interested in restricting email for all students so that students can only email within the domain and thus can only contact other students and teachers. While this is the default setting for students under 13 (as per CIPA requirements), we recommend against employing this setting for older students. It is common for students to need to send emails outside of the district for projects and other tasks. By restricting email to within the domain, students are not able to make the most of their email account; this will lead to the students using non-school accounts for these tasks.

Human Monitoring

What Hours are Emails Monitored?

To ensure that critical issues, like self-harm, threats, and violence, are addressed immediately, SafeMail monitors student email 24 hours a day 7 days a week. In the event that a critical issue has been identified, we will contact your primary and/or emergency contacts without delay so that you are able to address and resolve any such issues as soon as possible, and to the extent possible, in advance of further harm to your students.

Our dedicated Human Monitoring Specialists provide coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, excluding the following: December 24th at 5pm (Eastern Time Zone) to December 26th at 8am (Eastern Time Zone). They review any flagged content and direct relevant information to your district.

How are we Contacted when Issues Arise?

If a message is flagged, the staff member will review the email's contents and, if the message is found to be of concern, our staff will contact the district by email or phone depending on the urgency of the situation.

In the event of an emergency situation, attempts will be made to reach the three specified contacts by phone. If none of the contacts is available, we will then reach out by email. As emergency situations can arise at any time, we recommend ensuring that at least one of your contacts is always accessible by phone.

How Can We Change a Contact?

If you wish to change one or more contacts, please contact your account manager and we will be happy to assist you.

Why are there False Positives?

Students may often use their email to vent to fellow students. For instance, a student may complain they want to kill their teacher after being given a poor mark on an assignment. In cases such as these the complaint is often harmless however as our team does not know your district or the participants, we forward such cases to the district for review. When there is doubt about whether something is a concern or not, the issue is forwarded to district.

How Do we Change what is Being Referred?

If you find there are items (or a category of items) that are being referred to your district that your district does not feel are a concern, please relay that information to your account manager and we can adjust our reporting accordingly.

How Quickly are Flagged Items Reviewed?

As per our Service-Level Agreement, flagged items are reviewed within 24 hours of being submitted. Our Human Monitoring Team is normally able to get to the items much more quickly than that, but even if there is an unexpectedly high volume of emails, all flagged items will be reviewed within the 24-hour window.

Where Do we Find the SLA?

If you would like to view the SLA, please contact your account manager.