

China's New AI Companion Rules: No Emotional Dependency, No Virtual Partners for Minors

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China's New Rules for AI Companions: Dependency Banned

Strict limits on emotional manipulation and minors

- Under 18**
No AI virtual partners allowed for minors
- 2 hrs**
Forced use reminder for every user
- Jul 15**
Measures take effect across China, 2026

Disclosure rules plus hard limits on how a human-like bot may behave

June 29, 2026

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On April 10, 2026, four Chinese agencies led by the Cyberspace Administration of China issued the [Provisional Measures on Human-like Interactive AI Services](#), effective July 15, 2026. They govern any AI built to imitate a real person and hold “sustained emotional interaction,”

meaning companion bots, not customer-service tools. A provider cannot let its bot foster emotional dependency, damage a user's real relationships, or push bad decisions through emotional manipulation. Every bot must say it is an AI, remind users after two hours, and, on signs of self-harm, reach a listed guardian or emergency contact.

The rules go furthest with children. A company cannot give anyone under 18 a "virtual partner" or other virtual romantic relationship, and needs parental consent for any child under 14. A required "minor mode" adds time limits, reminders that the bot is not real, and guardian controls over characters and spending. Lawyers call it the first national rulebook for AI companion apps, and it treats emotional manipulation, not data or misinformation, as the main harm. Break them and a service can be pulled and fined up to 200,000 RMB, about \$28,000.

That figure is small next to the [EU AI Act](#), where breaking the chatbot rules can cost 15 million euros. The deeper difference is philosophy: the EU mainly asks an AI to admit it is a machine, while China also dictates how the machine may behave. Two governments, two answers to one question: how do you govern software designed to feel like a person?

Sources:

- [Provisional Measures on the Administration of Human-like Interactive AI Services](#), full English translation (China Law Translate)
- [Original measures](#), source text (Cyberspace Administration of China)
- [China's First Regulatory Framework for Virtual Companions Soon to Take Effect](#) (Hunton Andrews Kurth)
- [An Initial Breakdown of the Draft Rules for Human-like AI](#) (China Law Translate)
- [EU AI Act, Article 50: Transparency Obligations](#)

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