



Mental Health &
Recovery Services
Board of Allen,
Auglaize, and
Hardin Counties

October 2020 School Newsletter Article

Social Media Safety

Social media is a tool to connect with others near and far online. Like any tool, it can be used in a healthy and manageable way or misused. Parents, guardians, and other adults can help teens manage their social media in a way that is not harmful.

Causes for concern regarding social media:

- Teens used social media an average of 7 hours and 22 minutes each day in 2019.
- The University of Glasgow found the strain of the emotional investment in social media led to poorer sleep quality, lower self-esteem, and increased levels of anxiety and depression.
- Addictive reward system leading to less engagement in the world around them
- Exposure to potentially harmful ideas/photos/videos
- 1 in 3 children are exposed to bullying without breaks from the cruelty
- 1 in 6 teens report they have been contacted by strangers in a way that made them feel scared or uncomfortable. Most do not tell a trusted adult.
- More concerns: bit.ly/MHRSBteens

Social media can affect your child's mental health. Suicide rates are up in children and teens. Pay attention to their moods and behavior changes. Share the crisis text line with them so they can talk with a trained Crisis Counselor anytime they need. It is 741 741.

Tips to keep your children safe:

- Know and learn about the apps they are using and all the accounts they have.
- Regularly check their privacy settings. Children should have private accounts.
- Check in on their accounts with them, letting them know you want to keep them safe, not keep them from fun.
- Reassure them you want to know if they receive concerning messages. Do not punish them for the poor actions of others. This will help them come to you if strangers contact them.
- Regularly ask about them the positive and negative things they have recently seen and help them process their feelings.
- Model the behavior you want to see, including the amount of time spent on social media.
- Learn their online interests and goals for having these accounts.
- Talk to them about the consequences of misusing social media.
- Help them set boundaries and connect to the real world.

Not all social media is bad. Often, not allowing your child access to social media leads to secret accounts where parents are unaware of the child's activities. The pressures to be connected to friends and in-the-know on trends is strong (67% of teenagers say they know how to hide what they are doing online from their parents). Have open conversations, help them understand you



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are monitoring their accounts for their safety, and place reasonable time limits on social media. Learn more on how to protect your kids at bit.ly/MHRSBsocial.