FACT SHEET Social Media Safety

Minimum Age Requirement for Covered Platforms

Legislation to protect youth 16 and under from the adverse effects of social media platforms - CO-SPONSOR

***AB 1709**, Authored by CA Assemblymember Lowenthal, and co-sponsored by Common Sense Media.*

UPDATE: Signed into law by Governor Newsom on September 10, 2026; effective January 1, 2027.

What does this bill do? This bill protects CA kids and teens by delaying their interaction with addictive design features on social media platforms until age 16.

This bill:

- Requires covered platforms to:
  - Not provide an addictive feature to users under 16,
  - Implement reasonable measures to prevent users under 16 from being offered or provided addictive features on a covered platform,
- Delete minors' accounts and any related personal information from platforms that provide addictive features,
- Enables attorney general rulemaking to ensure protections for minors evolve alongside technology; and
- Establishes an e-Safety Advisory Commission, consisting of members with relevant expertise or experience, as an independent advisory body within the Department of Justice.

How does this protect California's kids and teens? Kids' social media use is at an all-time high. According to the U.S. Surgeon General's report, up to 95% of youth ages 13-17 report using social media, with more than a third saying they use social media "almost constantly." Our research also found that teens use their smartphones for nearly four and a half hours and receive an average of 237 notifications daily.

This overuse isn't by accident. Social media companies use design features – like algorithmic feeds, autoscroll – to get kids and teens to engage on their platforms for longer periods. Companies manipulate their platforms to maximize profits and user engagement, despite internal company knowledge that they contribute to harm to minors. Meanwhile, some design features can even promote harmful content to users, even if that content can contribute to real-life harms.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, this excessive engagement has had an increasingly devastating effect on children and teens, contributing to significantly higher rates of youth depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and self-harm.

What does the e-Safety Advisory Commission do? The commission will advise state government on protecting minors online. Its key responsibilities include:

- Research and Evaluation: Studying age assurance technologies, harmful platform design features, companies' child-safety practices, and online safety laws' impacts on different youth groups – including LGBTQ+ youth; Oversight and Feedback: Gathering public feedback on state online safety laws and monitoring related rulemaking; and
- Annual Reporting: Submitting an annual report with legislative recommendations to the Governor and Legislature by January 1.

How is this bill enforced? The attorney general or a local public prosecutor can bring a civil action against a noncompliant platform. The Act also authorizes the attorney general to adopt regulations to implement, enforce, and change the scope of covered platforms, as necessary.

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