



City of Cañon City  
**POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
Cañon City, Colorado 81212  
Paul Schultz, Chief of Police

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**COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION BULLETIN**  
**SECRET PHONE PHOTO VAULTS**

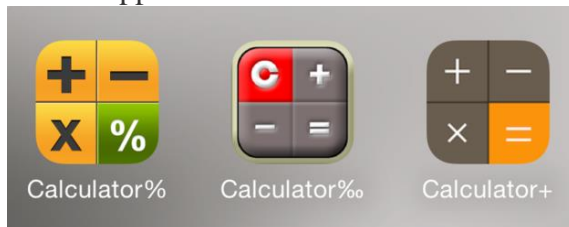
This latest incident has again brought to the forefront the need for parents, schools, law enforcement and the community at large to be more vigilant regarding unsupervised youth use of technology. As with most risky behaviors, we react after the fact, looking for ways to prevent continuance of the behaviors, that's the ultimate struggle of prevention, crime or otherwise.

The earliest report found online of these particular types of secret "folder" or "vault" apps was in 2011. Google apps, Amazon, iTunes and more all sold them before they were free. This "Calculator%" app seemed to become the preferred method in 2014 and goes by many names. "Calculator%" looks and acts like a calculator, but is actually a hidden photo and/or video vault.

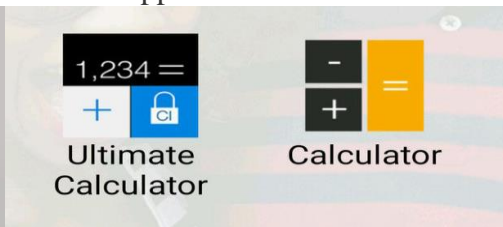
As of today, you can YouTube specific instructions on how to install these apps just by searching "secret photo" or "photo vault". The premise is pretty simple, install the app, enter a code, confirm it, maybe enter a back-up code, and select the phone app you want hidden, typically the photo and/or video. Take or receive photos/videos, send them to the vault, and delete them from your phone cache. They're now hidden and you can save them to keep private or to share from the vault. You can also upload them on a computer.

So what can we do? First educate yourself as to what these are, what they do, how they function, and what they look like. You can go to the app store on your phone and search the word "secret". You'll find there are lots of apps available to perform the function of hiding photos and videos. Below are some iterations of apps for iPhone and Android.

iPhone apps



Android apps



How do parents start the conversation? Ask your kids what technology they're using and check

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their phones. If it looks like a calculator or anything suspicious, ask them more questions. What else can parents do to prevent kids from making poor choices? Parenting has never been an easy job and technology has made it more difficult. But the overall premise of effective parenting has always been realistic expectations of your individual child and their individual social/emotional development, communication, parental involvement and preferably family meetings, and building trust. Sometimes parents think that by high school (and sometimes middle school) kids know what to do, but that is a critical time to stay involved, because that's when parental influence comes to fruition whether its choosing whether or not to use drugs and alcohol, become involved in bullying, violence, crime, gangs, or participating in secret photo vaults. It's not the time to set them completely free; it's the time to communicate with them regularly about their struggles, their lessons, and their coping skills. Consistency, logic, and the presence of a caring, involved adult are universal needs of children everywhere.

As parents, we can help our kids make better choices by knowing where they are, who they are with, who their friends are and who their friends parents are, and what their technological and social habits are so that we can help them navigate the land mines; teaching them to problem solve and consider consequences. Just teaching our kids what to do isn't enough anymore, we need to teach them how to think.

The lesson here isn't that parents have one more thing to worry about, it's just another wake up call to parents and those who care for and about children to stay alert, stay informed, and if needed, reach out and ask for help.

For more information on effective parenting techniques visit [www.canoncity.org](http://www.canoncity.org) Police and Public Safety; Crime Prevention Unit; Parenting for Prevention.

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