PUBLIC SECTOR Barracuda

Children's Internet Protection Act

At the turn of the century, Congress passed the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) into United States law. Five years after the World Wide Web went mainstream, this legislation was enacted to address and restrict access to offensive content over the internet from school and library computers. Now regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), CIPA imposes certain requirements on any school or library that receives federal funding or subsidies, such as the popular E-Rate program, which provides discounted internet access to qualifying schools and libraries. Here's what you need to know.

CIPA and E-rate

Any school or library receiving E-Rate funding must certify they are CIPA compliant with the appropriate technology in place. This includes having the necessary access to turn on web filtering or block access to pictures that are obscene, pornographic, or harmful to minors.

Additionally, service providers must use technology measures to prevent unauthorized access (or so-called "hacking") and other unlawful activities by minors online, including unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors, and restricting minors' access to any other materials deemed harmful to them.

Resources

- USAC CIPA Guidelines
- FCC CIPA Guide

On top of that, schools are subject to two additional certification requirements:

1. Their internet safety policies must monitor and log the online activity of minors
2. As required by the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act, schools must instruct minors about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with other individuals over email, on social networking websites, in chat rooms; and cyberbullying awareness and response.

In general, a school or library must certify that:

1. They have complied with the requirements of CIPA
2. They are taking actions necessary to comply with the requirements of CIPA
3. CIPA does not apply because they are not receiving E-Rate funding