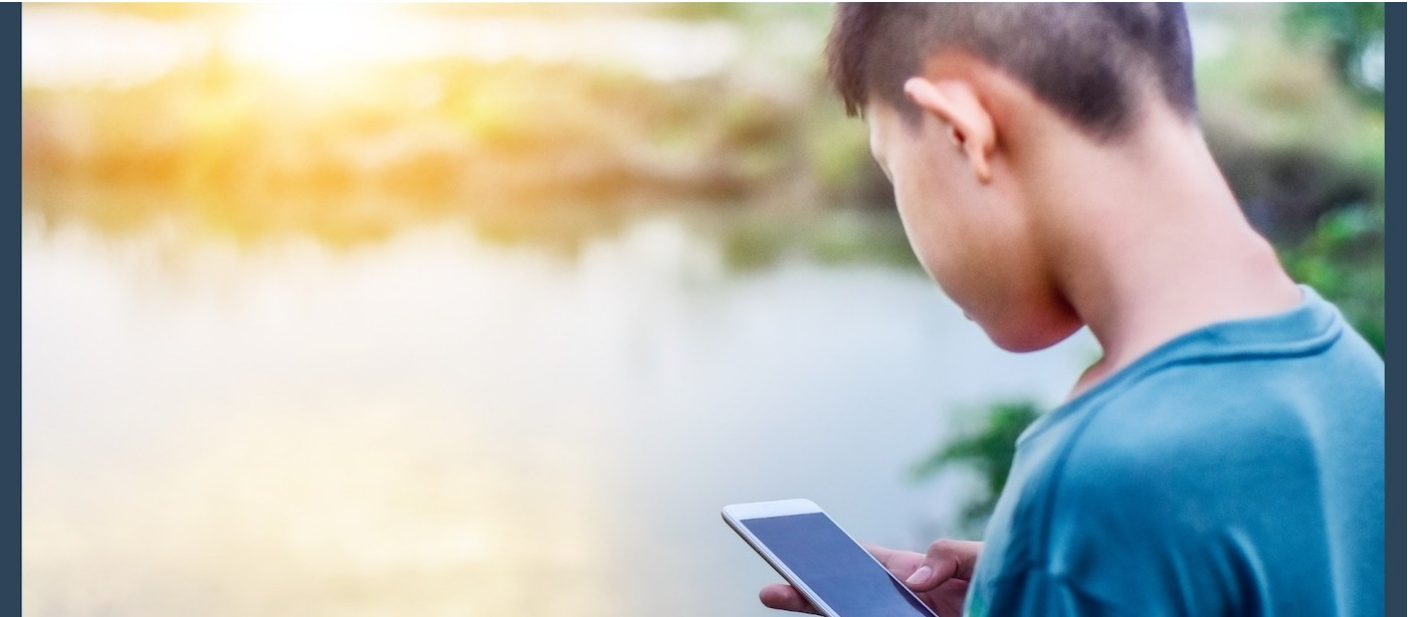


Digital Media Policies & Kids: The need for more thoughtful approaches to

Published: Monday, 21 November 2022 13:16

Written by: Sariah Villalon



By Sariah Villalon (Voices Policy Intern)

We live in a digital world where social media has become integral to our society. It has broadened our communication, allowing us to connect and share information with anyone around the world. It has helped bring awareness to many issues and achievements within our society. But let's face it, unintended risks and consequences come with every innovation. One of them is its effect on our mental health, especially our young people's mental health.

Over the years, there has been an increase in depression, anxiety, and suicide among the youth, especially among girls. Social media may influence these mental health problems through social comparison, cyberbullying, and exposure to other toxic content (Nesi, 2020).

[Governor Spencer Cox recently addressed the relationship between social media on the mental health of our youth](#) and how we could improve the mental health of our

Digital Media Policies & Kids: The need for more thoughtful approaches to

Published: Monday, 21 November 2022 13:16

Written by: Sariah Villalon

youth in Utah. Some of his recommendations are the following:

- Hold social media companies accountable by providing tools for parents to safeguard their children,
- Implement a cell phone-free environment in schools to reduce distraction for students.
- Encourage parents to set an example for their children by spending quality social time with one another without social media use.
- Educate their children on what is appropriate to say on these platforms.
- Monitor their children's social media use by using different tools.
- Have an honest conversation about social media

There are multiple good points that the governor pointed out. We agree that social media companies need to be held accountable for the algorithm and design of their apps that provide a toxic environment for their users. A couple of legislative efforts have been created to hold social media responsible. But is it enough?

We do not see so much urgency from these big techs. Even if they get fined, they could pay everything off quickly. It also puts too much burden on the parents to monitor and safeguard their children. We also have to be honest that we cannot blame everything on these companies. So, what can we do?

We need to hold these social media companies responsible by making them contribute to funding social media education for the youth. Organizations such as Digital [Respons-Ability](#) train parents, students, and educators on digital citizenship.

We cannot escape the digital world, and it will only progress from here on. We need to teach our youth how to use the technology and social media they have properly. **Removing phones during school time will not solve our problems. By educating the youth, they can be better equipped to make informed decisions for their lives and improve their learning.**

Another is research on the effect of social media on youth mental health. As we

Digital Media Policies & Kids: The need for more thoughtful approaches to

Published: Monday, 21 November 2022 13:16

Written by: Sariah Villalon

know, mental health is multi-faceted. We cannot just say that one factor causes mental health problems. **We need more longitudinal studies on its effects to counter better or mitigate its adverse effects.**

More importantly, let's talk more openly about our mental health. Let us educate ourselves and share our experiences with our children so they can also be aware of their well-being. Give them the resources to improve or manage their mental health. When children are more knowledgeable, it can increase their chances of knowing when and where to get the help they might need.

Learn more on how we can help through this [video](#). You can also [download this infographic](#) on Youth Mental Health & Digital Media for more information.