Teens and Social Media: Impact on the Youth Mental Health Crisis

Presentation by:
Jenny Loudon, MPA
Beth Rose, MPA,
Alaska Eating Disorders Alliance Co-Founders

Presentation to:
Municipality of Anchorage
Health Policy Committee

Alaska Eating Disorders Alliance
ABOUT THE ALASKA EATING DISORDERS ALLIANCE
Mission Statement

To provide help and inspire hope by engaging our diverse communities for Alaskans affected by eating disorders.

➢ Education
➢ Support
➢ Advocacy
➢ Body Confidence
SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH
Youth and Social Media – Who is Using It?

- 95% adolescents aged 13-17 use social media
- Despite minimum age requirements of 13 nearly 40% of children ages 8-12 use social media
Youth and Social Media – How Much Are They Using It?

- 51% of teens visit social media at least 1x daily
- In 2021, 8th and 10th graders reported an average of 3.5 hours daily
- Nearly 1/3 report they use social media “almost constantly”
- On average, teens are online 9 hours per day (not including homework)

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Potential Benefits of Social Media for Youth

• Connection
• Self-expression & creativity
• Peer-support
Potential Harms of Social Media for Youth – Mental Health

• Increased depression & anxiety
• Increased disordered eating
• Increased body image concerns
Eating Disorder Risks Associated with Social Media

- Online body comparison
- Promotion of “thin” body ideal
- 46% of 13-17 year olds say social media has a negative impact on their body image

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Risky Content Exposure

- Diet and “wellness” content
- Influencer health challenges
- Pro-eating disorder information
- Graphic and extreme content showing suicide and self harm
- Algorithms pushing risky content
The Bottom Line

“The most common question parents ask me is, ‘is social media safe for my kids’. The answer is that we don't have enough evidence to say it's safe, and in fact, there is growing evidence that social media use is associated with harm to young people’s mental health.”

U.S. Surgeon General
Dr. Vivek Murthy
What Can We Do?
Individual Efforts

Butterfly Foundation Podcast – “Young people, body image, and #socialmedia”

YoungMinds.org – A Guide for Social Media and Mental Health
What Can We Do?
Legislative Solutions

**Federal Level:** Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA)

**State Level:** SB80 – Mental health in schools

**Local Level:** “Out of Kids Hands” Act
To learn more, contact:

Website
www.akeatingdisordersalliance.org

Email:
Brose.alaskaedalliance@gmail.com
Jloudon.alaskaedalliance@gmail.com

Phone:
907-308-8400

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