

# Eagle Forum Report

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## *Deadly Mind Games*

### THE POWER OF SUGGESTION

by Alex Newman, journalist

A shocking 94% of California teenagers and young adults report experiencing “mental health challenges” in an average month, according to a new poll commissioned by Blue Shield of California’s Blue Sky “youth mental health initiative.”

When asked, “How is your mental health today,” almost half of the youth in Los Angeles reported that it was “fair” or “poor.” Statewide, almost a third said the same, with the numbers getting worse over time.

The polling results correspond with the latest Centers for Disease Control data showing 40% of youth feel “persistent sadness or hopelessness.” Even more shocking, the national survey found 20% seriously considered attempting suicide. Almost 10% actually attempted suicide, just over the past year.

These record levels of mental issues among young Americans come even as government at all levels and public schools roll out more “mental health” and “social-emotional learning” schemes than ever before. Some critics suggest there is a link.

Under the guise of dealing with what self-styled experts are calling an unprecedented mental health “crisis,” Big Pharma-funded policymakers are working to make dangerous psycho-

tropic drugs more widely available to young people.

As The Newman Report exposed last year, an official “mental health app” backed by the state of California is targeting vulnerable children with controversial propaganda involving the occult, the New Age, homosexuality, transgenderism, and fornication.

With God and the Bible increasingly sidelined, much of the angst being felt by youth in the Golden State is due to confusion. In fact, indoctrination and propaganda in government schools and so-called “social media” are key.

According to the poll, 85% of youngsters pointed to “gun violence” as a major stressor contributing to the supposed mental-health challenges. Nearly 80% cited concerns about alleged man-made “climate change.”

The constant race-mongering and “LGBTQ+” propaganda are also taking a toll, with almost 80% reporting concerns about “racism” and nearly 70% pointing to “discrimination against LGBTQ+ people.” Concerns about supposed discrimination

against immigrants were even more stressful to the state’s increasingly indoctrinated young people, with over 80% calling it a “stressor.”

No doubt responding to establishment efforts to promote and normalize censorship, some 84% of youth are concerned about the negative impact of “misinformation” online. Virtually all of the young people — 97% — reported using social media for “fun and entertainment.”

“The data shows youth are deeply affected by the world around them, from climate anxiety and safety to social media pressures,” argued Dr. Nicole Stelter, director of Behavioral Health at Blue Shield of California. “Young people are concerned about the future and how we treat one another.”

Blue Shield’s Blue Sky initiative chief Paula Ambrose suggested that ever-larger quantities of young people must obtain “professional mental health support.” Apparently, “stigma” is holding some back, and so visiting “professionals” must be promoted and normalized.

The Blue Shield survey was conducted by an outfit called “Children Now,” described as a “leading nonparti-



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san, California-based research and policy organization.” It was conducted last year and polled some 750 California residents between the ages of 14 and 25.

In Illinois, lawmakers recently approved universal “mental health” screening for all children in government schools. Critics from across the political spectrum and even psychiatrists slammed the move.

Harvard-trained psychiatrist Dr. Peter Breggin blasted screening all students and normalizing the idea of ubiquitous “mental health” issues among children while peddling drugs.

“The idea of screening school children for mental problems is equivalent to screening them for the drug market,” Breggin explained. “This will stigmatize increasing numbers of children, lead many of them to taking dangerous psychiatric drugs, and push some into a lifetime ‘career’ as mental patients.”


“Nothing is worse than telling a child they have a mental problem, first because it demoralizes them, and second because the problem, if there is one, is corrected by improving how we relate to them,” he added.

The Illinois legislature, where almost 90% of politicians’ campaigns are funded by Big Pharma, is also working on bills to mandate “mental health education” and more “social-emotional learning” for students in government schools.

A peer-reviewed study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that “youth suicides are closely tied with in-person school attendance.” When school is out for summer, the number of suicides among students plummets, before skyrocketing again when school begins.

When the Bible, prayer, close-knit family, and biblical education were the norm, there was no “mental health” crisis among children. This is all a modern phenomenon.

What the youth need is not “climate” hysteria, gender-bending indoctrination, endless “race” mongering,

or even more “mental health” schemes at their government school. What they really need is Truth and love. 

## BLACKOUT ROULETTE

by Beige Luciano-Adams, investigative reporter. She covers politics, arts, culture, and social issues, including LA Weekly and MediaNews Group publications.

**L**ast February, a YouTube executive took the stand in a landmark social media addiction trial in Los Angeles — the first to test whether tech companies could be held liable for the design and operation of their platforms and resulting psychological harm to children.

For parents who have lost children to accidental deaths or suicides they say were caused or facilitated by social media, it was a watershed moment. How would leaders of the world’s most powerful social media companies answer claims that they knew the risks, but still targeted children?

Judy Rogg, wore a large pin with the image of her son, Erik: freckled, forever 12, his bright blue eyes echoing his mother’s. She lost him in 2010 after he tried a “choking game” challenge, also known as a “blackout challenge,” in which kids attempt to get a brief high by hyperventilating or using ligatures to cut off oxygen until they pass out.

Such games predate the internet, but algorithms and mimetic posting on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok have exponentially amplified their reach, globalizing what was once a localized adolescent dare.

Both companies prohibit dangerous challenges and have become more proactive about removing them, and both use AI to detect and remove underage accounts. Executives have said for years that they can’t find evidence of choking challenges, even suggesting many viral trends are in fact “hoaxes” fueled by media.

And yet, kids keep dying after seeing these videos on their apps.

Rogg said she felt vindicated by internal documents that painted a damning picture of the company’s approach to safety, and by a timeline that coincided with her own research about the circulation of choking game videos on YouTube.

Parents hesitate to speak about their experience as most asphyxiation game deaths are mischaracterized as suicides, according to Rogg, who keeps tally through her advocacy organization, Erik’s Cause.

“It’s so outrageous that you just can’t even fathom it and you kind of put your hands over your eyes metaphorically because you just can’t look at it. Whereas with suicide, generally speaking, there are signs,” she said.

Since 2007, the year the iPhone was introduced, Rogg counts some 741 deaths, the majority of them boys in the United States.

On Feb. 3, 2026, Curtis and Wendi Blackwell found their 9-year-old daughter, JackLynn, unconscious in their Texas backyard, a cord wrapped around her neck. After watching videos on YouTube, they told media, she tried the “blackout challenge.”

Like “Kaley G.M.,” the 20-year-old plaintiff in the Los Angeles trial, JackLynn was on YouTube young, and often. Users under 13 are not allowed to register for a YouTube “main” account; they are instead diverted to a restricted version. But anyone can watch without an account — or, like Kaley did, simply enter a random birth date.

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Media outlets reported JackLynn would be added to 82 documented cases of “choking challenge” deaths. But those numbers are wildly outdated; they come from an analysis the Center for Disease Control conducted on possible cases from 1995 to 2007, and national reporting has not been updated since.

Many risky challenges appeared to peak during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and choking game fatalities have since decreased, according to Rogg’s count. But their popularity tends to be cyclical, resurfacing suddenly and then subsiding again.

Earlier this month, videos of the popular Gen-Z influencer Clavicular getting choked out, losing consciousness and convulsing during a livestream went, in his words, “giga viral” — in turn spawning endless commentary and iterative videos, spreading across YouTube and TikTok.

### Hoax or Harm?

In a hearing before a U.S. Senate subcommittee in 2021, Michael Beckerman, then head of public policy at TikTok, told lawmakers that his company was not able to find “any evidence of a blackout challenge on TikTok at all.” Such content, he said, would violate the company’s guidelines, and would be removed if found by AI or human monitors. Transparency reports at the time showed more than 94% of violating content was removed proactively, he said.

Beckerman further suggested reports of such “alleged challenges” on TikTok were rumors, sensationalized by the media and politicians, but never actually appearing on the app.



YouTube similarly does not allow content that depicts behavior showing adults risking serious bodily harm or death, particularly if it encourages the behavior. Specifically, it prohibits “extremely dangerous challenges,” including acts that risk asphyxiation.

Searches conducted by The Epoch Times in April found numerous examples of choking, asphyxiation, and fainting videos on YouTube.

Searching with popular challenge names, altered slightly to get around the site’s bans, produced myriad videos of adolescents hyperventilating and passing out, with or without friends pressing on their carotid arteries, and choking one another until they lose consciousness.

TikTok searches produced similar results. Both platforms now have a number of warning videos that appear at the top of search results.

YouTube removed more than 8 million videos for violating its community guidelines from October to December 2025, the latest period for which it provides reporting. The vast majority, 64%, were pulled for child safety reasons.

### ‘Tip of the Iceberg’

Rogg has become a hub for grieving families, who are unsure about what they’ve experienced and are looking for answers. Her own story reflects this uncertainty.

Erik was a “happy, well-adjusted kid,” Rogg said. Active in Boy Scouts and little league, he was excited and engaged in his future. He hoped to go to West Point when he turned 18.

Deep down, Rogg knew Erik didn’t want to take his own life.

As she waited by his bedside, where he remained on life support after the incident, two detectives showed up to tell her: “This wasn’t suicide. This was a choking game.”

Eventually, classmates came forward and told her YouTube videos

of the game were circulating widely among his grade, and he and another boy had been seen practicing choking one another. Still, she has no evidence of where Erik learned it.

“The majority of choking game deaths are misclassified as suicide. Medical examiners, detectives are not adept at understanding the difference. They walk in, it looks like suicide, they check a box and leave,” she said.

“It leaves parents in a double whammy of, ‘What signs didn’t I see? How bad of a parent am I?’ They weren’t a bad parent. It’s just that no one was around to talk about it.” Parents who have lost children to suicide, overdoses, or accidental deaths they link to social media said there is a pervasive myth that these tragedies only afflict troubled kids or children of bad parents.

Researchers have attributed adolescent fascination with games promoting self-harm to a desire to overcome fear or seek out intense sensations, including the sense of power after surviving a potentially fatal challenge, or to escape reality in times of frustration or anxiety.

The human brain development continues through late adolescence into the mid-20s. The pre-frontal cortex — responsible for decision-making, impulse control, and executive function — is among the last regions to mature.

### Rise of Dangerous Challenges

In 2009, the journal *Clinical Pediatrics* reviewed YouTube videos of adolescents participating in “recreational partial asphyxiation,” including those resulting in hypoxic seizures. The platform, authors concluded, had enabled millions of young people to watch choking game videos and risked normalizing the behavior.

In a 2025 survey of U.S. teens

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aged 13 to 17, Pew Research Center found that 92% use YouTube and 68% use TikTok.

At the time, the 65 surveyed videos had around 200,000 views. In 2016, the same year YouTube met its goal of 1 billion daily watch hours, a study in *Global Pediatric Health* provided an update, surveying more than 400 choking game videos. It found that related content had increased by more than 400%, with videos viewed more than 22 million times.

The migration of such games to online spaces has arguably made them more dangerous, as kids doing them alone can be at higher risk of injury or death.

Children who have been innately groomed by YouTube to become YouTubers may be driven to create ever more spectacular content as they strive to maintain an audience, wrote the authors of a 2020 study published in the Spanish-language journal *Salud Colectiva*. The study examined self-inflicted harm from online challenges in Brazil, where researchers in 2017 had noted a similarly dramatic proliferation in the number and variety of choking game videos.

### Child Safety v. Free Speech

Parents hope litigation will compel tech companies to change how they operate and prioritize safety for young users.

The Kids Online Safety Act is proposed federal legislation that would impose a “duty of care” on platforms to mitigate harms to children, tame the impact of algorithmic recommendations and addictive features, and give parents added controls. It would also require annual third-party audits and public reporting.

Critics warn that such laws will open the door to state-sanctioned surveillance and censorship and end online anonymity and the free internet as we know it.

The Foundation for Individual

Rights and Expression argues that KOSA’s vague mandate to mitigate harm caused by “design features” would leave things open for future interpretation by the Federal Trade Commission; the courts; all state attorneys general; and the platforms.

These mandates, the organization argues, would “leave a regulatory hammer hanging over social media platforms,” leading to preemptive censorship, according to whichever way political winds are blowing.

Proponents of the legislation counter that “duty of care” would only apply to a fixed and clearly established set of harms — “medically-recognized mental health disorders,” addictive use, illicit drugs, federally defined child sexual exploitation, and suicide — and that FTC cannot add or change harms covered under the bill. Additionally, they say, KOSA will not make platforms liable for content they host or remove, or for providing content to young users when they search for it.

In 2025, the Supreme Court in a 6–3 decision upheld a Texas law requiring websites that have at least a third of their content composed of “sexual content harmful to minors” to collect age-verification information from all users.

The ruling, according to the Electronic Frontier Foundation, “ignores the many ways in which verifying age online is significantly more burdensome and invasive” than flashing an ID card at a store. Requiring all users to hand over a “data-rich” government ID will lead to a host of “serious anonymity, privacy, and security concerns.” Even if companies are not compelled to age-gate their platforms by law, they may be compelled by the threat of liability to implement mandatory ID checks or biometric scans.

The Supreme Court has consistently upheld online anonymity, as a constitutionally protected “shield

from the tyranny of the majority,” as Justice John Paul Stevens wrote in 1995. But that protection intersects with efforts to protect minors from obviously harmful content, predatory algorithms, and addictive features.


Both YouTube and TikTok have introduced age verification mechanisms, but neither platform currently requires all users to verify their age with identification or biometric assessment to open an account.

If an account is flagged as potentially belonging to an underage user, based on its activity, that user may be required to submit a government ID, or selfie video to prove their age or, in the case of TikTok, unlock features such as the app’s live stream.

The company has said it removes around 6 million suspected underage accounts monthly.

In 2025, YouTube introduced AI to interpret account activity to estimate user age. If the company believes a user is under 18, teen settings automatically kick in and users have the option of verifying their identity with a government ID or credit card.

While awareness campaigns for cyberbullying, suicide, fentanyl poisoning, and sextortion are common, the choking game is not as well-known.

Some states have opted for an online portal, instead of a live class, to teach internet safety. “We will not create a program that is taught by a computer on teaching internet safety. I truly believe it needs to be taught by a live person who can answer questions.” said Rogg. 

## EAGLE FORUM

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