



Information Bulletin

CIKR-12-2022

October 12, 2022

(U) POTENTIAL SAFETY CONCERNS POSED BY THE BEREAL APPLICATION

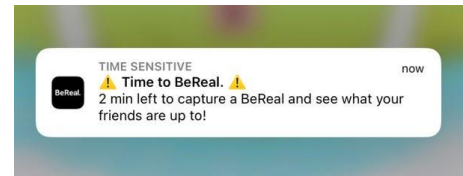
(U) SCOPE

(U//FOUO) The Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center (PaCIC) is providing this Information Bulletin to alert members of the education sector about the BeReal application. BeReal is a French social media application (app) that was released in 2020 and currently has approximately 10 million users each day, mostly in the 16 to 24 age group, although the app has attracted attention from younger children.¹ This bulletin will describe what the app does and clarify several safety considerations associated with the app.



(U) OVERVIEW

(U//FOUO) The BeReal app sends users an alert notification at a random time each day. Users then have two minutes to use the app to take and share a photo showing their current activity. The app simultaneously takes a selfie and shares both photos. Users cannot see their friends' posts until they share their own daily photos. In addition to the photos, each post shows the username, location, and the time elapsed since that day's notification was made. For example, if a post was made four hours after the notification was made, the post will show "4 hr late."



BEREAL NOTIFICATION

(U) THREAT ANALYSIS

(U//FOUO) The app's emphasis on authenticity and reality creates several potential safety vulnerabilities associated with the immediate posting of one's current location and surroundings. The initial signup does not require a real name, email, proof of age, or any other proof of identity aside from a verification code sent to a mobile phone. This means that anyone can sign up anonymously, including internet predators, non-custodial parents looking for information about a child, or a child who signs up without parental permission. BeReal also allows users to save screenshots of posts; although the app does notify the person whose post was screenshotted, this means a potentially embarrassing or compromising post may become part of someone else's permanent record or be further disseminated, creating the possibility for cyberbullying or the compromise of sensitive information within the post.²

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(U//FOUO) The random and immediate nature of the notification to make the daily post creates other safety concerns.

- Photos may show inappropriate content, such as photos taken in a restroom, locker room, or other area where there is an expectation of privacy.
- Daily posts may contain other individuals who do not wish to be photographed, or who do not wish to be posted on social media.
- Confidential or sensitive information may be shown in a photograph (e.g., a computer screen, papers on a desk, mail on a table, etc.).
- People may stop what they are doing to take the daily photo, creating a safety hazard or a distraction.
- Being “late” for the daily post may create situations where some users become targets for bullying.
- Some people may use the app as an excuse to take photos of people or places that should not be photographed.

(U) RECOMMENDATIONS

(U//FOUO) The PaCIC is providing this bulletin for informational and situational awareness purposes. School administrators, teachers, and other staff should be aware of the app, maintain situational awareness of student activities and behaviors, and be aware of any disruptions the app may cause.

(U//FOUO) Parents should be aware of the app, their child’s mobile device usage, as well as any changes in behavior. If parents choose to allow their children to use BeReal, privacy and consent should be discussed, as well as what to do if the child sees inappropriate content. When the child’s account is set up, the privacy setting should be set to “My Friends” so that their photos do not get posted on the public “Discovery” feed. Additionally, location data should be turned off so it is not posted with the photo. The American Academy of Pediatrics has an interactive family media plan available at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/fmp/Pages/MediaPlan.aspx#/> to help families develop a plan for children’s use of media.

The information used in this bulletin is drawn from open sources, DHS open-source reporting, FBI and other law enforcement intelligence reports and court filings. The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) has high confidence in the information obtained from court documents and those of government agencies. The PSP has medium confidence in the information obtained from open sources, which includes media reports and Internet websites whose information is credibly sourced and plausible but may contain biases or unintentional inaccuracies. When possible, open-source information has been corroborated through other law enforcement and government sources.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

To assist in improving our production and dissemination processes, please provide feedback of this product by completing an online customer survey. A link to the survey can be found at the bottom of this page. This will allow us to ensure that our customers continue to receive valuable, relevant information in a timely manner.

¹ Zhou, V. (2022, May 12). “BeReal surpassed 10 million cumulative downloads to date – boosted by a 5x qoq surge in q1 2022” *Data.ai*. Retrieved 09/21/2022 from <https://www.data.ai/en/insights/market-data/bereal-surges-to-popularity-in-q1-2022/>.

² Enthoven, J. (2022, June 20). “Screenshots on BeReal: How to see who see who screenshots a photo.” *Kapwing.com*. Retrieved 09/21/2022 from <https://www.kapwing.com/resources/screenshots-in-bereal/>.

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