A Social Media Risk Assessment for Youth and How to Use It

A Social Media Risk Assessment is a straightforward, step-by-step process to familiarize oneself with current social media platforms, the risks and benefits associated with these platforms, and youth's social media habits. This process can be valuable in identifying potential risks while creating the opportunity for an open, ongoing dialogue regarding healthy and safe social media practices.

Parents, caregivers, or providers who work with youth may use this tool on their own to assess youth social media use and/or may opt to share this tool with youth and review collaboratively.

Learn how youth are using social media

- What apps are youth using now?
- What type of content are they viewing?
- What are they posting?

Stay informed

- What's new and popular across platforms?
- Know age restrictions and privacy settings for each

Assess the potential benefits

- What benefits are youth experiencing from social media use?
  - Social connections, positive contact, positive impact on mental health

Assess the potential risks

- Who are they communicating with online? Are they people they have only met online?
- Is online connection replacing in-person relationships?
- Quality of content: Are youth viewing upsetting, traumatizing, or age-inappropriate content?
- Is it having a negative impact on mental health?
- Is there a desire to cut back or eliminate use, but the youth is struggling to do so?

Assess for specific risky behaviors

- Are youth expressing interest or engaging in potentially dangerous in-person activities?
- Is the content they are posting potentially harmful to their reputation or others?
- Are they engaging in more risk-taking behaviors such as drinking or other substance use?
- Harmful interpersonal interactions (e.g., cyberbullying/stalking, sexting)

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