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Exhibit R

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**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

*PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA,*  
*et al.,*  
Plaintiffs,

v.

*META PLATFORMS, INC, Instagram, LLC,*  
*Meta Payments, Inc., Meta Platforms*  
*Technologies, LLC., et al.,*  
Defendants

IN RE: SOCIAL MEDIA ADOLESCENT  
ADDICTION/PERSONAL INJURY  
PRODUCTS LIABILITY LITIGATION

THIS DOCUMENT RELATES TO:  
4:23-cv-05448

MDL No. 3047

Case No. 4:23-cv-05448-YGR

Judge: Hon. Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers

Magistrate Judge: Hon. Peter H. Kang

**TRIAL REPORT OF ADAM L. ALTER, PH.D.**  
**August 1, 2025**

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social media use among U.S. consumers, including the expansion of high-speed internet,<sup>61</sup> the growing pull of social media platforms as they attracted larger user bases (known broadly as network effects),<sup>62</sup> and the growing impact of online communication on public discourse.<sup>63</sup>

46. Within several years of Meta's acquisition of Instagram, over 50% of U.S. teens aged from 13–17 years, said they used Instagram;<sup>64</sup> by 2017, that number had grown to over 75%.<sup>65</sup> Meta's own records note that by 2019 Instagram had achieved near total (i.e., 90%) U.S. teen market penetration.<sup>66</sup> In a 2024 Pew Research Center survey, Instagram was reported as one of the top three social media platforms used among teens, with half of teens using Instagram daily, and one in five reporting being on the Instagram platform "almost constantly."<sup>67</sup> By 2024, Pew Research Center found that 70% of Americans had used Facebook and 50% had used Instagram.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, surveys indicated that 60% of teens had used Instagram, and 32% had used Facebook.<sup>69</sup> The use of social media is especially popular with teens in the U.S., who, according to Gallup, spend an average of more than 4.5 hours per day using social media

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<sup>61</sup> See, for example, the upward trend in broadband access from 2000 to present day documented by Pew Research Center: Pew Research Center, November 13, 2024, "Internet, Broadband Fact Sheet," *Pew Research Center*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/internet-broadband/>.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, Belleflamme, P., & Peitz, M. (2018), "Platforms and network effects." In *Handbook of game theory and industrial organization*, volume II, pp. 286-317, Edward Elgar Publishing.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Kim, R. M., Veselovsky, V., & Anderson, A. (2025), "Capturing dynamics in online public discourse: A case study of universal basic income discussions on reddit," In *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, 19: 021-1037.

<sup>64</sup> Lenhart, A. (2015) *Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2015*, Pew Research Center., <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2015/04/09/teens-social-media-technology-2015/>.

<sup>65</sup> The Associated Press, "Instagram and Snapchat are Most Popular Social Networks for Teens; Black Teens are Most Active on Social Media, Messaging Apps," *The Associated Press - NORC at the University of Chicago*, <https://apnorc.org/projects/instagram-and-snapchat-are-most-popular-social-networks-for-teens-black-teens-are-most-active-on-social-media-messaging-apps/>.

<sup>66</sup> META3047MDL-003-00003840, "Re: IG Growth – Saturation by Market," February 8, 2019, at 840.

<sup>67</sup> Faverio, M. and Sidoti, O. (2024). *Teens, Social Media and Technology 2024*, Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/12/12/teens-social-media-and-technology-2024/>

<sup>68</sup> Pew Research Center, "Social Media Fact Sheet," *Pew Research Center*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>.

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/12/12/teens-social-media-and-technology-2024/arch> Center.

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information and field-specific knowledge that the recipients of those services usually lack, those recipients are often not in a position to fully evaluate either the service once it is completed, or claims about which specific repairs or procedures were required. Lacking the ability to judge the veracity of a seller's claim, consumers of credence goods are often forced to trust the information provided to them.

54. Social media platforms are characterized by a number of features that make their safety particularly difficult for consumers to ascertain independently, and thus social media platforms qualify as credence goods. Among such features, they: a) have the potential to cause a number of psychological and physiological harms that are either invisible or difficult to perceive;<sup>82</sup> b) have the potential to cause a number of harms that are likely to accumulate over time, but are less likely to present acutely;<sup>83</sup> c) have the potential to cause a number of harms that are difficult for laypeople to diagnose or interpret;<sup>84</sup> d) have the potential to cause a number of harms that might

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<sup>82</sup> See Liu, M. et al. (2022), "Time spent on social media and risk of depression in adolescents: A dose-response meta-analysis," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(9)51-64; Hawes, T., Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J., & Campbell, S. M. (2020), "Unique associations of social media use and online appearance preoccupation with depression, anxiety, and appearance rejection sensitivity," *Body Image*, 33:66-76 (on the harms associated with social media); Faisal-Cury, A. et al. (2022), "Depression underdiagnosis: Prevalence and associated factors. A population-based study," *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 151:157-165 (on the underdiagnosis of depression).

<sup>83</sup> See Liu, M. et al. (2022), "Time spent on social media and risk of depression in adolescents: A dose-response meta-analysis," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(9)51-64; Hawes, T., Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J., & Campbell, S. M. (2020), "Unique associations of social media use and online appearance preoccupation with depression, anxiety, and appearance rejection sensitivity," *Body Image*, 33:66-76 (on the harms associated with social media); Cleveland Clinic Health Library, Nov. 30, 2022, "Clinical depression (major depressive disorder)," <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/24481-clinical-depression-major-depressive-disorder> (on the chronic nature of depression); Cleveland Clinic Health Library, May 20, 2025, "Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)," <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/23940-generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad> (on chronic nature of generalized anxiety).

<sup>84</sup> See Liu, M. et al. (2022), "Time spent on social media and risk of depression in adolescents: A dose-response meta-analysis," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(9)51-64; Hawes, T., Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J., & Campbell, S. M. (2020), "Unique associations of social media use and online appearance preoccupation with depression, anxiety, and appearance rejection sensitivity," *Body Image*, 33:66-76 (on the harms associated with social media); Jorm, A. F. (2000), "Mental health literacy: Public knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders," *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 177(5):396-401 (on the difficulty of recognizing depression).

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nicotine was addictive.<sup>119</sup> Yet, scientific evidence had been building since at least 1971 that cigarette use was addictive, culminating in strong scientific consensus by the 1980s.<sup>120</sup>

71. Researchers have also documented how the pharmaceutical industry misrepresented and misused scientific evidence to deny the addictiveness of opioids, including by widely disseminating a small number of favorable results.<sup>121</sup> As the discussion of Meta’s Community Standards Enforcement Reports (“CSERs”) and their associated “prevalence” metric in Section X.C shows, Meta’s communications strategy regarding harmful experiences on its platforms relied on construing certain highly favorable metrics as key indicators of platform safety.

*d. Agenda-setting*

72. In addition to advancing specific points or messages through the use of drumbeat messaging, proof points, and favorable metrics, companies frequently attempt to guide public conversation at a high level, shaping public discourse to make it as favorable to their own aims as possible. Research has shown for decades that news media play a significant role in directing the public’s attention toward or away from specific issues,<sup>122</sup> shaping the relevance to consumers of specific issues as well as how those issues are understood. By working to advance their own narrative in the news media through interviews, solicited stories, and other methods, companies can set the agenda on what it is and is not the focus of public interest. By controlling public

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<sup>119</sup> Regulation of Tobacco Products (Part 1): Hearing before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, 103rd Cong. (1994), <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.cbhear/cbhearings12412&div=2&id=&page=www.pb.s.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/settlement/timelines/april94.html>.

<sup>120</sup> Dani, J. A., & Balfour, D. J. (2012), “Historical and current perspective on tobacco use and nicotine addiction,” *Trends Neurosci*, 34(7):383-392, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3193858/>.

<sup>121</sup> See, e.g., Gupta, R. et al. (2024), “The opioid industry’s use of scientific evidence to advance claims about prescription opioid safety and effectiveness,” *Health Affairs Scholar*, 2(10):qxae119.

<sup>122</sup> Leonel, R., Lee, J. H., & Perrault, E. (2025), “Of shepherds and sheep: Who sets the agenda for firms’ attention to social issues?,” *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 32:647-60.

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found a “majority of parents are concerned about the types of experiences their teen might encounter online. Roughly two-thirds of parents of teens (65%) say they worry at least some about their teen spending too much time in front of screens, including a third who worry a lot about this.”<sup>174</sup>

105. As to social media more specifically, a 2022 Pew Research Center survey collected data from 1,316 parents of teens, and found that 46% of those parents reported being extremely or very concerned that their teens would encounter explicit content, while nearly a third were extremely or very worried that their teens would be bullied or harassed or experience problems with anxiety or depression.<sup>175</sup> A follow-up Pew survey of 1,391 parents and their teens conducted in 2024 similarly found that, among parents who are at least somewhat concerned about teen mental health, “44% say social media has the biggest negative impact on teens today.”<sup>176</sup>

106. A poll conducted by Ipsos in 2023 found even higher levels of concern. This poll, which was based on a nationally representative sample of 684 adults in the United States, found that 78% of parents reported being very or somewhat concerned about children using video and image-sharing apps. The poll also found that 66% of parents (two in three) said their children had experienced a negative effect of social media, with 25% reporting their children had experienced “addiction to social media,” 24% reporting their children had experienced “sleep

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<sup>174</sup> Anderson, Monica, Mar. 22, 2019, “How parents feel about – and manage – their teens’ online behavior and screen time,” *Pew Research Center*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/03/22/how-parents-feel-about-and-manage-their-teens-online-behavior-and-screen-time/>.

<sup>175</sup> Gelles-Watnick, Risa, Dec. 15, 2022, “Explicit Content, Time-Wasting Are Key Social Media Worries For Parents Of U.S. Teens,” *Pew Research Center*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/12/15/explicit-content-time-wasting-are-key-social-media-worries-for-parents-of-u-s-teens/>.

<sup>176</sup> Faverio, Michelle, Anderson, Monica, and Park, Eugene, Apr. 22, 2025, “Teens, Social Media And Mental Health,” *Pew Research Center*, [https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2025/04/PI\\_2025.04.22\\_teens-social-media-mental-health\\_REPORT.pdf/](https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2025/04/PI_2025.04.22_teens-social-media-mental-health_REPORT.pdf/).

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deprivation,” and 15% reporting their children had experienced “feeling anxious or depressed.”<sup>177</sup>

107. Two recent reports published by Harris Poll show similarly high concerns from parents about the suitability of social media for their children. A June 2024 survey of 1,088 U.S. adults found that “more than 4 in 5 (84%) American adults worry about the effect of social media on the mental health of today’s young people.”<sup>178</sup> A related 2025 poll of 1,013 U.S. parents aged 18+ with a child under the age of 18 found that “29% of parents thought their children began using social media too young” and “73% said they want to delay social media until at least age 16.”<sup>179</sup>

108. Many young users also express concern about the amount of time they are spending on social media, as well as social media’s addictive quality and associated harms. In a 2018 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, roughly “half of those ages 13 to 17 are themselves worried they spend too much time on their cellphones.” Roughly half (57%) of U.S. teens also reported taking steps to limit their use of social media, and 41% say they spend too much time on social media.<sup>180</sup> A follow-up survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2022, found roughly the same percentages with 36% of teens saying they thought they spent too much time

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<sup>177</sup> Ipsos, Sept. 14, 2023, “About eight in ten parents with children under 18 on 'traditional' social media apps worry about their children using video/image-sharing apps,” Ipsos, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/about-eight-ten-parents-children-under-18-traditional-social-media-apps-worry-about-their-children/>.

<sup>178</sup> Skiera, AJ, Jun. 24, 2024, “How Americans Assess The Impact Of Smartphones And Social Media On Their Health,” *The Harris Poll*, <https://theharrispoll.com/briefs/technology-health/>.

<sup>179</sup> *The Harris Poll*, Jun. 18, 2025, “What Parents Think About Their Kids Social Media and Smartphone Usage,” *The Harris Poll*, <https://theharrispoll.com/briefs/what-parents-think-about-their-kids-social-media-and-smartphone-usage/>.

<sup>180</sup> Jiang, Jingjing, Aug. 22, 2018, “How Teens and Parents Navigate Screen Time and Device Distractions,” Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/08/22/how-teens-and-parents-navigate-screen-time-and-device-distractions/>.

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129. Importantly, one key position Meta appears to have adopted based on this research was that the best way to reassure consumers that its platforms were safe was not to confront the issues head-on, but rather to issue a steady drumbeat of product proof points and general statements regarding the importance of well-being and connection. In particular, Meta avoided directly contradicting negative press, knowing that that strategy was likely to be counterproductive. For example, a CSN-7 draft research deck from October 2022 titled “Bad Science Rebuttals Mixed-Methods Study,” shows that Meta tested four rebuttal messages to critical claims blaming social media for poor mental health among teens.<sup>256</sup> Through the study, Meta determined that rebuttal messages are unpersuasive to consumers.<sup>257</sup> Instead, the company developed and tested a communications strategy that appeared to respond to consumer concerns, and employed communications tactics that it knew would resonate with and persuade its audience. Meta used influencers to convey health and safety messages, lending external credibility to its claims

130. Meta also commissioned influencers on its platforms to convey messages about the safety of its platforms and continues to use promoted influencer messaging as of the spring of 2025.<sup>258</sup> Influencer-delivered messages are particularly compelling because influencers tend to be trusted and admired by the audiences that elect to follow them. Any messages those influencers

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<sup>256</sup> META3047MDL-035-00001376, “[DRAFT] Bad Science Rebuttals Mixed-Methods Study,” October 2022, at slide 2.

<sup>257</sup> META3047MDL-035-00001376 at 2, “[DRAFT] Bad Science Rebuttals Mixed-Methods Study,” October 2022, at slide 2.

<sup>258</sup> See, e.g., Instagram posts from early 2025: @momsoftampa (Moms of Tampa), Apr. 17, 2025, *Instagram*, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIj8LpMxPcL/>. Accessed July 14, 2025; @monicaplus\_2 (Monica Villa), Mar. 21, 2025, *Instagram*, [https://www.instagram.com/monicaplus\\_2/reel/DHeqYYgyycA](https://www.instagram.com/monicaplus_2/reel/DHeqYYgyycA). Accessed July 14, 2025; @ashleeknichols (Ashlee Nichols), Apr. 9, 2025, *Instagram*, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIO8MZqPhnH/>. Accessed July 14, 2025; @ilanawiles (Ilana Wiles), Mar. 24, 2025, *Instagram*, <https://www.instagram.com/mommyshorts/reel/DHmFiQmRNMq/>. Accessed July 21, 2025; @mollybsims (Molly Sims), Apr. 12, 2025, *Instagram*, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIWwZvwv4g7/>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

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promote, then, are likely to be seen as trustworthy and authentic, and are capable of materially affecting the behavior, attitudes, or opinions of the audiences that perceived them.<sup>259</sup> In outreach plans—including one such plan developed for the first half of 2020—the company noted the importance of cooperation with “partners” and “top accounts” to communicate its well-being message.<sup>260</sup> In an internal email from 2023, the company celebrated the success of its work with influencers through an event series meant to educate “parent creators” about the company’s “tools to keep [] teens safe on our apps.” This campaign generated “49.3M impressions from earned and paid content[.]”<sup>261</sup> The messages communicated by influencers are similar in nature to the statements made in other venues, such as congressional hearings and in blog posts, but posted directly on Instagram in promoted posts intended to reach Meta’s users, furthering the reach of the messages about its platforms’ health and safety and offering proof points, side-stepping criticism, and setting the agenda.

131. Meta continues to employ influencers in this way. One recent post, shown in Figure 6 below, is addressed to mothers of young users, and emphasizes the safety tools available. The influencer, Ms. Nichols, talks about her children, aged 11, 9, and 6. Ms. Nichols goes on to explain that she is “encouraged by the enhanced safety features and protections of teen accounts,” identifying screen time limits as one such feature. She notes in the Reel caption, “I love that @Instagram offers safety features.”<sup>262</sup> As of May 2025, Ms. Nichols’ account has

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<sup>259</sup> Brooks, G., Drenten, J., & Piskorski, M. J. (2021), “Influencer celebrification: How social media influencers acquire celebrity capital,” *Journal of Advertising*, 50(5):528-547; Kay, S., Mulcahy, R., & Parkinson, J. (2020), “When less is more: the impact of macro and micro social media influencers’ disclosure,” *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36:1-31; Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Moulard, J. (2018), “Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation,” *Journal of Business Research*, 117:557-569.

<sup>260</sup> META3047MDL-019-00118434, “H1 2020 Well-being Integrated Outreach Plan,” at 435, 436.

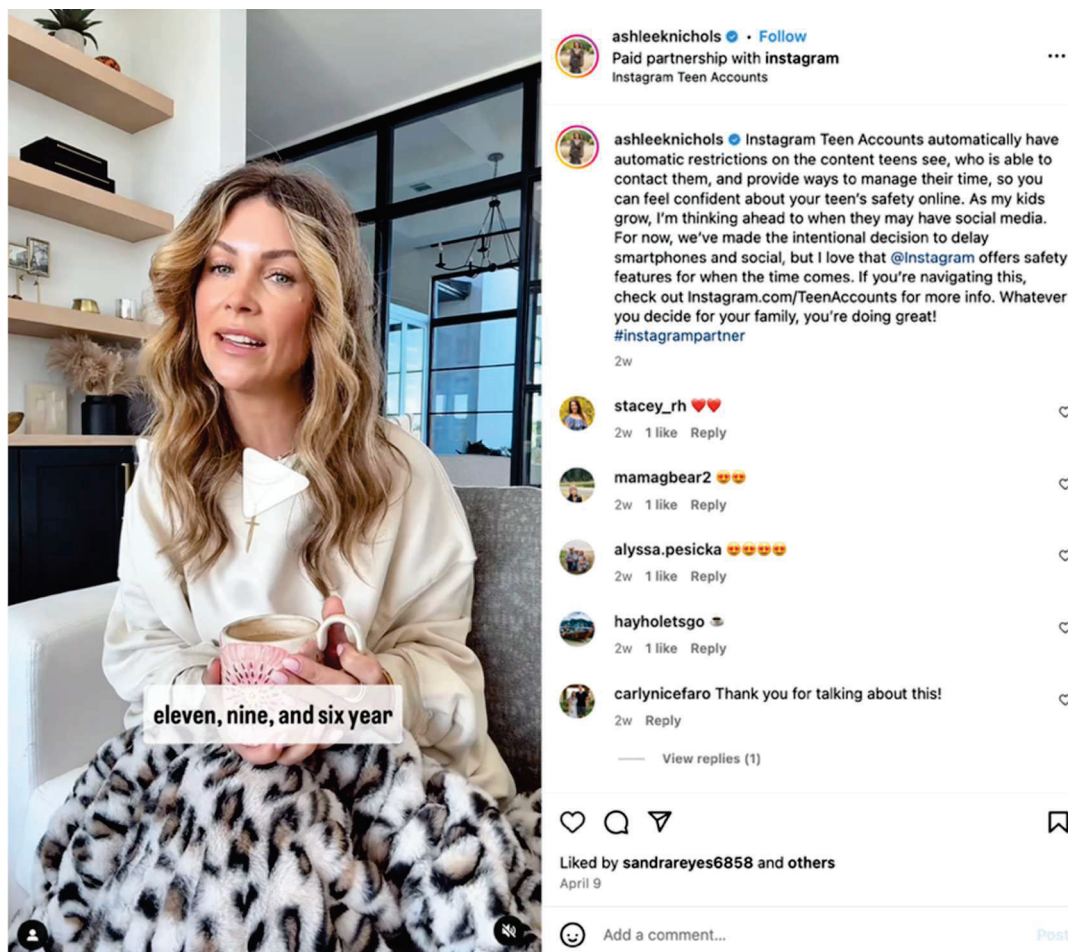
<sup>261</sup> META3047MDL-040-00498308, “no subject” email, December 18, 2023.

<sup>262</sup> @ashleeknichols (Ashlee Nichols), Apr. 9, 2025, *Instagram*, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIO8MZqPhnH/?hl=en/>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

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646,000 followers and the promoted Reel in Figure 6 has been viewed 7.2 million times.

**Figure 6. Post from Influencer account Ashlee Nichols<sup>263</sup>**



132. Another post, shown in Figure 7 below, hit on many of the proof points outlined in Meta’s consumer-tested communication strategy, commenting on tools that offer more “control over who interacts with your teen,” “[s]creen time limits for healthier usage,” and “content filters for a safer experience,” while also emphasizing “expert-backed” resources.<sup>264</sup> The repetition of these messages through trusted influencers further increased the believability and credibility of

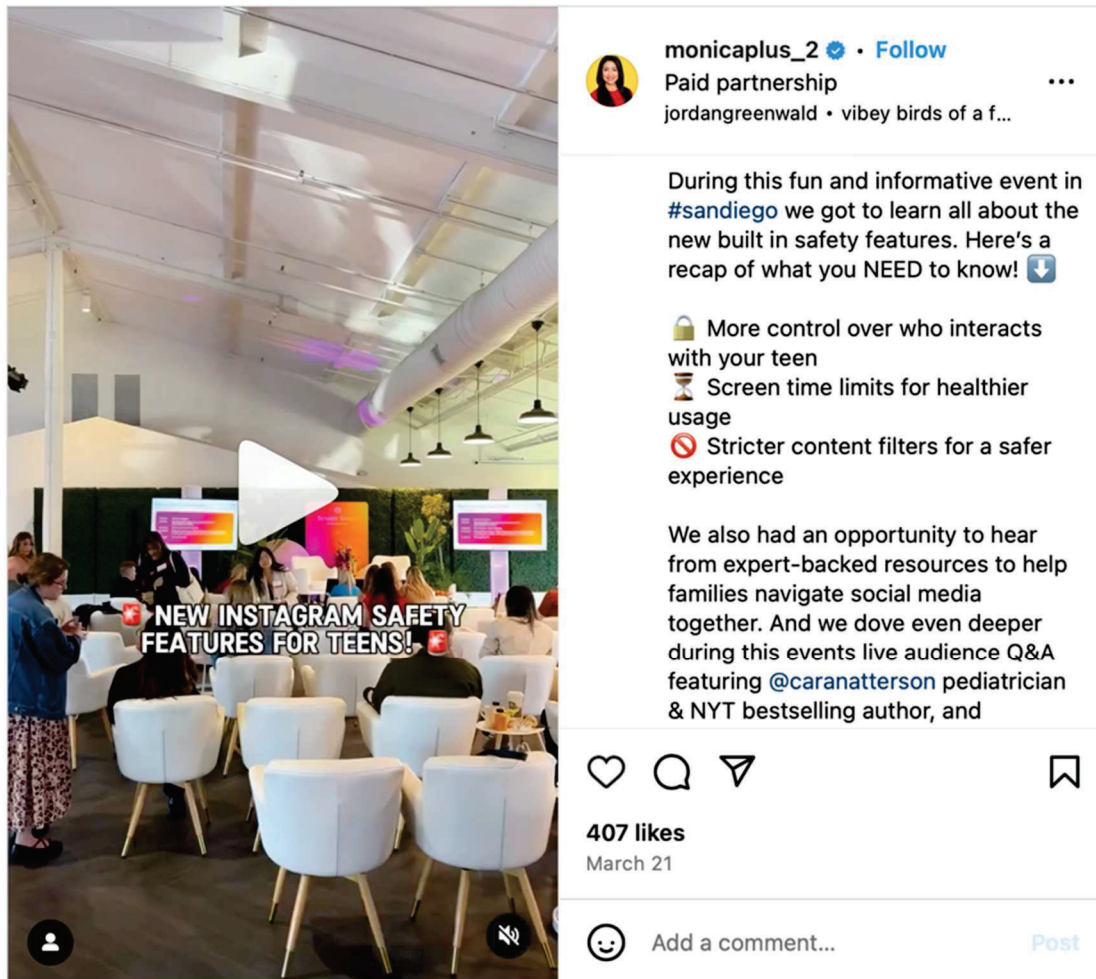
<sup>263</sup> @momsoftampa (Moms of Tampa), *Instagram*, <https://www.instagram.com/momsoftampa/>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>264</sup> @ashleeknichols (Ashlee Nichols), Apr. 9, 2025, *Instagram*, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIO8MZqPhnH/>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

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the statements, and the broad impression that the platforms both prioritize well-being and are, in fact, safe for teen users.

**Figure 7. Post from Influencer account monicaplus\_2<sup>265</sup>**



133. Because Meta’s own “research show[ed] that consumers parents have low awareness of Meta’s features and tools...to support teens and families,” in 2023, Meta launched a “Screen Smart” in-person series of workshops around the U.S. to tout its well-being features and tools to

<sup>265</sup> This account has 42,000 followers: [@monicaplus\\_2](#) (Monica Villa), *Instagram*, [https://www.instagram.com/monicaplus\\_2](https://www.instagram.com/monicaplus_2). Accessed July 14, 2025.

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parents as proof points of the company's emphasis on well-being.<sup>266</sup> As noted in the caption of the post above, this influencer attended an in-person Instagram "Screen Smart" event in early 2025, which Meta claimed would feature "academics and clinicians," and "help parents navigate conversations with their families about using devices safely and learn more about Meta's parental supervision tools."<sup>267</sup> Meta brought together parent influencers and content creators for this event, and several of them made posts similar to the one above.<sup>268</sup>

134. In 2023, Screen Smart events were held in Washington, Illinois, and Tennessee among other states.<sup>269</sup> In 2024, Screen Smart events that featured some of Meta's top executives, including Adam Mosseri and Antigone Davis, were held in Massachusetts and California, among other states that were "mapped as priority markets" for Instagram.<sup>270</sup>

135. Meta paid influential accounts to post and promote these messages about health and safety, which facilitated the company's goal of positioning its platforms as safe for teens.<sup>271</sup> These user-oriented messages also reiterate statements that Meta personnel and spokespeople have made in other venues, augmenting and cementing those messages by soliciting third parties to echo the same claims and sentiments. The statements made by those Meta personnel are discussed in more detail throughout Section X, below.

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<sup>266</sup> META3047MDL-111-00194148, "YWB 'Screen Smart' 2023 Series: Recap," 2023-2024, at 148; *see also* META3047MDL-146-00056954, "Parent Advocacy Network - Pilot Proposal."

<sup>267</sup> Meta, Apr. 17, 2024, "Supporting Parents Online With Our Screen Smart Program," *Meta*, <https://about.fb.com/news/2024/04/supporting-parents-with-screen-smart-program/>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>268</sup> *See, e.g.,* @momsoftampa (Moms of Tampa), Apr. 17, 2025, *Instagram*, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIj8LpMxPcL/>. Accessed July 14, 2025; Posts tagged with "Instagramscreensmart" on Instagram.com, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/search/keyword/?q=%23instagramscreensmart>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>269</sup> META3047MDL-111-00194148, "YWB 'Screen Smart' 2023 Series: Recap," 2023-2024.

<sup>270</sup> META3047MDL-047-00659172, "Youth updates for EA team biweekly (3/7)"; META3047MDL-129-00090617, "Antigone Davis Prep Doc: Boston 'Screen Smart'" May 2024.

<sup>271</sup> *See, for example,* Deposition of Wendy Gross, PhD, January 28, 2025, Exhibit 18; META3047MDL-034-00012951, "H2 2018 Communications Plan: Well-being," at 951; and META3047MDL-003-00141446, "2019 Marketing Budget," Oct. 18, 2018, at 448.

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276. The most prominent statistic advanced in Meta’s CSERs is its “prevalence” metric. This metric estimates the proportion of views of content that violate Meta’s community standards relative to all views of content on Facebook or Instagram.<sup>597</sup> As the “prevalence” page on Meta’s Transparency Center site explains, a prevalence of 0.20% means that for every 10,000 views, 20 views included violating content.<sup>598</sup> The CSERs provide prevalence metrics for several of the policy areas listed above, including violence and incitement, child endangerment (including nudity, physical abuse, and sexual exploitation), bullying and harassment, and hate speech.<sup>599</sup> Meta has variously described prevalence as a “key [metric],”<sup>600</sup> a “critical metric,”<sup>601</sup> and “[one] of the most significant metrics” provided in the CSERs.<sup>602</sup>

277. Meta has additionally published blog posts on its website’s Newsroom page to accompany the publication of the CSER each quarter, highlighting updated prevalence statistics. For example, Figure 9 below provides an excerpt from a blog post summarizing the Q2 2022 CSER data that prominently displayed updated prevalence metrics for bullying and harassment on each of Facebook and Instagram:

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<sup>597</sup> <https://transparency.meta.com/policies/community-standards/locally-illegal-products-services>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>598</sup> Mar. 6, 2025, “Prevalence,” *Meta*, <https://transparency.meta.com/policies/improving/prevalence-metric/>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>599</sup> Mar. 6, 2025, “Prevalence,” *Meta*, <https://transparency.meta.com/policies/improving/prevalence-metric/>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>600</sup> “Community Standards Enforcement Report,” *META.com*, <https://transparency.meta.com/reports/community-standards-enforcement/>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>601</sup> Rosen, Guy, May 23, 2019, “An Update on How We Are Doing At Enforcing Our Community Standards,” *FB.com*, <https://about.fb.com/news/2019/05/enforcing-our-community-standards-3>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>602</sup> May 23, 2019, “Measuring Prevalence of Violating Content on Facebook,” *Meta*, <https://about.fb.com/news/2019/05/measuring-prevalence>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

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“Prevalence” page of the company’s Transparency Center website, Meta reasons that “[m]easuring views of violating content rather than the amount of violating content published better reflects the *impact on the community*,” since a “piece of violating content could be published once but seen 1,000 times, 1 million times or not at all.”<sup>606</sup> In describing the metric in these ways, Meta has framed prevalence as the most useful measure to attend to, and one that is capable of tracking the rate of real harm on the platform.

280. In Statement C5, when describing the function of the prevalence metric, Meta has compared it to measuring the concentration of pollutants in the air,<sup>607</sup> claiming that just as environmental regulators record the percent of nitrogen dioxide in the air, Meta records the percent of times a user is exposed to violating content.<sup>608</sup> By deploying this analogy, Meta has created the impression that prevalence is a key indicator of the health and safety on its platforms, conveying again that a low prevalence of policy-violating content is an accurate gauge of the level of harm experienced by its users.

281. Further, Meta has explicitly connected the prevalence of violating content with the quality of user *experiences* on its platforms: In a blog post originally introducing the CSER reports and prevalence metric, Vice President of Analytics Alex Schultz explained that his own personal experiences facing abuse on Facebook in relation to his identity as a gay man made him “want to ensure that people’s experiences on Facebook are positive.”<sup>609</sup> He continued by stating

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<sup>606</sup> Updated Mar. 6, 2025, “Prevalence,” *Meta*, <https://transparency.meta.com/policies/improving/prevalence-metric/> (emphasis added). Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>607</sup> May 23, 2019, “Measuring Prevalence of Violating content of Facebook,” *FB.com*, <https://about.fb.com/news/2019/05/measuring-prevalence>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>608</sup> May 23, 2019, “Measuring Prevalence of Violating content of Facebook,” *FB.com*, <https://about.fb.com/news/2019/05/measuring-prevalence>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>609</sup> Schultz, Alex, May 15, 2018, “Hard Questions: How Do We Measure Our Efforts to Keep Bad Content off Facebook?,” *FB.com*, <https://about.fb.com/news/2018/05/measuring-our-efforts/> (emphasis added). Accessed July 14, 2025.

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prevalence metric is calculated as a percentage of total content views<sup>621</sup>), individuals without a background in statistical analysis are likely to interpret the low prevalence figures communicated in Meta's statements as indicating that the platforms present few, if any, risks of harm to users. Similarly, an expert might suspect that there is a wide array of harmful experiences which are not captured by Meta's community standards (e.g., negative social comparison, interpersonal conflict, etc.), while a lay person may not. As such, consumers may reasonably infer that, because the prevalence of violating content is negligible, so is the prevalence of harmful-but-not-violative content and the corresponding rate of harm.

291. The challenge of assessing Meta's statements similarly applies to the company's claims about its research on well-being. For example, when *The Wall Street Journal* published reporting based on leaked internal Meta research and documents which it claimed demonstrated the company's awareness of harm on its platforms, Meta publicly released just two slide decks along with annotations. In the annotated decks, Meta downplayed the findings of its own researchers and their internal research projects, labeling conclusions as "researcher speculation"<sup>622</sup> and repeatedly emphasizing that the research was not designed to demonstrate causality.<sup>623</sup>

292. Rather than directly addressing the implications of Meta's own leaked research and acknowledging the harmful nature of its platforms, Meta undercut its researchers and spun the results to its benefit by selecting the most favorable stats to trumpet, and explaining away

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<sup>621</sup> Updated Mar. 6, 2025, "Prevalence," *Meta*, <https://transparency.meta.com/policies/improving/prevalence-metric/>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>622</sup> Oct. 2019, "Teen Mental Health Deep Dive," *FB.com*, <https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Instagram-Teen-Annotated-Research-Deck-2.pdf>, pp. 3 and 29. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>623</sup> Oct. 2019, "Teen Mental Health Deep Dive," *FB.com*, <https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Instagram-Teen-Annotated-Research-Deck-2.pdf>, pp. 1-4, 17-19, 21-28, 30-32, 34-35, 37, 40-41. Accessed July 14, 2025.

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someone *over* 13 years old.” (emphasis added)<sup>831</sup> By contrast, in response to an interrogatory posed by the Plaintiffs in this matter, Meta stated that its internal policy is that “[w]here Meta has indicia that the user is not *under* the age of 13, Meta may automatically permit the user who has been flagged as potentially underage to continue using Instagram.”<sup>832</sup> Whereas Meta’s publicly communicated standard for retaining flagged accounts is verification that the flagged user is *over* 13, its internal policy, as enforced in practice, is that by default a user’s account is not removed unless the company verifies that the user is *under* 13.<sup>833</sup> A default such as that allows many more U13 accounts to remain on the platform than if the company only allowed users on the platform who could affirmatively demonstrate that they are aged 13 years or older. Meta’s default practice of allowing U13s on its platforms unless it can verify that the account holder is U13 is in clear contrast with other age-restricted activities such as gambling, smoking, and voting, where the default is that those wishing to engage in the activity must affirmatively prove they are old enough before being permitted to do so.

380. Meta’s reporting flow for U13 accounts is also notably ineffective. According to Mr. Béjar, it is “almost impossible to report underage accounts.”<sup>834</sup> In one email from 2019, Monica Bickert referred to the reporting flow as “broken,” after she attempted to report a user for being underage and experienced an error.<sup>835</sup> In response to this discovery, Antigone Davis replied, “I agree it is more than pretty bad and suggests we want to deter underage reporting.”<sup>836</sup>

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<sup>831</sup> “Report a child under 13 on Instagram,” *INSTAGRAM.com*, <https://help.instagram.com/517920941588885>. Accessed July 14, 2025.

<sup>832</sup> Meta’s Responses and Objections to the Illinois Civil Investigative Demand, dated April 10, 2023, at 5 (emphasis added).

<sup>833</sup> Meta’s Responses and Objections to the Illinois Civil Investigative Demand, dated April 10, 2023, at 5.

<sup>834</sup> Deposition of Arturo Béjar, April 7, 2025, 195:7-24.

<sup>835</sup> Deposition of Monika Bickert, May 1, 2025, Exhibit 51.

<sup>836</sup> Deposition of Monika Bickert, May 1, 2025, Exhibit 51.

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The undersigned hereby certifies their understanding that they owe a primary and overriding duty of candor and professional integrity to help the Court on matters within their expertise and in all submissions to, or testimony before, the Court. The undersigned further certifies that their report and opinions are not being presented for any improper purpose, such as to harass, cause unnecessary delay, or needlessly increase the cost of litigation.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A. Alter', is written over a horizontal line.

Adam L. Alter, Ph.D.

August 1, 2025

Date