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The Social Media Epidemic

Social media companies, through the design of their platforms, have perpetuated a youth mental health crisis which is negatively impacting our schools.



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Social Media – Youth Mental Health Crisis



The Alleged Intentional Design of Addictive and Harmful Products

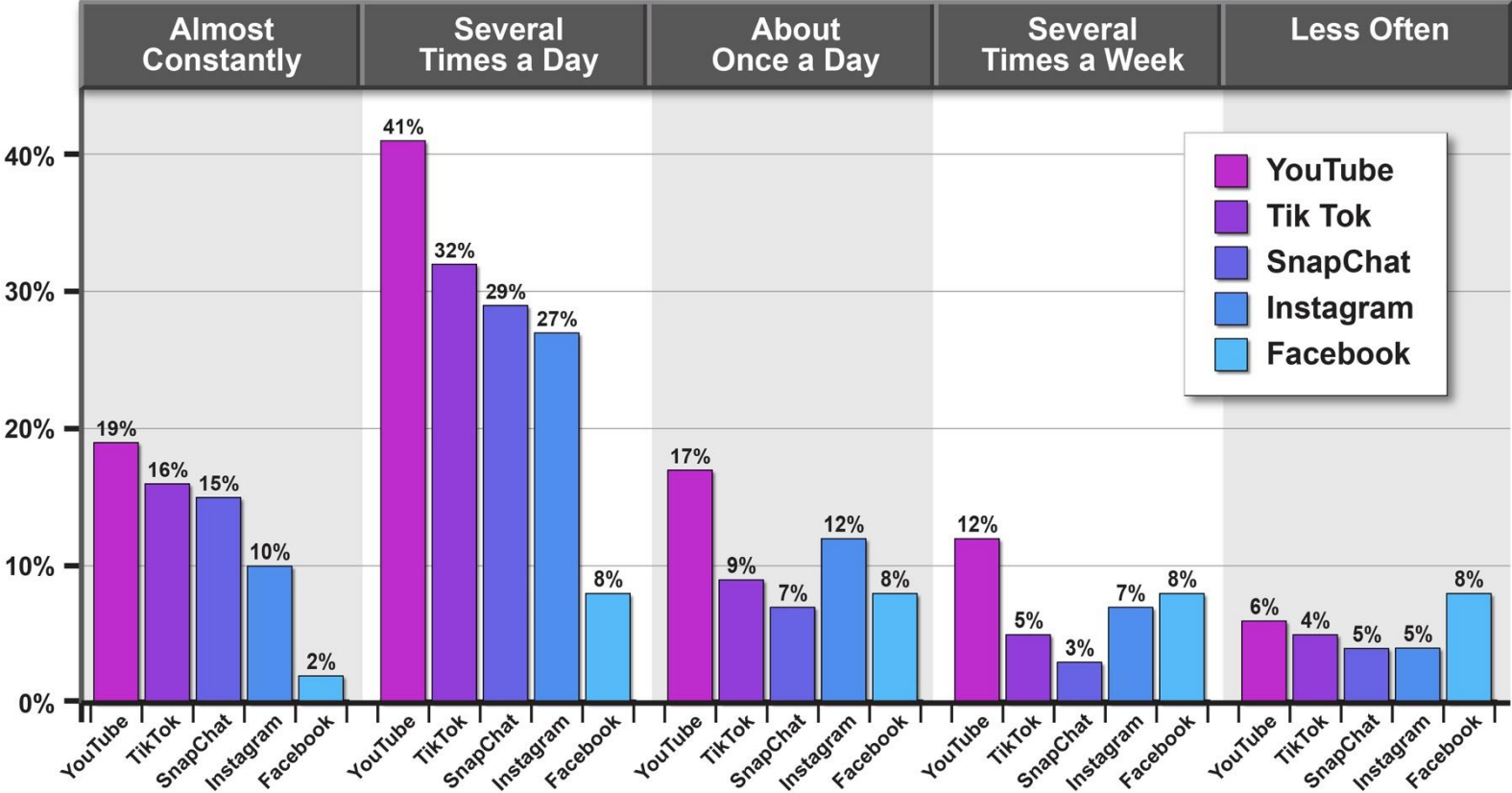
- Plaintiffs allege social media companies designed features into their platforms that were specifically engineered by those companies to exploit children's developing brains and maximum compulsive use
- These intentional design features include:
 - Endless scrolling;
 - “Likes” and engagement metrics reward compulsive use; and
 - Constant notifications designed to trigger intermittent dopamine responses.

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Surge of Mental Health Issues Associated with Social Media

Frequency of Social Media Activity Among Young Adults



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Social Media Addiction Causes Mental Health Issues

- Peer reviewed scientific literature, as well as previously concealed studies by the Tech Companies themselves, have concluded that social media products cause mental health issues, including:
 - Anxiety;
 - Depression;
 - Suicidal ideation;
 - Sleep disruption; and
 - Eating disorders.
- School districts are on the frontlines of a nationwide youth mental health crisis fueled by addictive social media products.
- With so many youth in turmoil, schools have been forced to divert crucial resources to help students in need of mental health services.

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Why Litigation?

1. As social media usage rises among school children, Meta, TikTok, Snap, and Google reap enormous profits by targeting children.
2. School Boards have been left to bear the costs of treating students affected by addiction and providing additional support services to affected students.
3. We plan to change how social media companies operate to safeguard children and adolescents—their most vulnerable consumers. In addition, we seek to receive meaningful compensation for school boards for past, present and future expenses.

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Defendants



1) Meta

(owner of Facebook & Instagram)



2) ByteDance

(owner of Tik Tok)



3) Snap

(owner of Snapchat)



YouTube

4) Google

(owner of YouTube)

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Multi-Front Effort

- **Four Fronts:**
 1. State Attorney General Enforcement
 2. State Legislative Action
 3. Coordinated Litigation by School Districts
 4. Individual Litigations on behalf of harmed children

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Venue

- MDL 3047: IN RE: SOCIAL MEDIA ADOLESCENT ADDICTION PERSONAL INJURY PRODUCTS LIABILITY LITIGATION
- Multi-District Litigation
 - Local Federal Court initially, to be transferred to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California for discovery and pre-trial purposes.
 - The MDL process oftentimes leads to successful resolution of multi-party, national litigation (e.g., JUUL).

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Causes of Action

- 1. Public nuisance** - where a company's actions create or contribute to a public health, safety, or wellness crisis, entities forced to bear the resulting costs may seek compensation for those losses
- 2. Negligence/products liability** - tech companies failed in their duty of care by intentionally designing and deploying defective, psychologically manipulative product features aimed at hooking young users
- 3. Failure to warn** - tech companies concealed internal research showing the mental health risks of their platforms to minors and failed to provide adequate warnings

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Damages

Damages (Past and Future)

1. School Resources:

- a. Resources and staff to address mental health needs from social media addiction;
- b. Resources for parent and community education outreach;
- c. Resources and staff for monitoring on-campus/extra-curricular events;
- d. Resources, including staff, for on-campus education;
- e. School discipline and suspensions.

2. Impact on School Personnel:

- a. Teachers, administrators, and counselors;
- b. School resource officers.

3. Abatement (examples):

- a. Education (classes and materials);
- b. Outreach programs (both student and parent);
- c. Student forums;
- d. Mental health support.



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Damages

Examples of Damages

- Hiring additional mental health personnel.
- Developing additional mental health resources to address mental, emotional, and social health issues.
- Increased training for teachers and staff to identify and help students exhibiting symptoms affecting their mental, emotional, and social health.
- Train teachers, staff, and members of the community about the harms caused by Defendants' wrongful conduct.
- Develop lesson plans to teach students about the dangers of social media platforms.
- Increasing disciplinary services and hiring additional personnel for disciplinary services in response to increased bullying and harassment over social media.
- Addressing increased property damage to schools.



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Recent Victories

1. In March, a New Mexico jury found Meta liable for misleading consumers about the safety of its platforms and for endangering children and ordered Meta to pay \$375 million in civil penalties.
2. One day later, a Los Angeles jury awarded \$6 million in damages to an individual plaintiff alleging harm caused by Meta and YouTube.
3. The first trial involving a school district plaintiff—Breathitt County School District (KY)—resolved against all four social media defendants for \$27 million.
4. The next two school-district bellwether cases (Tucson, AZ and Charleston, SC) are scheduled for trial in early 2027.

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Considerations for School Boards

1. 25% contingency fee only upon successful recovery; costs advanced by counsel.
2. Plaintiff Fact Sheet as opposed to traditional discovery.
3. Importance of joining the nationwide effort to fight for students, families, teachers, school administrators, and taxpayers.
4. Additional financial resources for student support.



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School District Resources Needed to Litigate the Claims

1. Bellwether cases are already selected.
2. Your involvement will be focused on helping us complete written discovery for your district.
3. In consolidated litigations like this, that discovery is called the “Plaintiff Fact Sheet” and provides information about the school district’s claim.
4. We will also ask the school district administrators to collect certain documents to substantiate the claims.

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The Attorney Team

- Our team is uniquely positioned to move school district claims forward and achieve the best result. Members of the team represent over 160 school districts in this litigation and are Court appointed leadership in this litigation.
- We represent Spartanburg 6 School District and the Board of Education of Harford County, both of which were selected by the Court as among the twelve school districts to go through the bellwether discovery process.
- Last summer, the Court selected our client, the Board of Education of Harford County, as one of six school districts that will proceed to trial.



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