

# CASE SCENARIO FOR PROVIDERS

## SOCIAL MEDIA CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUTH AND FAMILIES

### Medical Appointment with Jordan (12)

Pediatric and adolescent providers can integrate conversations about media use into health consultations with increased confidence knowing that their acknowledgement and guidance can have a positive influence on youth and families. A healthy relationship with a trusted adult is a protective factor for youth mental health and many youth trust health care providers' expertise.<sup>1</sup> Talk about social media in the spirit of health and wellness, not judgment and control. Engage with youth and their caregivers by demonstrating curiosity and offering your partnership.<sup>2</sup>



**TIP:** Submit any questions you have to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) [Center for Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health Q&A Portal](#) for a personalized and evidence-based response. Patients can also look to the portal for additional support outside of the office.

The [AAP's policy statement](#) on media use offers some key recommendations for pediatricians.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### PEDIATRICIANS

- Work with families and schools to promote understanding of the benefits and risks of media.
- Promote adherence to guidelines for adequate physical activity and sleep via a Family Media Use Plan ([www.HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan](http://www.HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan)).
- Advocate for and promote information and training in media literacy.
- Be aware of tools to screen for sexting, cyberbullying, problematic Internet use, and Internet gaming disorder.

**Jordan, who is 12 years old, is accompanied by his caregiver for his sports physical. As the provider reviews immunizations and other health history, they include social media use in the conversation.**



**Provider:** Good to hear you're both ready for the new school year! I'm wondering what role, if any, does social media or other digital media play in your family?

**Jordan:** I just got a phone! But it doesn't have a lot of apps so it's mostly for texting my mom if I stay late after school. She won't let me get Instagram or TikTok yet.

**Caregiver:** That's right, no social media yet. I let him text a couple of his friends, but we are starting slow. I only started using Facebook about a year ago to stay in touch with relatives back home.



**Provider:** It sounds like you've talked about expectations and limits. Taking it slow is a wise way to start. And there are some benefits to digital media, like being able to stay in touch with friends and family. There can be risks too, of course. Jordan, what do you know about the risks of social media?

**Jordan:** I know that sometimes people feel like they can't stop using social media. Occasionally, my friends stay up really late on TikTok and complain that they are tired at school the next day. But I do sometimes feel left out without social media since it feels like all my friends have it.



**Provider:** Thanks for sharing, Jordan. Mom, how do you manage his phone use?

**Caregiver:** Since I'm paying for the phone, Jordan is technically borrowing it and we've agreed to the rule that we can look through it together at any time. I know he sees TikTok videos his friends share, so we talk about things like public pranks that seem risky. As Jordan gets older, I'm hoping to revise my rules to what I feel is appropriate for his age. But it's hard to know if I'm doing any of this right!



**Provider:** You're willing to meet your son where he's at without compromising your values. He's at a developmental stage that you feel is ready for more responsibility. You've both been open to talking with me and saying when you aren't sure about something. I appreciate our partnership in this! Would it be ok if I shared some additional information with you?

**Caregiver:** Yes, that would be great.



**Provider:** Jordan, is it ok with you, too?

**Jordan:** Oh, sure.



**Provider:** First, I want to acknowledge that media use is common and it's likely you'll use social media eventually, Jordan, especially if it helps you stay connected to friends and family. Two things I encourage all my patients and their families to pay attention to are sleep and physical activity. They are both really important for our physical and emotional health. If digital media interferes with either, that's a signal to come together and look at your plan. In fact, I have a resource that can help with managing the load of figuring all this out: the American Academy of Pediatrics' Family Media Use Plan, available at [HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan](https://www.healthychildren.org/MediaUsePlan). It's really flexible, so you get to decide what's important, and you can (and should!) change it as life changes. It's also important that you have regular conversations about social media and sleep, physical activity and negative content. Mom, here's a tip sheet that might be helpful for you (hands caregiver the AAP's [Research-based Tips from Pediatricians for Families](#)).



## RESOURCES FOR PROVIDERS

Visit the [AAP Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health website](#) and check out the following resources for more information and tools:

- **Frameworks Institute:** [Strategies for Effectively Communicating About Toxic Stress](#)
- **Youth Engaged 4 Change:** [Tip Sheet on Social Media Use and Mental Health](#)
- **American Psychological Association:** [Social Media and the Internet](#)

Access the following resources for information you can share directly with parents:

- **American Academy of Pediatrics:** [Research-based Tips from Pediatricians for Families](#)
- **Common Sense Media:** [Parenting, Media and Everything in Between](#)
- **American Psychological Association:** [Keeping Teens Safe on Social Media: What Parents Should Know to Protect Their Kids](#)

## REFERENCES

1. Snell, A. & Kline, J. (2022, July-October). Findings from an online assessment of youth ages 13-18 years old [Unpublished internal document]. Commissioned from Lake Research Partners by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing.
2. Moreno, M.A., Klein, J.D, Kaseeska, K., Gorzkowski, J., Harris, D., Davis, J., Gotlieb, E., & Wasserman, R. (2023, August 12). A cluster randomized controlled trial of a primary care provider-delivered social media counseling intervention. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2023.06.007>.

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