



Kids Code Coalition

PRIORITIZING THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE ONLINE

Chatbot Protections for Kids

The Kids Code Coalition brings together a wide cross-section of organizations from across the country to secure passage of legislation to protect kids online. Key among our legislative priorities is advancing protections for kids on chatbots. This legislation can take a variety of forms — from AI companion chatbot safeguards to product liability standards to data protections to transparency requirements — depending on the priorities of each state.

The Problem

AI companion chatbots are systems designed to simulate ongoing personal or emotional relationships through conversational interaction. These chatbots pose a growing risk and danger to children and teens because they are designed to simulate human relationships while lacking the judgment, boundaries, and accountability of real people. Research from Common Sense Media shows that [nearly three in four teens](#) have used AI companions, often without their parents' knowledge, and many rely on them for emotional support, advice, or companionship. These systems frequently use human-like language, emotional validation, and

persistent engagement tactics that encourage emotional dependence, blur the line between real and artificial relationships, and exploit developmental vulnerabilities in young users. As a result, children may perceive chatbot responses as trustworthy or authoritative, even when the information is misguided, inaccurate, harmful, or dangerously inappropriate.

The harms of chatbots are not theoretical for kids. Investigations and lawsuits document cases in which chatbots have encouraged or failed to intervene in self-harm, suicide, sexual exploitation, and other dangerous behaviors. Multiple lawsuits and investigations allege that prolonged interactions with AI companion chatbots contributed to the deaths of several children in the U.S. Together, these harms and risks demonstrate the urgent need for accountability and regulation for chatbot design, development, and deployment to ensure protections for kids and teens.

Legislative Solution

As Big Tech continues to prioritize profits over young people's wellbeing, states across the country are filling the gap. Lawmakers are increasingly responding to the risks chatbots pose to children by proposing legislation that establishes clear guardrails, accountability, and enforceable safety standards. Rather than banning the technology outright, these proposals recognize that chatbots are commercial products designed and deployed by companies that should be responsible for preventing foreseeable harm. The goal is to ensure that innovation does not come at the



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expense of child safety, mental health, and privacy — especially for kids who are uniquely vulnerable to manipulative design, emotional dependency, and misleading or dangerous interactions with AI systems. Together, these legislative approaches typically encompass some of the below:

- **Child safety guardrails:** Restricting or prohibiting chatbot interactions with minors unless strong safeguards prevent self-harm encouragement, sexualized content, illegal activity, and manipulative emotional dependency.
- **Clear disclosures:** Requiring frequent, conspicuous notice that users are interacting with an AI system — not a human.
- **Data privacy protections:** Limiting the collection, retention, sale, and use of children's chat data; banning targeted advertising and profiling based on conversations; and requiring affirmative consent before using minors' data.
- **Mental health protections:** Mandating crisis detection and referral protocols when users express suicidal ideation or self-harm, and prohibiting chatbots from presenting themselves as licensed professionals.
- **Design accountability:** Preventing engagement-optimizing features from overriding safety controls and banning

manipulative design practices that encourage secrecy or isolation.

- **Enforcement and remedies:** Empowering attorneys general to enforce the law and giving families the right to seek damages and injunctive relief when violations cause harm.

How We Can Support You

The Kids Code Coalition brings together young people, parents, educators, medical professionals, technologists, and elected officials necessary to pass legislation in states.

The national, state, and local organizations the coalition brings together can help mobilize grassroots support for legislation and identify advocates for storytelling, press and media, and witness testimony in legislative committees.

Who's in the Kids Code Coalition?

The Kids Code Coalition includes national organizations like the Common Sense Media, Design It For Us, Ekō, Issue One, MAMA, ParentsTogether, The Anxious Generation, and Tech Oversight Project alongside state and local groups to advocate for kids' online safety.

For More Information

You can check out the Kids Code Coalition at KidsCodeCoalition.org. Please reach out to contact@kidscodecoalition.org with any questions or to schedule a meeting.