

META Settlement, How It Affects Ohio's Children

This August, META agreed to pay around \$18 billion in a settlement to resolve a lawsuit brought forward by 29 states. Ohio is set to receive over \$319 million across the next decade. Ohio CACs should be at the table for the discussion on how to best utilize the money to benefit Ohio child victims. Ohio CACs provided prevention services to over 80,000 children in 2025 and served almost 12,000 child victims.

The lawsuit claimed META created social media platforms with intentionally addictive features and misled the public about the safety of its platforms for children. Additionally, they violated the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act by collecting data of children under the age of 13.

In addition to the payout, META is now required to mandate a variety of safety features on its platforms, which includes age-appropriate content controls, stronger age-verification, and a combined 2 hour screen time limit for children on Instagram and Facebook with required pauses every 15 minutes to limit scrolling.

There is no official plan for how Ohio will use their allotted money, but it is vital that it is put towards supporting children's initiatives, including education regarding online risks, supporting those who have been negatively affected by social media, and ensuring that META honors the platform changes outlined in the settlement.

It is incumbent upon Ohio's leaders to ensure that this money is spent strategically. We have the chance to create generational change through early intervention in Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACES, and we must not squander this opportunity.

This settlement is just one example of the many dangers children face every time they go online. Beyond highly addictive content, the internet opens pathways for children to be exposed to cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and online predators.

Online manipulation can lead to severe forms of abuse, including sexual exploitation. In 2025 alone, the National Center For Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), reported 21.3 million submissions to their cyber tipline, including over 61.8 million images and videos of suspected child exploitation. Of those, NCMEC flagged over 400,000 reports from generative AI in the first half of 2025 alone, up from 67,000 in all of 2024.

the rise of generative AI, and the looming presence of sexual predators, it is more important than ever to educate children on digital boundaries and online safety. It is paramount that Ohio CACs have a seat at the table to determine the best way Ohio can do this and support child victims with the states allotted \$319 million.

Down below, we have included links to NCMEC's online safety resources, as well as resources from the Ohio School Safety Center (OSSC).

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