

California educators sue TikTok, Snap and YouTube for allegedly delivering harmful content to kids

March 16 2023, by Jason Green



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California educators are suing Snap, TikTok and YouTube over allegations they intentionally designed their platforms to be addictive and to deliver harmful content to children.

The 107-page lawsuit was filed Monday by Cotchett, Pitre and McCarthy LLP on behalf of the San Mateo County Board of Education and the superintendent of schools.

"For the youth targeted by [social media companies](#) and for the adults charged with their care, the results have been disastrous," Karin Swope, an attorney for the firm, said in a statement. "Excessive use of the YouTube, TikTok, and Snap companies' platforms by children has become ubiquitous. And now, there are more children struggling with [mental health issues](#) than ever before. Suicide is now the second leading cause of death for youths."

The companies, the suit alleges, use artificial intelligence and machine learning to deliver harmful content to children.

Citing a recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the lawsuit notes suicidal behavior and depression among youths rose dramatically between 2011 and 2021. This trend, the complaint contends, corresponds with the release and growing popularity of Snap, TikTok and YouTube during the same period.

The suit claims the three [social media](#) companies have also caused "concrete and tangible harm" to schools in San Mateo County. For example, several schools were recently vandalized in connection with the "Devious Lick" TikTok challenge.

"As outlined in the complaint, there is hard science behind the claim that social media is fueling a mental health epidemic in [school-age children](#)," San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools Nancy McGee said in a

statement.

"Every day, schools are dealing with the fallout, which includes distracted students, increased absences, more children diagnosed with ADHD, cyber-bullying that carries into the classroom, and even [physical damage](#) to our San Mateo schools, an example is the vandalism caused by the TikTok so-called 'Devious Lick Challenge' at the start of the school year."

The lawsuit seeks to curtail the conduct of TikTok, Snap and YouTube, as well as to recover county schools' costs to address the youth mental crisis they allegedly caused.

MediaNews Group, Inc.

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Citation: California educators sue TikTok, Snap and YouTube for allegedly delivering harmful content to kids (2023, March 16) retrieved 8 June 2023 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2023-03-california-sue-tiktok-snap-youtube.html>

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