

# PROTECTING KIDS ON SOCIAL MEDIA: The Harms of Social Media

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UTAH STATE SENATE · SALT LAKE CITY

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# BACKGROUND

- Rates of mental health issues among youth have increased over the past two decades, correlating strongly with access to and use of social media.
- Parents need to know about the harms of social media so they can choose to take action to protect their children.
- Utah is at the forefront of holding social media companies accountable for the harms they are causing our children and young people.



## The effects of social media on teens and mental health: the statistics

- 2009-2010 social media became prevalent (Utah SHARP survey)
  - Nearly all studies find a statistically significant correlation between heavy social media use (3-4 hours a day) and mood disorders
- 57% of American teen girls are persistently sad or hopeless, and nearly one in three girls seriously contemplated suicide—an increase from 19% a decade ago (CDC)
- 53% of Utah female high school students had persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness
  - 61% increase from 2009 (Utah SHARP survey)
- 100% increase in mental illness in teens from 2009 to 2019 (Jonathan Haidt)
- 3 hours a day on social media can double the risk of poor mental health, including symptoms of depression and anxiety (U.S. Surgeon General)
- Young adults who use social media are 3x as likely to suffer from depression (University of Utah Health)



# BACKGROUND

## WHAT DOES THE DATA SHOW?

Up to **95% of youth aged 13-17** use a social media platform, with more than a third saying they use social media **"almost constantly."**

*(The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory)*

When asked about the impact of social media on their **body image**, nearly half **(46%)** of youth aged 13-17 said social media makes them **feel worse** and **40%** said it makes them **feel neither better nor worse** and only **14%** said it makes them **feel better.**

*(The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory)*

Young adults who use social media are **3x as likely** to suffer from **depression.**

*(University of Utah Health study)*

Technology use within 1 hour of bedtime, and **social media use in particular**, is associated with **sleep disruptions and attention problems.**

*(APA)*

Parents report: **76% of Utah children** use social media in some capacity, **57%** use it 7 days a week, and **53%** use it 1-3 hours a day.

*(Social Media Survey)*

Mental illness in teens **increased between 50% and 150%** from 2009 to 2019.

*(Jonathan Haidt)*



# S.B. 152: SOCIAL MEDIA REGULATION AMENDMENTS

- ✓ Enacts a strict age verification process.
- ✓ Allows parents or legal guardians to set time restrictions on social media use and gives them the ability to access their child's account.
- ✓ Blocks direct messages to minors without being "friends" on the platform.
- ✓ Prevents social media companies from collecting and selling data on minors.

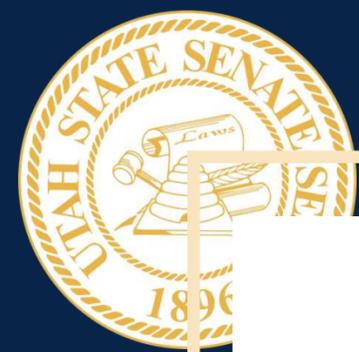


# BIPARTISAN ISSUE

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Social media companies should be held accountable “for the experiment they are running on our children for profit” – President Biden (2023 State of the Union)

S.B. 152 was a bipartisan effort in the Utah Legislature.



# WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Utah is providing parents with more tools, resources and controls to help fight against the harms of social media

## Tips for Parents:

- Create a family media plan with expectations of how and when to use technology and social media.
- Learn about social media platforms and how they work.
- Have open and honest discussions with your child about the harms of social media and spending time online.
- Model responsible online behavior for your child.
- Reconsider allowing your child to have social media.
- Free up time to connect with your child device-free.
- Create tech-free zones & find opportunities to connect in person with your child.