

**Before the  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of )  
 )  
Implementation of the Child Safe Viewing Act; ) MB Docket No. 09-26  
Examination of Parental Control Technologies )  
for Video or Audio Programming )  
 )

COMMENTS OF VERIZON AND VERIZON WIRELESS

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- I. Verizon Is Committed to Empowering Parents, Protecting Children, and Promoting Consumer Choice.....2**
  
- II. Verizon Provides Numerous Tools To Aid Parents In Controlling the Content Available To Their Children.....4**
  - A. FiOS TV Services .....4**
  - B. Wireless Voice and Data.....6**
  - C. Content Available Over the Internet.....9**
  
- III. Government Regulation of Content Blocking Technologies Is Unnecessary and Could Impede Private Efforts to Develop Innovative Tools .....11**

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**COMMENTS OF VERIZON<sup>1/</sup> AND VERIZON WIRELESS**

The Child Safe Viewing Act<sup>2/</sup> appropriately focuses on providing parents with a variety of tools to protect their children. As consumers have increased choice in viewing opportunities, it is ever more important that they have available tools to manage what their children can see. Verizon understands the importance of parental control technologies to its subscribers, and it has focused substantial attention and resources on the development of technologies that enable parents to filter the programming and content available to their children. As a result, Verizon offers efficient, easy-to-use tools for parents to monitor and control the content available to their children over each platform over which it offers service – including FiOS TV, wireless voice and data services, and Internet access. Parents have embraced these offerings, and Verizon is committed to continuing to develop services and technologies that provide parents with effective ways to manage their children’s activities and safeguard them from content that parents may find objectionable or harmful.

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<sup>1/</sup> In addition to Verizon Wireless, the Verizon companies participating in this filing (“Verizon”) are the regulated, wholly owned subsidiaries of Verizon Communications Inc.

<sup>2/</sup> See Child Safe Viewing Act of 2007, S. 602, P.L. 110-452, 122 Stat. 5025 (Dec. 2008).

While Verizon thus embraces the goal of spurring the “development of the ‘next generation of parental control technology,’”<sup>3/</sup> it believes that federal regulation of such technologies is unnecessary at this time and risks discouraging carriers from continuing to innovate in this area. Indeed, governmental intervention would be fraught with potential difficulties. It not only would raise significant potential First Amendment issues,<sup>4/</sup> but also would present substantial complexities given the extremely fast pace with which new media and communications products are being deployed. Government regulation in this area should be avoided absent evidence of a specifically identified market failure. No such failure exists. To the contrary, providers have substantial incentives to innovate and provide parents with the choices and capabilities that will allow them to control the content to which their children are exposed. And providers have strong incentives to, and do, inform consumers of the availability of these tools so that they can select the services and providers that meet their needs.

**I. Verizon Is Committed to Empowering Parents, Protecting Children, and Promoting Consumer Choice.**

Across its full range of services, Verizon is committed to policies and tools that empower parents, protect children, and promote consumer choice as end-users access content using Verizon’s platforms. To this end, Verizon has established a set of corporate policies – known as Verizon’s “Guiding Principles for Content” – that embody its core principles regarding access to

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<sup>3/</sup> *Implementation of the Child Safe Viewing Act; Examination of Parental Control Technologies for Video or Audio Programming*, Notice of Inquiry, 24 FCC Rcd 3342 ¶ 1 (2009) (“NOI”).

<sup>4/</sup> *See, e.g., American Civil Liberties Union v. Mukasey*, 534 F.3d 181 (3rd Cir. 2008) (holding that portions of the Children’s Online Protection Act were unconstitutional); *Center for Democracy & Technology v. Pappert*, 337 F.Supp.2d 606 (E.D. Pa. 2004) (holding unconstitutional state statute requiring Internet service providers to block access to websites displaying child pornography).

content available through its services.<sup>5/</sup> These principles include respect for customer choice, respect for customer privacy and security, and dedication to full compliance with the law.

Specifically, for each of the Verizon networks, Verizon adheres to the following Guiding Principles:

- Where Verizon offers its own content through one of its platforms, it does so based on factors that include content ratings provided by existing rating systems and consistency with acceptable industry practices. Verizon seeks to give customers the ability to make informed choices about the content it offers by making any ratings and other information readily available and by giving customers access to tools they can use to monitor and control the content they obtain.
- As a network provider, Verizon provides access to the Internet and, through it, to services and content the substance of which Verizon does not own, develop or control. Verizon is committed to empowering its customers to make informed choices about the services and content they access over its network by providing customers with tools they can use to manage content, including parental controls, as well as access to educational materials and other resources about content rating systems to assist parents and other users in identifying appropriate content for themselves and their children.
- Verizon respects freedom of expression and its customers' ability to freely access and disseminate the lawful content of their choosing in a manner that respects others' use of the network and that complies with the law. Verizon supports sound industry practices for safeguarding children, the intellectual property rights of content owners, and the privacy and security of its customers.
- Finally, Verizon exercises discretion over its choice of brands and companies that serve as its advertising partners. Verizon's selection of these partners takes into account its corporate values as well as those of its business partners and customers.

In addition to these Guiding Principles, Verizon has established a number of specific content guidelines applicable to each of its service networks, including its FiOS TV service, its wireless voice and data offerings, and its broadband Internet service. These content guidelines make it easier for parents to protect their children from offensive or harmful content.

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<sup>5/</sup> These policies are described in greater detail at <http://responsibility.verizon.com/home/contentpolicy>.

Verizon also works closely with others in the industry, consumers, and other stakeholders to develop and implement effective tools to empower parents and other consumers to protect children. For example, a Verizon official was recently named to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's Online Safety and Technology Working Group. This working group, established by the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act,<sup>6/</sup> will report to the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and to Congress on industry efforts to promote a safe online environment for children. Verizon also participated in the recently completed Internet Safety Technical Task Force led by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard, which examined online safety issues concerning social networking services. Forums such as these provide an opportunity for industry members and other stakeholders to work together and to share information about the practices that are effective at protecting children as they access the content made available by today's communications platforms.

## **II. Verizon Provides Numerous Tools To Aid Parents In Controlling the Content Available To Their Children.**

Verizon makes available extensive parental control technologies on each of the platforms through which it provides service.<sup>7/</sup>

### **A. FiOS TV Services**

Verizon's FiOS TV service offers a variety of programming for audiences of all ages. Verizon recognizes that some households may wish to block content they consider objectionable or unsuitable, and that parents in particular must have effective tools at their disposal to ensure

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<sup>6/</sup> See Broadband Data Services Improvement Act at Title II, S. 1492, P.L. 110-385, 122 Stat. 4096 (Oct. 2008).

<sup>7/</sup> These tools are summarized in the attached brochure and described in further detail and made available for download at <http://parentalcenter.verizon.radialpoint.net/>.

that their children are not exposed to inappropriate material. In response to the 1996 Parental Choice in Television Programming Act,<sup>8/</sup> the television broadcast, cable, and movie industries worked together to create voluntary, industry-originated systems for rating television content. *NOI* ¶ 13. The TV Parental Guidelines contain both age and content based ratings, whereas the Motion Picture Association of America (“MPAA”) guidelines are age based. *Id.* ¶ 14. These ratings function in concert with the V-chip feature that Congress required to be integrated into all television sets with screens 13 inches or larger starting in 2000, giving parents workable tools to limit the programming their children watch on television.

FiOS TV makes available for no charge parental control options that, in addition to the existing ratings system, provide parents with effective, easy-to-understand mechanisms to monitor and control the content to which their children are exposed. For example, the Digital Video Recorder (“DVR”) offered to Verizon’s FiOS TV customers includes a variety of “TV Parental Controls” that are implemented through the subscriber’s DVR remote control using a four-digit personal identification number of the subscriber’s choosing and allow parents to easily control what programming their children may view. Through this application, FiOS TV customers can block programming on specific channels, hide information for adult-rated content in TV listings and throughout the Interactive Media Guide, and prevent any unauthorized On Demand, Pay Per View, or subscription purchase on their accounts. The FiOS TV parental controls also allow customers to selectively block programming available to their children using both the TV Parental Guidelines and the MPAA ratings. Verizon even enables its customers to block promotional Video On Demand trailers to ensure that children are not inadvertently exposed to inappropriate promotional programming that otherwise might not be blocked by

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<sup>8/</sup> See Telecommunications Act of 1996 at Sec. 551, S. 652, P.L. 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (Feb. 1996).

existing parental control settings. Finally, parents also can prevent unauthorized purchases of games and control the use of games using Entertainment Software Rating Board (“ESRB”) ratings.

**B. Wireless Voice and Data**

Verizon similarly recognizes the importance of providing parents with appropriate tools to prevent their children from receiving content that they deem inappropriate or offensive on their wireless devices. As the Commission correctly notes, however, establishing effective parental control technologies in the wireless context can pose additional challenges, because children typically operate wireless devices away from the purview of their parents. *NOI* ¶ 27. In addition, unlike broadcast, cable, and satellite TV, the content delivered over wireless devices is not limited exclusively to channels or content selected by the carrier, but also includes the limitless range of third-party content available on the Internet and the growing number of games and other applications made available for wireless devices. For these reasons, Verizon Wireless makes available a variety of parental controls that customers can use to manage access to content on wireless devices.

Currently, these parental controls fall into two general categories: content controls and usage controls. In connection with content controls, as an active member of CTIA - The Wireless Association, Verizon Wireless has played an integral role in the development of industry-sponsored measures to provide parents with the ability to control the carrier content made available to their children by wireless providers themselves. For example, under the CTIA-sponsored “Carrier Content Classification and Internet Access Control Guidelines”, carrier-provided content is classified as either “Accessible Carrier Content” or “Restricted

Carrier Content.”<sup>9/</sup> Under the guidelines, wireless providers, including Verizon Wireless, have agreed not to offer restricted content unless they provide tools to parents to restrict access to that content. These voluntary industry standards have been successful in enabling parents to limit the availability of such restricted content on mobile devices.

Additionally, Verizon Wireless offers a service known as Content Filters which, as the Commission recognizes, *NOI* ¶ 29, allows parents to further control the content their children can access on their handsets, including content accessible through the Internet, V CAST Music and Video and short code message campaigns. These filters, which are provided at no charge, can be set at a variety of levels by logging into the subscriber’s account at “My Verizon”: (1) “C7+” for content recommended for children ages seven and older (similar to TV-G); (2) “T13+” for children ages 13 and older (similar to TV-PG/TV 14 or PG 13 rated movies); and (3) “YA17+” for children ages 17 and older (similar to TV-MA or R-rated movies and explicit rated songs). This service provides parents with a way to limit their children to accessing only age-appropriate content.

Verizon Wireless also provides parents with the ability to block any or all data services available on their children’s handsets. Those blocks, which are available at no charge, can be used to prohibit access to, among others, the Internet, V CAST Music and Video, and Verizon Wireless’ application store (“Media Center”), and prevent the sending or receipt of text, picture, or video messages. There is even a block for premium charge short code message campaigns. Short code campaigns are advertising or promotional campaigns that are conducted by third-parties utilizing text messages to or from five- or six-digit numbers (*i.e.*, short codes) that those advertisers lease through an industry-wide system. Some of these campaigns may result in

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<sup>9/</sup> See [http://www.ctia.org/advocacy/policy\\_topics/topic.cfm/TID/36](http://www.ctia.org/advocacy/policy_topics/topic.cfm/TID/36).

charges to the end-user. Customers can activate these blocks through the My Verizon section of Verizon Wireless' website or by calling customer care.

In addition to making these content based controls available to customers, Verizon Wireless has established usage controls that provide parents with additional tools to manage their children's ability to access content over their wireless devices. These include controls that allow customers to (1) limit the times of day during which children can use messaging or data services on their handsets; (2) block calls or messages to or from certain phone numbers; (3) set monthly voice minute and messaging allowances and send free alerts when a child approaches or reaches the allowance; and (4) designate trusted numbers from which a child can always be reached, even outside of the designated time of use and regardless of usage allowances.

Finally, Verizon Wireless offers its wireless customers the Chaperone Family Locator service, a convenient and valuable tool to help parents monitor the location of their children's cell phones at all times using either the Chaperone Website or the Chaperone Parent application on parents' own mobile phones. With the Chaperone service, a handset's location information will be displayed as an approximate address on a detailed map. Verizon Wireless' Chaperone service also includes Child Zone capabilities, which allow parents to establish geographical boundaries around specific locations, such as school, home or soccer practice. When a child carrying a mobile phone that is registered in the Chaperone service arrives at or leaves the Child Zone, the parent will receive a notification via text message. In addition, parents can elect to receive text message alerts notifying them of the location of the child's phone at a specific date/time, similar to a curfew check. The Chaperone service thus provides additional, complimentary safeguards to Verizon Wireless' content and usage based parental controls that help parents ensure their children's security.

### **C. Content Available Over the Internet**

Verizon believes that broadband Internet access is a positive force in our society and that ensuring that broadband technologies are available to as many people as possible will benefit Verizon's customers and our country. But the rewards of the Internet revolution come with risks. In particular, as children create social networks through the Internet that are often beyond the reach of many adults, parents need to be able to manage their children's online safety. In recognition of these concerns, Verizon offers an extensive set of Internet parental controls with online tools to help parents protect their children from accessing offensive or objectionable content over their wireline Internet connection.

Verizon's online Parental Control service, which Verizon makes available at no charge to all its broadband subscribers as a standalone service, or for a monthly fee as part of its suite of security services, allows parents to select categories of web sites (*e.g.*, web sites concerning sex or gambling or that contain profanity) that they wish to block in order to help protect their children. In addition, the service allows parents to identify and block individual websites based on their specific URLs and to prevent their children from accessing certain types of applications such as online chat or gaming sites. Parents also can schedule when Internet access will be available on their children's computers to ensure, for example, that their children can only access the Internet when an adult is present.

These online parental control tools, which are password protected, also enable parents to monitor their children's online activities by keeping logs of all web sites visited by each user in their household (including blocked sites that the user tried to visit). Of course, Verizon also offers (for a subscription fee) anti-virus, firewall, and anti-spyware security tools that are critically important to protecting the user's computer, data, and personally identifiable

information, including information about children. Taken together, these security tools provide an effective, efficient, easy-to use mechanism for parents to monitor and control their children's online activities and to safeguard their personal information.

Finally, Verizon believes that educating parents about the importance of protecting their children from content they deem offensive or objectionable is as essential to safeguarding children's interests as is the availability of parental control technologies. Verizon offers a wealth of resources to which parents can turn for advice regarding family online safety issues, including links to a variety of third party online safety websites.<sup>10/</sup> Verizon also makes available on its website a set of recommendations to help ensure that parents are as well informed as possible about steps they can take to control their children's access to certain materials – regardless of the technology platform (*e.g.* television, wireless voice and data services, or broadband) they are using.<sup>11/</sup> These include:

- talking to children to create an environment that allows honest and open dialog with children about their media activities and experiences;
- using all available parental control software to filter out potentially harmful, inappropriate, or offensive content;
- surfing the Internet, watching TV, and enjoying wireless content together with their children to help them learn to recognize and anticipate the risks associated with certain online content;
- using usage controls and parental controls software to monitor television, personal computer, phone, and wireless use and setting limits where appropriate;

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<sup>10/</sup> For example, Verizon provides “useful links” to sites run by third-party experts such as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and Wired Safety on its online Parental Control Center, <http://parentalcenter.verizon.radialpoint.net>. In addition, the Verizon Foundation maintains a website with a variety of online safety resources, [http://thinkfinity.org/about/feature\\_list.aspx?feature=safety](http://thinkfinity.org/about/feature_list.aspx?feature=safety).

<sup>11/</sup> See <http://parentalcenter.verizon.radialpoint.net/>.

- moving the TV and personal computer to open areas of the home, with the screens facing out and visible at all times, to better monitor children; and
- joining their children's online social networks so that parents can make sure they know who their children's online and wireless friends are.

Even the most advanced content filtering services will not prevent access to all unwanted or undesirable content, and they are not and will never be a substitute for parental supervision.

### **III. Government Regulation of Content Blocking Technologies Is Unnecessary and Could Impede Private Efforts to Develop Innovative Tools.**

While it is appropriate for both Congress and the Commission to devote attention to the important issue of ensuring that parents have effective tools at their disposal to protect their children from content that they deem to be objectionable, government regulation in this area is unwarranted. As the above discussion makes clear, Verizon provides parents with effective, easy-to-use ways to control the content to which their children have access and informs customers about the tools available to them. As the communications environment that children encounter becomes increasingly complex and spans many different platforms, consumers have come to expect that the parental controls available to them will continue to expand and adapt to meet their changing needs. For these reasons, Verizon continues to invest in and deploy more advanced filtering technologies and parental control tools to meet its customers' demands. Verizon is not alone in these efforts; indeed, the communications industry as a whole has devoted and continues to devote substantial resources toward the development of parental control tools to safeguard children's interests. In light of the industry's voluntary efforts in this area, and the clear market incentives to innovate and offer effective parental control tools and inform consumers about their availability, regulation is not necessary.

In fact, given the exceedingly fast evolution of communications technologies and the marketplace, the development of an extensive federal regulatory regime could hinder, rather than

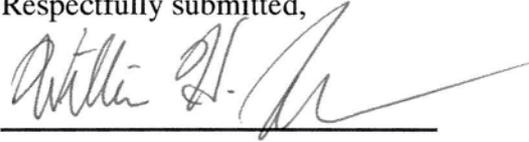
facilitate, the development of advanced parental control technologies. Given the speed with which new technologies are being deployed, any lengthy regulatory process aimed at mandating standardized parental control requirements could work to delay, rather than expedite, the development of advanced, state-of-the-art content filtering or blocking mechanisms. Moreover, any regulatory efforts to arrive at a “one-size-fits-all” approach to parental control technologies very well could result in adoption of a lowest common denominator approach that would discourage carrier innovation, inhibit the development of alternatives, and ultimately leave parents with fewer, less effective tools at their disposal.

Given the success of the industry’s efforts to ensure that parents have available tools to manage their children’s online, television, and wireless experience and to protect their children from inappropriate content, and the absence of any reason to believe that market forces will not continue to provide substantial incentives to innovate and provide those tools, the Commission should focus its attention on ensuring that carriers have the flexibility to respond rapidly to their customers’ demands for enhanced parental control technologies in today’s ever-changing media environment.

### **Conclusion**

Today’s highly competitive communications marketplace is driving providers to develop and offer advanced and innovative parental control technologies to protect children as they navigate and access content on a variety of communications platforms. Government should continue to encourage industry and other stakeholders to develop effective tools and education programs that keep pace with the fast-changing communications marketplace and that empower and inform parents and respond to their concerns. Such initiatives will be much more effective than regulatory mandates that are unlikely to keep up with this evolving marketplace.

Respectfully submitted,



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# Parental Controls

## Verizon Parental Controls

No parental control solution is 100% effective and should not be used as a substitute for adult supervision.

Verizon Communications Inc. (NYSE:VZ), headquartered in New York, is a leader in delivering broadband and other wireline and wireless communication innovations to mass market, business, government and wholesale customers.

Verizon Wireless operates America's most reliable wireless network, serving more than 70 million customers nationwide.

Verizon's Wireline operations include Verizon Business, which delivers innovative and seamless business solutions to customers around the world, and Verizon Telecom, which brings customers the benefits of converged communications, information and entertainment services over the nation's most advanced fiber-optic network.

A Dow 30 company, Verizon has a diverse workforce of more than 228,000 and last year generated consolidated operating revenues of more than \$93.5 billion.



## Online Safety Internet Security Content Ratings & Controls



Verizon believes strongly that broadband is a positive force in our society and that getting this technology in the hands of as many people as possible is good for our customers, our company and our country.

Verizon recognizes that parents need tools to help protect their children while online, on a mobile phone and while watching TV. So, Verizon offers a company-wide Parental Controls Program with free online tools to help make our customers' experience using our services enjoyable and safer — for themselves and for their families.

### Verizon Wireless

Verizon Wireless offers account holders free Content Filters and even more extensive options including Usage Controls, Chaperone<sup>sm</sup> with Family Locator for their children's wireless devices.

### Verizon FiOS<sup>®</sup> TV

Verizon includes a free parental controls feature with your FiOS TV which allows you to control the programs available to your family.

### Verizon Online

Verizon FiOS and High Speed Internet offer free parental controls to help protect young users from many threats on the Internet.

Verizon is committed to providing families the tools necessary for a safer, more enjoyable information age.

*As our customers live more and more of their lives online, we face growing concerns over the privacy and security of personal information.*

*As children create social networks and virtual worlds that are often beyond the reach of many adults, parents need better ways of protecting their children's safety online.*

**Ivan G. Seidenberg**

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer



To learn more about Corporate Responsibility at Verizon, visit: [responsibility.verizon.com](http://responsibility.verizon.com)

### NEW!

Verizon Parental Controls are now also located on a single Web site with information for Verizon Online, Verizon FiOS and Verizon Wireless.

Check it out at: [verizon.net/parentalcontrol](http://verizon.net/parentalcontrol)



## Verizon Wireless Content Filters

By using Content Filters, account holders may allow their children to access content available through their Verizon Wireless handsets, including content accessible through Mobile Web 2.0, short code-based messaging campaigns, V CAST Music and V CAST Video, with confidence that the content will be age-appropriate.

Only Verizon Wireless offers age-appropriate content filters, which are easy to change as your child matures, and always free of charge:



Content recommended for ages 7 and older. Includes content similar to TV-G, G-rated movies and no explicit rated songs.



Content recommended for ages 13 and older. Similar to TV-PG/TV-14, PG 13 rated movies and no explicit rated songs.



Content recommended for ages 17 and older. May include content similar to TV-MA, R-rated movies and explicit rated songs.

To learn more, please visit:

[verizonwireless.com/parentalcontrols](http://verizonwireless.com/parentalcontrols)

## Verizon Wireless Usage Controls

Usage Controls provide you with the tools to manage your family's budget and cell phone usage by allowing you to:



Set voice and messaging allowances and receive free text alerts when your family member nears or reaches the allowance.



Designate specific times of the day when your family member is not permitted to use messaging or data on his or her cell phone.



Create lists of blocked phone numbers to prevent unwanted calls and text messages from being sent or received.



Designate trusted numbers that can always communicate with your family member, regardless of other Usage Controls that are set.



Create profiles and customize settings for each family member or each line on your account.

You can access and manage all the lines on your account online via My Verizon. To learn more, please visit:

[verizonwireless.com/usagecontrols](http://verizonwireless.com/usagecontrols)

## Verizon FiOS TV Parental Controls

Verizon FiOS TV offers a wide variety of programming for audiences of all ages. Some households may wish to block unsuitable or objectionable content.

FiOS TV Parental Controls make it easy to ensure that viewable programming is appropriate for all family members.

The controls allow you to:

- Manage what can and cannot be watched with a 4-digit PIN
- Control content using TV and MPAA ratings for shows and movies
- Control games using ESRB ratings
- Block all programming on specific channels individually
- Hide information for adult-rated content in TV listings and throughout the Interactive Media Guide (IMG)
- Prevent all unauthorized On Demand, Pay Per View, Gaming, and subscription purchases on your account
- Block promotional Video On Demand trailers



With just a few clicks of the remote, FiOS TV Parental Controls enable you to easily manage the content that comes into your home and make better decisions about what your children watch.

To learn more, please visit:

[verizon.com/fiostvhelp](http://verizon.com/fiostvhelp)

## Verizon Online Parental Controls

Parental control software is a great start to ensuring your child's experiences browsing the Web are safe and secure. The Verizon Parental Control service from Verizon Online can help you identify and block Web sites you decide are inappropriate for your children.

The Parental Controls service allows you to:

- Block Web sites by categories
- Block or allow Web sites based on the URL of the site
- Block Internet access for certain programs or groups of programs
- Schedule when Internet access is available



Included with your Verizon Parental Controls service is the Verizon Security Advisor™, a FREE security test to see if your PC is protecting you from the latest online threats.

In addition to the free parental controls service, the Verizon Internet Security Suite also offers a package of Anti-Spyware, Anti-Virus, Firewall, Pop-up & Ad blocker, Privacy Manager, Fraud Protection and PC Tune-Up on multiple PCs for one low price.

To learn more and download free software, please visit :

[verizon.net/parentalcontrol](http://verizon.net/parentalcontrol)

## Verizon Wireless Chaperone

Chaperone Family Locator provides a convenient and valuable service to help securely determine the location of your family member's cell phones.



Your child's location will be displayed as an approximate address on a detailed map from the Chaperone Website or the Chaperone Parent application on your mobile phone.

Chaperone also includes Child Zone, which allows you to set boundaries around locations such as school, home or soccer practice. When the child carrying the Chaperone Child phone enters or leaves the Child Zone, you can be notified by Text Message. You can also receive an alert on your child's phone's location at a specific date/time, similar to a curfew check.

To learn more about Chaperone and device availability, visit:

[www.verizonwireless.com/chaperone](http://www.verizonwireless.com/chaperone)

