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# Keeping kids safe online and in school



The Province is moving forward on three important actions to keep kids and young people safe from online threats, restrict cellphones in school and hold social media companies accountable.

“Today, kids live with different challenges than they did a generation ago, and they face them all in the palm of their hand,” said Premier David Eby. “While cellphones, the internet and social media help us connect with each other, they also present risks that can harm kids. The impact and influence of these tools is so great, and the corporations so powerful, it can be overwhelming for parents. That’s why we are taking action to protect kids from the threats posed by online predators and the impacts of social media companies.”

The announcement includes three concrete actions to keep kids and young adults safe:

- restricting the use of cellphones in schools;
- launching services to remove images from the internet and pursue predators; and
- legislation to hold social media companies accountable for the harm they have caused.

Research shows that frequent cellphone interruption in the classroom, social media platforms with addictive algorithms and predators who seek to exploit young people all present significant risks to young people. Studies have found that children’s mental health and physical safety can suffer as a result

of body-image distortion, cyberbullying, images shared without consent and disturbing instances of sextortion.

The Province will work with school districts to ensure all schools have policies in place by the start of the next school year to be able to restrict students' cellphone use in the classroom.

"Having cellphones in the classroom can be a distraction from the kind of focused learning we want kids to experience at school," said Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care. "There also is a time and a place for cellphones, including when they support student accessibility purposes. By learning in a safe school environment how to use their cellphones responsibly and respectfully, including when to put them away, students will be better able to develop healthy habits around technology and social media use in their everyday lives."

The Province is also ensuring more digital literacy training is available for students so they have the knowledge and tools they need to stay safe from online predators, become good digital citizens and develop healthy relationships with technology.

On Monday, Jan. 29, 2024, the Province will launch two new services to help people stop or prevent the distribution of explicit images of them and pursue damages from the perpetrators. These services will improve access to justice and offer a clear path to legal action.

"Technology can be an extremely useful tool, but when used by bad actors it can have devastating impacts on people's lives," said Niki Sharma, Attorney General. "That's why we are providing supports for people, especially young adults, to take down their private images from websites and pursue damages against predators."

In spring 2024, to keep kids healthy and further protect them from other long-term detrimental impacts, the Province will be introducing legislation to hold companies accountable for the harms their products may have caused the public. When it comes to social media companies, this legislation would enable the government to recover costs caused by harms to children and adults associated with their platforms and algorithms. The government could use those recovered funds to provide treatment and counselling programs, and put in place monitoring systems and educational programs about the harms of using these products and services.

These actions are part of a larger effort to keep kids safe and healthy, which includes expanding Foundry youth mental-health centres, launching an anti-

vaping strategy and expanding school food programs through Feeding Futures.

**Learn More:**

For information about mental-health and addictions resources, including resources specifically for youth, visit: [www.helpstartshere.gov.bc.ca](http://www.helpstartshere.gov.bc.ca)

Find Erase resources online: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/erase>

To report bullying, visit: <https://erasereportit.gov.bc.ca/>

For information about digital literacy training through Erase, visit: <https://pages.saferschoolstogether.com/erase-family-session>

To learn more about the Intimate Images Protection Act, visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023AG0036-000657>

To read about supports available for survivors of gender-based violence, sexual assault or domestic violence, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/domestic-violence>

To access resources and research on the online sexual exploitation of children, visit: <https://cybertip.ca/en/>