

The logo for the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at California State University Northridge (CSUN). It features the letters 'CTL' in a large, white, serif font on a black rectangular background. The background of the entire page is a collage of various educational terms and CSUN branding in different colors and orientations.

ON THE CUTTING EDGE

Social Media Safety: Local Origins, National Impact

by Marc Berkman, CEO of the Organization for Social Media Safety
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Since the early 2000's, social media use has surged across the world reaching about 4.8 billion social media users in 2021. As social media has spread, research has identified numerous social media-related threats to the health and well-being of children. Social media use among teens and students has been linked to lower grades, poor sleep, mental health problems, and behavioral issues (Garrett, 2016; McNamee, 2019; Riehm, 2019; Wakefield, 2020). Indeed, about 59% percent of teens have been cyberbullied, leaving them at heightened risk for suicide (Anderson, 2020; John, 2018).

The Organization for Social Media Safety (OFSMS) is the first 501(c)(3) consumer protection organization focused exclusively on social media. Headquartered in the San Fernando Valley, OFSMS' mission is to protect against all social media-related dangers, including cyberbullying, human trafficking, hate speech, and misinformation. It seeks to accomplish this through a consumer protection-oriented model with three main programmatic divisions: education, advocacy, and technology.

OFSMS' educational programming focuses on teaching essential social media safety skills to the public with its primary initiative being a suite of school-based social media safety services for K – 12 schools offered across the continental United States. School-based services include social media safety student assemblies, parent workshops, and consulting services to develop and improve schools' social media safety-related policies.

OFSMS' social media safety curriculum for students and parents is evidence-based, and it is informed by a distinguished Board of Directors and Advisory Council consisting of educators, mental health experts, physicians, and technology experts and by OFSMS' Student Advisory Council, which consists of high school leaders from across the country. The curriculum is revised on an ongoing basis in response to evolving social media risks and through an analysis of programmatic feedback. Dr. Wendy Murawski, Executive Director of the CSUN CTL, is a member of the Advisory Council.

Feedback solicitation is directly incorporated into student assemblies using handheld, interactive controllers to gather responses from the audience. This capability not only allows for ongoing measurement of audience impressions, but it also serves to increase individual student engagement by enabling participation throughout the presentations. It also allows OFSMS to capture critical, completely anonymized, data that provides insight into how social media-related dangers are affecting students on individual school campuses and throughout the country.

OFSMS is also focused on reaching the most vulnerable, at-risk student populations. While school-based services are fee-based to ensure sustainability, OFSMS offers complimentary or subsidized social media safety presentations to high risk, low resource schools. The student populations of low resource schools are theoretically at higher risk for falling victim to social media-related dangers, especially cyberbullying and trafficking. Unfortunately, based on OFSMS' analysis, most of these schools provide no social media safety training, and many of them do not have sufficient resources to do so. OFSMS has worked with a variety of schools in the CSUN local community and is eager to continue its collaboration with K-12 schools and universities to further its mission.

Want to learn more about the Organization for Social Media Safety?
Please visit www.ofsms.org

For more information, contact:
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Additional Resources

Here are links to three strategies that educators should consider teaching or implementing with their students or in their communities to maximize social media safety for their students:

- Block and Report <<https://www.socialmediasafety.org/blog/tip-of-the-month-block-and-report/>>
- Community Guidelines <<https://www.socialmediasafety.org/blog/tip-of-the-month-community-guidelines/>>
- Phone Time Challenge <<https://www.socialmediasafety.org/blog/how-to-fight-social-media-addiction-family-phone-time-challenge/>>

Here are three resources that will help educators learn more about social media safety:

- Social Media Dangers Documentary — Childhood 2.0 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=He3IJhFy-I>>
- US Dept of Health & Human Services <<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/workforce/socialmedia/safety/>>
- Buckling the Social Media Seatbelt SuperCourse <<https://courses.ofsms.org/courses/the-buckling-the-social-media-seatbelt-supercourse>>

The Organization for Social Media Safety has worked with numerous K-12 schools in CSUN's neighboring San Fernando Valley community, including:

- Hale Charter Academy
- Viewpoint School
- Patrick Henry Middle School
- Porter Ranch Community School
- Calabash Charter Academy
- New Academy Canoga Park
- Vista Middle School
- deToledo High School
- San Jose Street Elementary School

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