

2025–2026

Annual Report

common sense media

Common Sense Media is the leading nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the research-backed information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive in the digital era. We rate, educate, and advocate to protect and prepare kids online.



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A Letter from Our Founder



Common Sense Media was founded 23 years ago with the mission to be the leading voice for families in a world shaped by media and technology. Today, that mission is more important than ever.

AI is transforming childhood faster than any technology that came before it. Kids are turning to it for schoolwork, for a creative outlet, and, troublingly, for companionship, and safeguards haven't caught up. Parents, educators, and policymakers can feel the ground shifting beneath their feet, and they are looking for a trusted partner.

This year, we took a bold step to meet the moment. With Common Sense Media's new Youth AI Safety Institute launched in May 2026, we're committed to setting standards and evaluating the AI products our kids use every day. No parent would let their kid ride in a car that wasn't crash-tested. The Institute brings that same principle to AI, putting products to the test and publishing the results for families and educators to make more informed decisions.

Rigorous testing only makes a difference if families can act on what we learn. Our guidance reached parents at the kitchen table, teachers in classrooms, and lawmakers weighing how to protect a generation growing up in an always-on world. Across the country, our advocates carried our mission into state houses and the halls of Congress as they worked to advance landmark protections for kids online and proved that smart, bipartisan, pro-kid policy is possible even in a divided political climate.

But protecting kids is only half of our mission. We have to prepare them, too. That's why we've launched our new Digital Literacy & Well-Being Curriculum, building on our 15 years as the gold standard in digital literacy for grades K–12.

Today, our ratings, research, and resources reach more than 150 million people across the globe.

Thank you for standing with us. The stakes have never been higher, and neither has our resolve.

With gratitude,

James P. Steyer
Founder and CEO
Common Sense Media



We're Shaping the Future of Childhood

The 2026 Common Sense Media Summit on Kids and Families

This year, we hosted our third annual Common Sense Media Summit on Kids and Families, where **over 700** of the leaders shaping childhood came together to put a much-needed focus on kids and families.

The two-day Summit was a powerful display of unity among Americans devoted to lifting up the next generation. Our 2026 State of Kids and Families in America poll found that parents and kids across the political spectrum share profound concerns about mental health, economic stability, and unbridled technology. Still, participants left feeling energized and optimistic about the future.



Dr. Nadine Burke Harris and Dr. Lisa Damour in "Ask Lisa Live" Summit panel discussion (March 2026).



Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, Marian Wright Edelman Award for Leadership in Child Advocacy recipient (March 2026).

"I believe in America, and I believe in the fundamental goodness of this country, even though that belief has been shaken deeply in the last decade. Ultimately, every time I'm around folks like the people in the audience, I just feel this great sense of optimism. I'm not a 'glass half full' person; I'm a 'glass nine-tenths full' person. I believe that we will triumph, and that we will come out of the mess we have created for ourselves bigger and stronger than ever, but only if we put kids first."

— James P. Steyer, Founder and CEO

"Nobody knows the answer to how we are going to prepare today's kids for an increasingly AI- and tech-filled world. I think the way that we're going to get through—there's one thing we know in psychology, and we know it beyond anything else. We know what helps: It is meaningful, deep, purpose-giving relationships with each other, supporting each other, and making sure that we are human before we're anything else. It's my third year [at the Summit], and I love Common Sense Media. I love everything everyone's doing."

— Marlon Morgan, licensed school counselor and father of two

We're a Trusted Voice for Families

Protecting and Preparing Families in an Always-On World

Families come to Common Sense Media to make sense of a tech and media world that moves faster than any parent should be expected to navigate alone. This year, we deepened the expertise behind our age-based guidance, expanded the number of families we reach, and built new tools for a moment when AI is reshaping what our kids watch and play.

Our ratings and reviews remain at the heart of our work. In 2025, we published more than 2,500 new movie, TV, and book reviews, and several hundred more were added in the first months of 2026. Every review is written through the perspective of our child development lens, a rubric that evaluates media by what children are typically ready for at each age and stage. We also went deeper by publishing season-specific reviews of some of the tentpole series that millions of families tune into such as *Stranger Things* and *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, so parents get timely, specific guidance on the buzziest shows. Alongside our reviews, we supplied regular recommendations and curations to distribution partners like Target, Apple, the Washington Post, Vizio, and Tubi.

The judgment behind our guidance grew stronger this year through a partnership with the clinical psychiatrists and researchers at



The Family Movie Night newsletter has 275,000 subscribers.

More than 47,000 media reviews published since 2003

Stanford Medicine's Brainstorm Lab. These experts now inform both our AI Risk Assessments and the mental health and tech advice we offer parents, grounding our recommendations in current clinical understanding of how media and tech shape young minds.

We also began translating that expertise into tools built for the AI era. To help meet families where their questions begin, we published **20 new Parents' Ultimate Guides** on topics ranging from AI toys and chatbots to online gambling and parental controls for kids' favorite apps. And we brought our advice directly into the Common Sense Media app, giving busy parents expert tech guidance on the go.

In addition to deepening our guidance, we broadened our reach. Our Family and Community Engagement program has continued to expand, now supporting **more than 2,500 family engagement specialists** who serve 5.5 million families through schools and community organizations across all 50 states and around the globe.





In 2025, we also opened a series of research reports on adolescent boys, whose online lives have long gone underexamined. Our first report on boys' digital lives surveyed more than 1,000 boys and found that the vast majority are exposed to unhealthy ideas about masculinity online, often without searching for them. Our second report, focused on online gambling, found that more than a third of boys are gambling before they're even old enough to vote. Together, these reports give families a clearer view of pressures that often go unspoken, and they also prompted direct action with the introduction of multiple bills in New York and California that would restrict youth gambling.

The world of tech and media is changing faster than ever. We're here to make sure every family can navigate it with confidence.

We're the Gold Standard for Digital Literacy

Empowering Students and Teachers to Thrive in the Digital Age

For more than a decade, Common Sense Media has led the way in digital literacy education. Our leadership hasn't changed, but the digital world has. As classrooms were forced to adopt AI with no real guidance and students increasingly relied on the technology for schoolwork, we reimagined the resources that educators need to meet the moment with confidence.





At the center sits our new Digital Literacy & Well-Being Curriculum for grades K–12. We added 150 lessons to teach kids how to navigate some of the biggest challenges they face online, from staying safe on social media to distinguishing fact from AI-generated fiction. Every lesson is designed to engage students through hands-on, real-world scenarios informed by our research-backed materials, which are developed alongside educators and free to use. We've also added interactive activities and games to make sure digital literacy topics stick with younger students.



"Long before AI literacy was a thing, Common Sense Media had been providing a curriculum that teaches kids to look critically at all kinds of technologies. Now, more than ever, this critical media literacy covered in the digital citizenship curriculum is the foundation for being AI literate. The models and the tools built on top of them by edtech will keep changing. The critical lens is the solid ground our students need to stand on."

— Alex Fishman, Chicago Public Schools Teaching and Learning Division

SCHOOL DISTRICT CASE STUDY

To embed our curriculum directly into the systems schools already use, we launched our Digital Literacy in Every School initiative. Chicago Public Schools is one of the first success stories. We worked with district leaders to integrate our digital literacy lessons into the platform their teachers rely on for instruction, assessment, and family communication. We also tied our AI Basics course for teachers to a district-wide professional development badge. We are also impacting teacher development by becoming the first required course for Chicago teachers to earn an AI Literacy badge through their professional development portal, which is accessed by 24,000 teachers. The technical work was demanding, but our district champions carried it through. More than **300,000 students** across **500 schools** will now have access to our lessons on AI, media literacy, data privacy, and online safety. Equally important, we now have a repeatable framework for bringing our curriculum into the biggest school systems in the country. With 10 major district partnerships identified, Chicago is the first of many.

NEW TEACHER PREPARATION

As technology continues to reshape learning, equipping teachers with the skills to support students' digital literacy and well-being has never been more critical. Recognizing that this work must begin before educators even enter the classroom, we launched a new partnership with Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton College for Teaching and Learning Innovation, one of the largest teacher preparation programs in the country. Together, we are developing training and resources that give emerging educators and administrators the practical, ethical, and future-ready capabilities they need to confidently navigate a moment of rapid technological and professional change.

Today we reach 70% of U.S. schools, including 85% of Title 1 schools, and over 100,000 schools globally. As technology keeps changing, our research-backed resources are the foundation students and teachers can stand on.

Leading the Charge for Change

Building the Digital Future Our Kids Deserve

A safer online world isn't built on its own. It's built by parents, educators, and kids who make enough noise in the right places, and this year, our coalition grew louder than ever. Our base of advocates grew 46%, from 167,000 to 244,000, and they delivered real results for families. We secured 11 key policy victories, including 10 new laws and the defeat of a proposed ban on state-level AI safety laws.

Much of our work centered on companies' design choices that shape what children see and do online. We secured first-in-the-nation social media warning label laws in California and New York, and advanced Age Appropriate Design Codes in Nebraska and South Carolina. We also supported Illinois' new law to restrict addictive feeds.



California advocates join Common Sense Media in Sacramento for a Day of Action pushing for social media warning labels and stronger AI safety protections for kids (August 2025).

> *"Common Sense Media has been a godsend to us, helping us formulate the right policies, focusing on building coalitions and advocacy, and getting really significant, often nation-leading legislation over the finish line."*
> **— New York Governor Kathy Hochul**



New York advocates join Governor Hochul for a roundtable on expanded age verification, privacy-by-default standards, and AI safety measures for youth (January 2026).

In California, we pushed for a new age assurance law that will make kids' online experiences more age-appropriate and protect their privacy. New York adopted a measure to keep online predators away from children and a phone-free classrooms policy to ensure school is for studying, not scrolling.

We also made meaningful progress on AI safety, where the rules are still being written. We supported the first federal law to crack down on explicit AI-generated deepfakes. In New York, we secured safety requirements for AI companion chatbots, supported a bill to criminalize AI-generated child sexual abuse material, passed a bill to halt the sale of AI toys for five years, and passed a bill to protect kids from online crime. Among our most consequential AI wins was a defensive one: Through direct meetings with lawmakers and pressure from parents across the political spectrum, we blocked a proposed ban on state-level AI safety laws.



IL Governor Pritzker signs the Children's Social Media Safety Act, curbing addictive social media and protecting kids' privacy (July 2026).

We are working overtime to build a better world for kids in the AI era.



Our youngest advocates celebrate a successful Day of Action in New York to build a safer digital world (March 2026).

> *"I sincerely want to thank Common Sense Media for being one of the key organizations, if not the premier one, for protecting our children right here in New York."*
> **— New York State Senator Kristen Gonzalez**

As with all our work, our advocacy efforts were grounded in our research and amplified by parents themselves. Following our research on online gambling among adolescent boys, we opened conversations with New York Governor Kathy Hochul about limiting gambling advertisements aimed at minors and informed the state gaming commission on the steps it should take to prevent underage gambling. It's a clear example of our multipronged approach to protecting and preparing families: We hear from parents about the challenges their kids face, our research surfaces clear evidence, and our advocates turn that evidence into action to make the internet safer and healthier for kids.

Our Boldest Action Yet on AI

The Common Sense Media Youth AI Safety Institute

This year, we launched one of the most ambitious projects in Common Sense Media's history: the Youth AI Safety Institute, dedicated to making children's experiences with AI safer across the globe.

The numbers present a clear case. Our national survey found that nearly 9 in 10 American teens and tweens now use AI, and a quarter use it every day. Yet one in six say AI has shown them something that "wasn't OK," and nearly half have never talked with a parent or teacher about how to stay safe with it. AI has reached kids' lives far faster than the safeguards around it.

The Institute exists to close that gap. It will develop public standards for AI safety, independently test the AI products that children use most, and publish the results to create transparency and accountability. Our model is car crash-test ratings: a clear bar for the industry to meet, a straight answer about whether a product is safe, and steady pressure that improves design over time. This builds on two and a half years of AI Risk Assessments at Common Sense Media. Independence is the foundation of this work. The Institute's initial funding comes from both philanthropy and industry, but the Institute is solely responsible for its standards, research, and evaluations, and maintains complete editorial independence over published results. It's guided by a Board of Advisors of leading experts in AI, youth development, child safety, mental health, and education.

The Institute's first few months will set the pace. Working with its advisory board and partners, the team is focused on drafting an initial set of youth AI safety standards. It published new research on how young people in the U.S. and Europe use AI. And it released its latest assessments of some of the most widely used AI products, from AI search results to dedicated mental health therapy apps.

Learn more at **institute.commonsensemedia.org.**



We're Making the Online World Safer Across the Globe

Carrying Our Mission Across Borders

The digital world knows no borders, and neither does the work of protecting children online. This year, we significantly extended our leadership well beyond the U.S., reaching thought leaders across the Atlantic.

Days after its launch, the Common Sense Media Youth AI Safety Institute made its global debut at the inaugural Copenhagen Youth AI Summit, which convened more than 200 leading policymakers, technology executives, educators, civil society leaders, and youth advocates. His Majesty King Frederik X of Denmark delivered the opening address, and other speakers included President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, HRH Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh, and other luminaries. All participants were united around a clear charge: Families across the globe agree AI will profoundly change their children's lives, and they're not willing to leave safety to tech companies alone.

New research gave weight to that charge. Common Sense Media's polling of families in Spain, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Poland showed both the urgency and the public mandate for stronger AI safeguards. Across these E.U. member states, only 8% of parents and 27% of teens are confident that AI companies are prioritizing the safety of teenagers. Among parents, 77% want strong laws governing AI, while just 14% trust companies to innovate responsibly on their own.

Common Sense Media's newest international work rests on our steadily growing European footprint. Since founding our U.K. office in 2019, we have expanded our presence to the E.U. and Australia, where groundbreaking progress has been made toward protecting children online.



Fmr. European Commission EVP Margrethe Vestager co-hosts Copenhagen AI & Kids Summit (May 2026)



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen delivers keynote in Copenhagen (May 2026).

"Our children are growing up in a digital world shaped by addictive algorithms. But it should be parents, not platforms, that raise them. Together, Europe must forge a harmonized approach and set new standards. Not by rejecting technology, but by protecting our children."

— Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

"Like electricity and the internet, AI will redesign society as we know it. The benefits will be huge but, left free to evolve and advance, the harms are almost beyond our imagination… Ensuring AI is safe and works for us is one of the greatest and most pressing challenges of our times, and cannot be achieved operating in national silos and without the insight and opinions of the young people who now navigate the online world on a daily basis."

— Chris Sherwood, CEO of the NSPCC

Wherever the conversation about tech and kids is happening, Common Sense Media is there. And we're working to make sure independent research, clear recommendations, and the voices of kids themselves are all in the room where it happens.

A Voice from Our Teen Press Corps

Anniyah Rizvi is a college freshman and youth advocate who first got involved with Common Sense Media as a high school sophomore. She joined Common Sense Media's Youth Advisory Council in 2023, where she wrote newsletters and drafted letters to her representatives on kids' online safety legislation. She has since interned at Common Sense Media's D.C. office and written for our Teen Press Corps.



Anniyah Rizvi most recently interned at Common Sense Media's office in Washington, D.C., and writes for our Teen Press Corps.

Anniyah knows firsthand how complex the digital world can be for kids. She has seen social media bring her peers together around creativity and shared interests, but she also knows the pitfalls of endless scrolling and targeted algorithms. "Every time I open [TikTok], I have to brace myself," she said. "Working with Common Sense Media has made me more cognizant and careful about how I engage with tech." She came to understand the real gaps in regulation, and that young people deserve better.

"My involvement with Common Sense Media sparked my interest in tech policy," she said. Her experience opened doors to conversations about consumer protection and gave her the tools to advocate for change. Today, Anniyah's voice is shaping a better digital world for her generation and generations to come.

What gives her hope for the future?

Organizations like Common Sense Media that keep working toward a safer online world for kids everywhere.

Common Sense Media in the News

Why Experts Say AI Toys Don't Belong Anywhere Near Kids Under Age 5
Parents Magazine
January 22, 2026

Study Finds This Is How Teen Boys Are Being Lured into Gambling
The Today Show
January 29, 2026

'Not Meant for Children': Adults Favor Age Restrictions on Social Media, AI
Education Week
February 9, 2026

59% of Kids Use AI to Look Up Information—But It Could Weaken 'Critical Thinking Skills,' Says Expert
CNBC
March 13, 2026

Common Sense Summit on Kids and Families in San Francisco Focuses on AI, Tech
CBS News
March 24, 2026

Child Safety Lab Launching 'Independent Crash Testing' for AI Tools
CNN
May 5, 2026

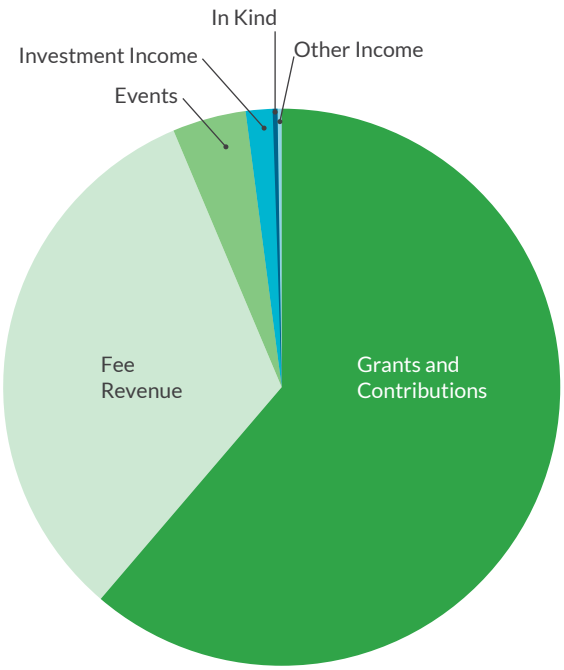
Financial Highlights

Common Sense Media remains in a strong and stable financial position, with a clear focus on long-term sustainability and impact. For 2025, total revenues reached $36.5 million, reflecting a healthy and balanced funding mix. Expenses were $35.4M, resulting in a net gain of just over $1 million.

Multiyear grants from leading foundations that strongly believe in our mission remain the cornerstone of our revenue mix, representing both the majority of our financial support and a key driver of our long-term stability. A key element of our financial strategy is maintaining a diversified revenue base. In 2025, philanthropy—including both foundation grants and individual contributions—accounted for 61% of total revenue. Program service revenue, derived from business development partnerships and our membership program, contributed 32%, while events represented 4%, and other income, including investment income and in-kind support, made up the remaining 3%.

While multiyear grants and accounting recognition rules may shift annual percentages, we remained on track throughout 2025 and are confident in our capacity to deliver on mission priorities while safeguarding our long-term financial health going forward.

A key element of our financial strategy is maintaining a diversified revenue base.



Grants and Contributions		22,339,142	61.3%
Fee Revenue		11,812,615	32.4%
Events		1,559,233	4.3%
Investment Income		667,906	1.8%
In-Kind		87,188	0.2%
Other Income		1,746	<0.1%
Total		**36.467.829**	**100%**

Our Distribution Partners

Common Sense Media is proud to partner with leading media, retail, and technology companies that share our commitment to improving kids' digital well-being.






























Our Foundation Partners

We thank our foundation partners for their generous support:

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The Anschutz Foundation
The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation
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The Tow Foundation
Valhalla Foundation
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Honoring Harvey J. Anderson II

For over a decade, Harvey J. Anderson II served as a cherished Common Sense Media board member and friend, lending his extraordinary expertise to our mission of creating a safer, more empowering digital world for children and families. His judgment and expertise were instrumental in making the organization what it is today. He understood what a door opening at the right moment could mean because he had walked through one himself.

Anderson earned his engineering degree from Marquette University through its program for first-generation and low-income students. He then earned his law degree from the University of San Francisco before becoming a trusted counsel to Silicon Valley companies like Mozilla and Hewlett-Packard. A father of five, he never lost sight of the generations coming up behind him, and he gave back to his alma mater throughout his life.

"Harvey was one of the most insightful and generous people I've ever worked with, and I was fortunate to call him a friend. He had an unshakable faith in people—especially those just starting their careers. Denelle's gift ensures that Harvey's spirit of generosity will continue to open doors for first-generation graduates, giving them the same opportunities in tech that he championed throughout his life."

— James P. Steyer, Founder and CEO



We're deeply grateful to Harvey's family and community who helped make this vision a reality. Harvey's legacy is already making a difference.

To carry Anderson's generosity forward, his wife, Denelle Dixon, and their sons, Luke, Dylan, Trevor, Cole, and Jax, established the Harvey Anderson Fellowship at Common Sense Media. The fellowship creates professional opportunities at Common Sense Media for first-generation college graduates, beginning with a cohort who are already hard at work shaping AI literacy, responsible tech policy, and a safer digital world for families. It is, fittingly, a door held open for the next generation.

Meet the Inaugural Harvey J. Anderson II Fellows

Cassandra Muñoz



Originally from Minneapolis and now based in San Francisco, Cassandra is a former elementary school teacher with a master's degree in education and a minor in racial justice in urban schooling. A first-generation college graduate, Cassandra brings a deep personal connection to the values behind the Fellowship. She's now working on AI literacy and educator-facing programs, blending her background in teaching with her growing expertise in emerging technology.

"Every day I come to work, I'm reminded of the leap my dad took and how it created space for me to take my own."



Juciani Rosa

Born in a small town in Brazil and now living in the Bay Area, Juciani is the first in her family to graduate from high school and college. She brings past experience in trust & safety and a strong drive to protect vulnerable communities in digital spaces. As the AI Risk Assessment Fellow, she'll help lead our work evaluating how platforms impact young people and shaping safer AI tools for families.

"Being given this opportunity makes me feel seen, valued, and welcomed into a field I care deeply about."

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Grandparents have special standing in the digital age. They remember a childhood without screens and want a better future for their grandchildren. The Common Sense Media GrandAlliance gathers that experience, wisdom, and resolve in service of a single goal: a digital world where every child can learn, grow, and thrive.

Members support the work at the core of our mission, from advocacy that protects kids' rights online, to digital literacy education in schools across the globe, to the rigorous research that grounds everything we do. Along the way, members receive impact reports and invitations to briefings with leading experts on children's digital lives.

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"As technology continues to evolve at a breakneck pace, its effects on kids' lives can feel overwhelming, especially for adults who remember childhoods that looked completely different. At a time when it's easy for grandparents to wonder how they can make a difference, the GrandAlliance offers an opportunity for direct action by giving them the chance to lay the tracks on which their grandchildren's digital lives will run."

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