



EDC Making a Mark to Protect America's Youth Online

WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 9, 2023)—On Tuesday, President Joe Biden took the stage for the [State of the Union](#) to address the Administration's priorities for the nation. President Biden spent a substantial amount of time discussing the need to protect children and teens from social media's harm to their mental health, wellbeing, and development. The President called for bipartisan support to pass legislation to protect children and teen's privacy, health, and safety online.

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) is honored to have a seat at the table and work with legislators to pass legislation that will do just that. The EDC worked tirelessly last year with Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) to pass the [Kids Online Safety Act](#). Congress failed to include the legislation in their end of year package. The EDC continues to engage with Senators Blumenthal and Blackburn and Representatives Castor (D-FL) and Bilirakis (R-FL) to plan for a reintroduction of the legislation in the U.S. Senate and prospects for a U.S. House of Representatives companion bill. The Kids Online Safety Act would protect minors on social media from algorithmic harms, provide tools and resources to parents, and hold platforms accountable for their promotion of mental and physical harms, including eating disorders.

"The crippling beauty standards perpetuated by social media can have detrimental effects on youth mental health," **said Chuying Huo, Vice President of EDC's Young Adult Council.** "I'm glad to see President Biden spreading awareness about this vital issue. It is up to every one of us to urge Congress to protect children from deceptive advertisements and harmful content on social media." The EDC is optimistic a bipartisan solution to rein in big tech can be accomplished during the 118th Congress.

As part of EDC's work to protect youth online, the organization's Chief Policy Officer, Katrina Velasquez, will be consulting with the newly established National Center of Excellence for Social Media. The Center of Excellence will serve as a centralized source for evidence-based education and technical assistance to support the mental health of children and adolescents as they navigate social media. The EDC expresses gratitude to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for prioritizing youth's wellbeing online and to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) for serving as the grantee of the SAMSHA's 5-year grant.

The Center will reach a national audience of millions of stakeholders each year, including children and adolescents, parents and families, educators and school personnel, clinicians, and technology industry representatives. “After years of advocates telling us of the harmful effects of social media on their eating disorders, I am honored to advise on this new Center of Excellence for Social Media to ensure the needs and voices of individuals and families affected by eating disorders are at the table,” **said Katrina Velasquez, Esq., MA., Chief Policy Officer of EDC.**

The Center will work towards achieving three goals over the course of five years: (1) improve youth’s mental wellbeing by reducing the risks and leveraging the benefits of social media, (2) build the capacity of individuals who work with youth to mitigate social media’s impact on mental wellbeing and promote healthy social media use, and (3) synthesize and promote the evidence base and best practices for healthy social media use via communication, guidance, and other resources. The EDC looks forward to providing its expertise on this subject to help promote healthy social media use and support healthy mental development in digital spaces.

“We know that children and adolescents are at increased risk for a variety of negative mental health outcomes and that social media can exacerbate those risks,” **said Christine Peat, Ph.D., EDC Board President.** “The EDC is eager to collaborate with organizations like the Center of Excellence for Social Media to create a social media landscape for children and adolescents that protects them from possible harms, including eating disorders.”

The EDC is pleased to see a unified message across the nation to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of young people over the profit and revenue of tech companies. As more people become aware of the harms caused by social media, the greater protection and safety the nation’s children and teens will have.

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) is a Washington, D.C. based, federal advocacy organization comprised of advocacy organizations, academics, treatment providers, family/loved ones of children with eating disorders, and people experiencing eating disorders nationwide. The EDC advances the recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority throughout the United States. Additional resources can also be found at eatingdisorderscoalition.org.

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