



The Screen Time Action Network at Fairplay
Online Harms Prevention
Legislation Checklist for Youth and Online Safety Bills

Our Mission Statement

We believe our children and young people deserve to be safe online. We are here to challenge the status quo that leaves parents and caregivers fending for themselves when it comes to trying to manage their kids' screen time and online safety.

We created this Checklist as a tool to ensure that future legislation is focused on solving these health and safety issues we see currently affecting young people.

Definitions: Child is under age 13. Minor is under age 18.

We support legislation that will educate key stakeholders on the hidden online dangers for young people (parents, schools, young people, youth leaders, scouts, mental health facilities).

Education should include:

	Problem	Potential solution
<input type="checkbox"/>	No or minimal Digital Citizenship or Media Literacy training in schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Require a robust digital citizenship curriculum K-12th grade. •Wireless carriers could sponsor courses at school (we do not endorse tech companies sponsored courses). •Could offer a discount on phones or accessories if they take the class (similar to insurance discounts for students taking a driver's ed class). •Textbooks will align curriculum adoption across school districts. •States can earmark school funding for digital citizenship / Social Emotional Learning. •No devices allowed in school classrooms.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Few trainings for parents and caregivers on setting healthy and age-appropriate limits on kids with screen time. Parents assume tech companies or the government have safeguards in place; assume 13 year old minimum age is for a reason.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Require robust parent education on the harms and risks starting at birth, continuing through school years. •Offered through community wellness program, PTAs/PTOs, schools, mental health facilities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	People don't know there are options between "no phone" and "smart phone with access to everything" .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Educate families on the range of options you can give for first phones and create a norm that the first phone is a "dumb phone".

Legislation should hold Big Tech accountable for harmful content, including platforms that condone anonymity, keep hold of our children's attention and prey on their vulnerabilities for a profit.

Accountability should include:

	Problem	Potential solution
<input type="checkbox"/>	The reporting system is broken. The process social media companies have for reporting content that is against Community Guidelines doesn't work. Guidelines and penalties are not enforced. (Drug dealing, bullying, challenges.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Tech companies need to invest in monitoring for illegal activity, review reported allegations, and ensure guidelines are being followed. •Parallel database reporting so we can see those issues reported that haven't been resolved and follow up. •Follow through with threats to ban user.

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<input type="checkbox"/>	Reporting issues: Hard to know where to report content or how to report issues. Each platform has its own system. No person to follow up with on the platforms when something goes wrong. When you report an issue, either you get no response or a canned response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Overhaul the reporting process so that it's easy to do and there are status updates so you know what happened with your issue. •One-click reporting, instead of several screens of information required. •Customer service safety department with live people (vs AI) responding within 24 hours. •Automatic AI reply immediately, then live person reply within 24 hours. •Specific legislative guidelines to review reported content that doesn't meet their self-imposed community guidelines and enforce penalties if not reviewed in a timely manner. •Penalties for failure to review reported content and enforce Community Guidelines / Terms of Service in a timely manner.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Underage kids making accounts and using the apps. No age verification process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Verify user ages with a simple process, using the information tech companies already have. •AI can detect birthday comments, ages of friends, comments about school, what they're studying, what games and videos "liked", how they spell, what times they access entertainment apps, location/IP address, who their friends are and infer how old they are.
<input type="checkbox"/>	No warnings or interventions. Apps make it easy to bully in the moment or fall into a rabbit hole of harmful content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Require apps to send intervention messages if a child has been searching or receiving harmful content (suicide, self-harm, bullying). •Require apps to flag key bullying words and phrases and encourage the sender to pause before they send this. This feature shouldn't be able to be turned off on a child's phone.
<input type="checkbox"/>	No duty of care for youth. Apps are built to maximize view time and profits, not protect minors from harmful content. Kids have lost their lives to social media harms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Require a duty of care for minors so that companies must design their platforms with kids' best interests as a primary consideration, including not subjecting them to harms. The focus should be on youth-focused benefits instead of platform benefits first.
<input type="checkbox"/>	13-year-olds can toggle off all parental controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Require safeguards so that parental controls stay enabled.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social media algorithms are secret	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Require social media companies to have algorithmic transparency with publicly published content moderation systems and the ability to audit them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Content moderation/Linguistic inequality in non-English versions of apps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Require apps to have the same content moderation standards for all languages their app supports.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Harmful features such as Autoplay are on by default. "New YouTube child accounts" have it turned off now by default.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Turn on safety features on all devices by default on all platforms.
<input type="checkbox"/>	API (application programming interface) is closed on some apps so monitoring apps can't monitor the apps for safety. There's no ability to perform "quality control".	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Open up API (API allows softwares to talk to each other). •Require all apps to be open to parental monitoring apps. •Allow monitoring apps like Google Family Link and Bark to be pre-installed on minors' phones.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Independent researchers do not have access to data from social media companies and cannot effectively study them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Require tech companies to cooperate with outside independent researchers who will publish their findings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Terms and conditions/privacy legal language from apps are hard to understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Require tech companies to write them so they are easy to understand. •Only let them ask for the necessary permissions to run the app, not the data collection and spying permissions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small non-diverse population defining algorithms and what youth have access to (mostly young, white, straight, male tech industry professionals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Include representation from all populations (equity based model) as we propose solutions.

Legislation should advocate for the creation of a federal regulatory body to oversee Big Tech and safety standards that are enforced to create and maintain safe and healthy environments for young people.

Safety standards should include:

	Problem	Potential Solution
<input type="checkbox"/>	No formal review process on harmful apps, add-ons or features (e.g Speeding filter on Snapchat encouraged teens to speed and resulted in deaths.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Create a review board that includes parents and experts to review products <i>before</i> they go live. •FTC or other committee to review.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tech companies aren't held responsible for harms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use the alcohol and cigarette industries as a model for success in holding for-profit companies accountable. •When we found internal documents from these companies knowing they were harming the health of humans, we held them accountable.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phone and device addiction .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The default on minors' phones would contain screen time limits and notifications for "break times", with a slow down on the scroll rate beginning at 10 PM. These settings could be changed by the parent/guardian on their payment/account page.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Child and teen mental health is suffering with social media misuse and overuse and not having safety procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fund studies to find the root causes of mental health issues and put safety features in place for protection and better health. •Update the national Youth Risk Behavior Survey by the CDC with questions about screens and mental health. •Require pediatricians to ask patients about screen time and mental health.
<input type="checkbox"/>	13 year old should not be treated as adults (COPPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Change COPPA laws to reflect that youth under 18 years old are still children and need safeguards and protections online.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Platforms allow instant uploads vs. being reviewed <u>before</u> uploading, resulting in harmful content being viewed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Review for content, pause to review, then post if appropriate. •All platforms to monitor based on key indicators
<input type="checkbox"/>	Anonymous messaging community apps allow for anonymous bullying for those under age 18. (Need to rethink this sentence to isolate for bullying, not grass roots organizing or politics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ban all anonymous messaging apps for minors on any platform.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Section 230 allows platforms immunity from responsibility to protect users. Exempt from liability. (while playing it both ways--also have editorial control in publishing.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Make social media companies liable for damages, including partners and add-on apps on their platforms (like YOLO).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social media algorithms deliver inappropriate, harmful content . 9% of teens first learned of self-harm on IG. (FB Files). Once algorithm sees you'll watch it, it delivers more content like that. Exposure to harmful content that doesn't end, even when teens report the content and block it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Require transparency in the algorithm, reporting on how it works, allowing researchers access to data, making teen safety a priority.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Algorithm delivers targeted advertising to kids and tracks kids on and off the platform.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •End data-driven advertising for minors and enact strong use limitations on data that is collected.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Platforms like TikTok are collecting biometric data and we don't know how this will be used in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •End collection of biometric data and other data we can't begin to foresee how it could hurt kids in the future. •Require Terms Of Service that are easy to understand.

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<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Installing and setting up parental controls after buying a phone is hard and time consuming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Require the Phone Carrier to provide pre-programmed children and teen friendly phones with parental controls already installed. Parents would supply the age of the child and the phone would be set up based on age. Access would be limited to appropriate content. Phone could grow with the child as it unlocked more features.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Young people have access to the harmful content on smartphones too young. They are developmentally not ready for the pressure this creates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Apps would provide robust parental controls. Watchdog apps pre-installed on devices (like the camera or calculator are). •Kid safe mode as default with all safety features turned on. •Parent can see all downloads for a child's phone on their account/invoice, even if the cost is \$0. •Mirror all images from a child's phone (under age 13) to a parent's phone. •There are several age-appropriate phones on the market that look like a smart phone and work with all carriers. Promote these types of phones to parents. •Promote a step-by-step plan, starting with "dumb" phone, and moving through a series of trainings before smartphone and gradually adding more privacy as they mature.

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For more information on this Checklist or to join our efforts, contact Online Harms Prevention work group co-chairs Joann Bogard and Lisa Honold at the Screen Time Action Network.