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NEWSLETTERS

Meta has ability to verify users' age, reduce CSAM, New Mexico judge hears

By [Madeline Hughes](#)

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Meta should verify users' age, strengthen the protections it has for children to prevent them from talking to adults and implement a one-strike policy for users who engage in child sexual exploitation, said Brian Levine, the director of Manning College's Cybersecurity Institute. He said his recommendations would hopefully reduce harms to children, and Meta could work with an independent monitor to ensure it is addressing those harms as required by the court.

By adopting a variety of recommendations to further protect children on the platform, predators would be less likely to share CSAM, Levine said. He testified as an expert witness in a remedies trial in New Mexico, where the state has said Meta should redesign its platforms and pay \$3.7 billion in abatement, following a jury's finding that the company is liable for harming users (see [here](#)).

Meta "should facilitate and fund an independent third party, approved by the New Mexico [Department of Justice] and appointed by the court, to annually audit Meta's age-assurance system and test the ability of users to circumvent age restrictions, and report the results to the monitor, the court and the public," Levine said.

The company uses facial recognition to verify Facebook Dating users' ages, and it should be able to easily expand that across its platforms, Levine said.

Judge Bryan Biedscheid, who is presiding over the proceedings, asked if current technology is accurate enough to handle the task.

"Yoti has announced that their products are exactly that, 99 percent accurate for detecting that someone six to 12 is, in fact, under 13. Not to repeat myself, but I'm gonna — this is a product that Meta already uses, or a partner that Meta already uses [for Facebook Dating]," Levine said.

Age verification is essential to cracking down on harmful interactions between children

and adults, he said, because “you can't protect kids if you don't know that they're kids, and you can't protect them from adults if you don't know that adults are adults.”

Meta could also repurpose its current tools to bar teens under 18 from sending nude photos entirely, Levine said.

The company currently blurs the photos and asks people if they want to send and receive such photos, but it should be technically possible to block them entirely, he added.

Daniel Dorris, a lawyer for Meta, asked if teens could turn to other apps to send nude photos.

“This is already against policy, so I am not asking for much,” he said, adding that Meta could also continue warning teens about the consequences of sending such photos, along with blocking the photo. “It’s not a race to the bottom.”

Dorris also asked Levine about his research into Meta’s Teen Accounts and other improvements made to its platforms since the New Mexico lawsuit was filed in 2023.

“Teen accounts, for all you know, could have been ... a dramatic improvement of teen safety,” Dorris said.

“And if that's the case, it should be easy to comply, technically feasible, no work on Meta’s part to maintain and enforce those settings. I think that'd be great,” Levine said.

Levine reiterated throughout the day that a court order would also ensure Meta continued its specific child safety-related changes, because the company can currently make changes to those programs whenever it wants, he said.

— *MLex viewed the trial on Courtroom View Network.*