Addressing Social Media Harms by Investing in Youth Well-Being

Attorney General Russell Coleman's $358 million settlement with Meta[1] and Breathitt County Schools' $27 million victory[2] are not the finish line, they are just the beginning of a much larger reckoning over how social media companies design their platforms and address the harm caused to young people.

The Bloom Kentucky Social Media Settlement Workgroup is partnering with FundIRL[3] to ensure that litigation-related funds reach young Kentuckians, support both prevention and treatment, stay protected from diversion to the state's General Fund, and are tracked transparently.

Kentucky should invest in positive youth development through incoming social media litigation-related funds.

Take Action Now!

Tell your legislators and local government officials that social media litigation-related funds must serve the youth harmed most by investing in:

- Positive, in real life youth enrichment opportunities
- Targeted, inclusive, and universal mental health services

Stay informed and follow updates from the Bloom Kentucky Social Media Settlement Workgroup for:

- Youth voice on the issue
- Litigation updates
- State legislation updates and calls to action

In real life (IRL) opportunities like after-school, summer, and mentoring programs; library enrichment opportunities; outdoor education; and experiences in the arts can serve as opportunities for positive experiences and connections.

These experiences provide an alternative to social media and screen time, a true antidote to the isolation and negative mindframe excessive use of screen time can cause.[3]

The Kentucky Context



Nearly half of teens (48%) nationally report that social media has a mostly negative impact on their mental health.[4]

That statistic sits within a broader landscape of youth mental health in Kentucky, where in 2022-2023, 1 in 6 children (16%) had ever been diagnosed with depression or anxiety.[5]

[1]Kentucky Office of the Attorney General, "Attorney General Coleman Announces Largest Big Tech Settlement in History," Kentucky.gov, August 2026, https://www.kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=1979

[2]Valarie Honeycutt Spears, "Breathitt Schools got $27 million in social media companies' settlement," Lexington Herald-Leader, June 1, 2026, https://www.kentucky.com/news/local/education/article315944318.html

[3]Children's Funding Project. (2026) https://fundirl.org/

[4]Pew Research Center. (2025) https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2025/04/22/teens-social-media-and-mental-health/

[5]Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Children and Teens with Anxiety or Depression," KIDS COUNT Data Center, accessed August 31, 2026, https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/11429-children-and-teens-with-anxiety-or-depression?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/2/2-52/false/2490,2105,2043,1769,1696,1648,1603/any/22085,22084

Kentucky Youth Deserve More: Bloom Kentucky's Four Guiding Principles for Investment

1. **Protect and support youth well-being and mental health:**
    a. Funds should be used to measurably prevent, mitigate, and remediate harms associated with social media use, promoting off-screen connection, resilience, and protective factors for children and youth.
    b. Funds should be allocated to evidence-informed programs based on data showing where need is highest.
2. **Invest across the behavioral health continuum of supports:**
    a. Funds should prioritize investments across promotion, prevention, and treatment systems, including universal access to youth.
3. **Empower fair, inclusive, and transparent governance:**
    a. Funding decisions should be guided by independent advisory councils and governance structures, such as a Positive Youth Development Commission, that are accessible and publicly accountable, incorporating youth and family members with lived experience, educators, clinicians, and community leaders. These advisory councils should oversee the program and ensure funds are equitably allocated.
    b. Funding decisions should be transparent and posted on public-facing forums.
4. **Guarantee meaningful access for all youth:**
    a. Every young person, inclusive of school-age children and young adults, should have meaningful access to robust programs and services that strengthen well-being and mental health, with particular attention to underserved and disproportionately impacted populations.

Investing litigation-related funds in positive youth development is investing in a thriving future for Kentucky's youth.

Bloom Kentucky's Working Group on Social Media Settlements

Bloom Kentucky's Social Media Settlement Working Group, in partnership with Fund IRL, is a collective of youth-serving agencies and individuals across the state with growing concern for the impact of social media harms on youth mental health and childhood experience.

- Big Brothers, Big Sisters of America
- A Path Forward, Louisville Urban League
- Kentucky Psychological Association
- Girl Scouts of Kentucky's Wilderness Road
- Kentucky Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs
- Kentucky Association for Environmental Education
- Kentucky Out-Of-School Alliance
- Kentucky Voices for Health
- Kentucky Youth Advocates
- McNary Group Consultant
- Metro United Way
- OneQuest Health
- Partners for Change
- Rae of Sunshine Kentucky
- Table Sense

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Learn more about Bloom Kentucky at bloomky.org