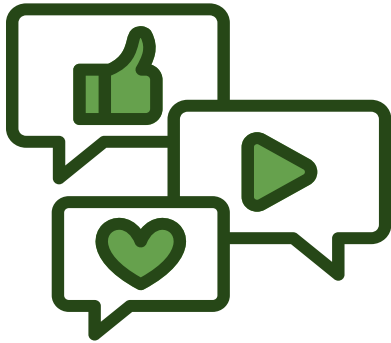


# Kids Online Safety Act

## What Youth Leaders and Parents Need to Know



### WHAT IS IT?

The "Kids Online Safety Act" (KOSA) is a bill that was introduced by the US Senate in February 2022, and was reintroduced in May 2023. The bill establishes guidelines meant to protect minors on social media platforms.

### WHAT DOES IT DO?

According to the Congressional Research Service, "This bill sets out requirements to protect minors from online harms." The requirements are placed on applications and services that are popular to teens; not email services or educational institutions, for example.

The apps and services that teens utilize "must take reasonable measures...to prevent and mitigate certain harms that may arise from that use (e.g., sexual exploitation and online bullying)."

## PLATFORMS MUST PROVIDE...

- Certain safeguards for minors, such as settings that restrict access to their personal data.
- Tools for parents or guardians to supervise minors' use of a platform, such as control of privacy and account settings.

## PLATFORMS MUST ALSO...

- Disclose specified information, including details regarding the use of personalized recommendation systems and individual-specific advertising to minors.
- Allow parents, guardians, minors, and schools to report certain harms.
- Refrain from facilitating advertising of age-restricted products or services (e.g., tobacco and gambling) to minors.
- Report on foreseeable risks of harm to minors from using the platform at least once annually.



***We need platforms that value the well-being of our children, above the profit they seek to make from them.***

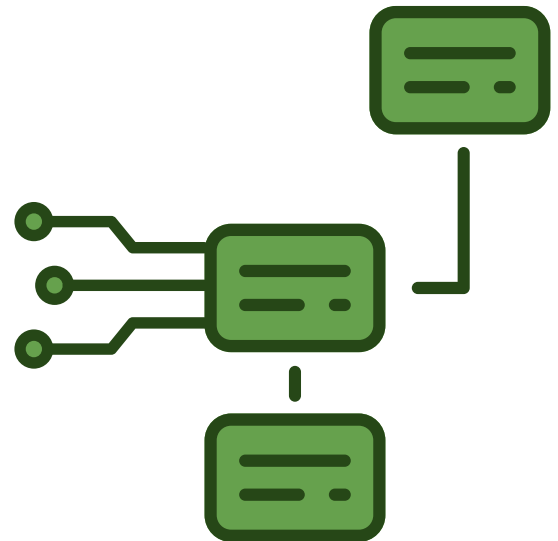
*The Local Youth Worker, Ep. 430*

# ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The bill also requires large websites and platforms to meet certain requirements before using algorithms, including those that prioritize information furnished to the user based on user-specific data.

For example, such platforms must:

- Provide users with notice that the website uses such algorithms.
- Make available a version of the platform that uses algorithms that do not prioritize information based on user data.



Further, the bill provides for enforcement through the Federal Trade Commission and states, requiring the commission to seek to contract with the National Academy of Sciences to study the risks of harm to minors by the use of social media and other online platforms.

The bill establishes a council to advise on implementing the bill. It also requires guidance for market and product research focused on minors and an evaluation of options to verify a user's age.

# KOSA & THE CONNECTION TO SECTION 230



## *Where did it come from?*

In the 1950s, bookstore owners were being held liable for selling books containing “obscenity,” which is not protected by the First Amendment. One case eventually made it to the Supreme Court, which held that it created a “chilling effect” to hold someone liable for someone else’s content.

## *How did the issue evolve?*

In the 1990s, when the commercial internet was taking off, some internet companies began offering online forums. The ones who chose to moderate content got in trouble for exercising editorial control.



## *What is it?*

This evolution didn’t sit well with politicians who worried it would discourage budding internet companies from moderating content at all. Thus, the Communication Decency Act of 1996 went into effect, allowing websites to host content that isn’t theirs and not be held liable for that content.

# WHAT ARE YOUTH WORKERS AND PARENTS TO DO?

From a Biblical perspective, it is imperative we remember that:

- There is value in bringing truth to light.
- We are called to speak up for the weak and vulnerable.
- Humans are image-bearers of God, not products to make profit from.

Additionally, consider these practical questions:

- Since this conversation is going on, where can you jump into it without hysteria?
- Is the device or app necessary or worth it? If yes, which of the existing safety tools could be helpful to utilize?
- If kids do in excess what adults do in moderation, how can you model this better for them?



Reformed Youth Ministries exists to serve the Church in its efforts to reach and equip youth for Christ. Through its **conferences**, **training** and **resources**, everything RYM does is oriented to help churches as they seek to raise up the next generation of the Church with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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