

Social Networking Sites: Recommendations for Service Providers & Families

Youth & Digital Technology: Growing Up Online Toolkit

This document provides service providers with a useful list of recommendations based on previous research and clinical practices. These recommendations can assist families in navigating digital technology. As digital landscapes evolve, it is essential to provide up-to-date resources that address both the benefits and challenges of technology use among children and youth.

Recommendations for Service Providers

Become more familiar with the types of social media, the benefits and risks clients are exposed to. The links below provide access to interactive documents, various social media platforms, applications, and websites, many of which are commonly used by young people. Families may have seen an image or logo on their child's device and would like to learn more about the type of content their child is accessing.

- Help increase caregiver awareness of time spent on social media platforms with information at: <https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/screen-time-and-young-children>
- Provide guidance on social media use and its significance: https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/social_media
- Offer educational tools developed by the Canadian Paediatric Society and the Media Awareness Network to supplement teaching; MediaSmarts <https://mediasmarts.ca/> is one of the most comprehensive digital literacy resources in Canada.
- Advise parents to develop a plan of use regarding social media: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2792691/#b51-pch08301>
- Advise youth on what to do when someone shares an image of them without consent: <https://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/help-someone-shared-photo-me-without-my-consent-tip-sheet>
- Encourage Cyber Security awareness: <https://www.getcybersafe.gc.ca/en/resources/abcs-cybersecurity-kids>
https://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/pdfs/tipsheet/Cyber-Security-Tip-Sheet-Socializing-and-Interacting-Online-Final_en.pdf
- Enhance Cyberbullying Prevention: <https://cyberbullying.org/Cyberbullying-Identification-Prevention-Response-2018.pdf>
- Understand the Online Landscape
Overdrive Interactive's Social Media Map: <https://www.ovdrv.com/knowledge/social-media-map/>
- Tracking emerging social media trends among youth: <https://www.common sense media.org/blog/16-apps-and-websites-kids-are-heading-to-after-facebook#>
- Promoting digital well-being: The Digital Wellbeing of Canadian Families

For more information, contact

informationandcystandards@recoveryalberta.ca

Updated: June 2025

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page17564.aspx>

- <https://mediasmarts.ca/research-and-evaluation/digital-well-being-canadian-families>
Screen time and child development: Canadian Paediatric Society Position Statement
<https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/screen-time-and-preschool-children#:~:text=Screen%20time%20for%20children%20younger,hour%20or%20less%20per%20day.>
- Gaming and addiction risk assessment: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)
– Online Gaming Guide
<https://www.camh.ca/en/your-care/programs-and-services/problem-gambling--technology-use-treatment>

Recommendations for Parents & Caregivers for Problematic Use of Social Networks Sites:

- Talk with your children about the digital technology they use so you are informed. Ask questions about the people they interact with on social networking sites, why it's fun, the activities they do, and their favourite sites. Do not comment while they're explaining. This is an opportunity to connect with your children about something they're interested in.
- Familiarize yourself with games and social networking sites and possibly try them yourself to increase familiarity.
- Discuss reasonable limits on using technology, and have two-way discussions about safe, responsible, and considerate use of social networking sites.
- Be a positive role model when using technology. Model safe behaviour; for example, do not use your phone while driving. Apply the same standards of technology use for yourself. Choose other recreational activities more often, such as reading, outdoor play, and creative, hands-on activities.
- Discuss important elements, such as privacy and safety. For example, remind children not to share confidential information, inappropriate texts, videos or photos.
- Monitor what your children post on social media to help protect them against online predators and bullies.
- Balance the pros and cons of technology use.
- Educate your children to avoid using technology when it could impact safety and model this behaviour. Do not use digital devices at swimming pools, in washrooms, on balconies and rooftops, or while walking on streets or in crowded places. Other spaces where it's hazardous not to pay attention are staircases, escalators, roads, parking lots, or any place where safety is a concern.
- As a family, be mindful of the use of digital time. Set limits on use; for example, do not allow technology use before going to school, during meals, or before bedtime.
- Encourage age-appropriate rest time and sleep habits.
- Include more educational options in games and interactions with friends and family.
- Modify access to content. For example, activate parental limits on devices to avoid violent and inappropriate sexual content.

For more information, contact

informationandcyfistandards@recoveryalberta.ca

Updated: June 2025

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page17564.aspx>

Social Networking Sites: Recommendations for Service Providers & Families | 3

- Promote healthy alternative recreational activities such as outdoor events, reading, and family time.
- Make available activities that improve social skills.
- Implement strict measures to control use, such as blocking certain websites, limiting internet access, and turning off alerts on devices.
- Help children recognize and question problematic content.
- Consider psychotherapy and family therapy, if necessary.
- Consult a physician if technology use is affecting a family member's overall functioning.
- Conduct a self-assessment of current digital habits and develop a family media policy [1-3].

Books that services providers can recommend for Parents, Educators & Caregivers

Practical tools, conversation strategies, and household policies to support healthy screen habits in children and youth:

Disconnected: How to Protect Your Kids from the Harm of Device Dependency

Author: Thomas Kersting

Focuses on teen and tween behavior, real family stories, and therapist-informed advice.

Screenwise: Helping Kids Thrive (and Survive) in Their Digital World

Author: Devorah Heitner

Provides guidance on mentoring kids through tech use, not just limiting it.

Raising Humans in a Digital World

Author: Diana Graber

Gives parents and educators an action-oriented plan to develop digital citizenship, ethics, and healthy habits in youth.

The Tech Solution: Creating Healthy Habits for Kids Growing Up in a Digital World

Author: Dr. Shimi Kang (2020)

Offers youth-appropriate metaphors and exercises, written by a Canadian psychiatrist with expertise in addiction and child development.

For more information, contact

informationandcystandards@recoveryalberta.ca

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page17564.aspx>

Updated: June 2025

References

1. Canadian Paediatric Society. (2024, November 22). *Screen time and preschool children: Promoting health and development in a digital world*. Retrieved from <https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/screen-time-and-preschool-children#:~:text=Screen%20time%20for%20children%20younger,hour%20or%20less%20per%20day>
2. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). (2019). *Should I play or should I go?* Retrieved from <https://www.camh.ca/en/camh-news-and-stories/should-i-play-or-should-i-go>
3. Media Smarts. (2018). *The Digital Wellbeing of Canadian Families. [Executive Summary Infographic]*. Retrieved from <http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/publication-report/summary/infographic-digital-canadian-families.pdf>

© 2025 Recovery Alberta – Clinical Business Initiatives



This work is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivative 4.0 International licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/). You are free to copy and distribute the work (including in other media and formats) for non-commercial purposes, as long as you attribute the work to Recovery Alberta, do not adapt the work, and abide by the other licence terms. To view a copy of this licence, see <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>. The licence does not apply to Recovery Alberta trademarks, logos or content for Recovery Alberta is not the copyright owner.

This material is intended for general information only and is provided on an "as is", "where is" basis. Although reasonable efforts were made to confirm the accuracy of the information, Recovery Alberta does not make any representation or warranty, express, implied or statutory, as to the accuracy, reliability, completeness, applicability or fitness for a particular purpose of such information. This material is not a substitute for the advice of a qualified health professional. Recovery Alberta expressly disclaims all liability for the use of these materials, and for any claims, actions, demands or suits arising from such use.)