Public Service Announcement

Impacts of youth social media use on mental wellness

Start Date: November 28, 2025
End Date: December 31, 2025
Nunavut-wide **150 secs**

The Government of Nunavut encourages families, educators and communities to monitor and minimize youth social media use. Social media platforms are designed to maximize engagement using techniques similar to gambling, such as intermittent rewards and infinite scrolling, which can lead to compulsive use among youth.

In Nunavut, where mental health challenges and suicide rates are among the highest in Canada, these risks are amplified by isolation and cultural disruption.

Key Concerns

- High usage rates: Nearly one in three Canadian teen girls spend five or more hours daily on social media, and 12% show signs of addiction. Boys report similar patterns, though at slightly lower rates.
- Mental health risks:
  - More than two hours per day of screen time significantly increases emotional and behavioral difficulties.
  - Passive scrolling is linked to the most harmful effects.
  - Increased social media use predicts higher depressive symptoms within a year.
  - Associated issues include anxiety, depression, disordered eating, self-harm, suicidality, sleep deprivation and attention challenges.
- Critical developmental windows: Girls aged 11-13 and boys aged 14-15 are most vulnerable.

In Nunavut, youth face unique pressures, including cultural loss and intergenerational trauma, which can compound the negative effects of social media. Suicide remains a crisis at a rate 5 to 25 times higher than the Canadian average. Community-based,

culturally grounded programs, such as land-based healing, Inuit qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles, and Elder mentorship are essential for resilience.

What To Do:

- Set healthy limits: Keep recreational screen time under two hours per day.
- Encourage active use: Promote creative or educational engagement rather than passive scrolling.
- Integrate culture: Support programs that connect youth to Inuit traditions, language and land-based activities.
- Monitor and discuss: Regularly check in with youth about their online experiences and mental well-being.
- Seek help early: Watch for signs of addiction or distress, such as withdrawal, mood changes or sleep problems, and connect with mental health resources promptly.

Where To Get Help:

- **Kamatsiaqtut Helpline:** 1-800-265-3333 (24/7, Inuktitut, English, French).
- **Kids Help Phone:** 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868.
- **Hope for Wellness Helpline:** 1-855-242-3310 (Inuktitut available).
- **Ilisaqsivik Health & Wellness Centre:** Inuit-led counselling and programs (ilisaqsivik.ca).
- **Embrace Life Council:** Suicide prevention and wellness programs (inuusiq.com).
- **Healing by Talking Program:** 1-888-648-0070 (free phone counselling).
- **Inuusivut Annirnaqtut Action Plan:** Community-led suicide prevention initiatives (Government of Nunavut).

###

Media Contact:

Charmaine Deogracias
Manager of Communications
Department of Health
867-975-5712
cdeogracias@gov.nu.ca

ᑭᒃᑯᑐᐃᓐᓇᕐᓄᑦ ᑐᓴᕋᑦᓴᐃᑦ ᐊᑐᐃᓐᓇᐃᑦ ᐃᓄᒃᑎᑐᑦ, ᖃᓪᓗᓈᑎᑐᑦ ᐃᓄᐃᓐᓇᖅᑐᓐ ᐅᐃᕕᑎᑐᓪᓗ ᐅᕙᓂ *www.gov.nu.ca.*
Public Service Announcements are available in Inuktitut, English, Inuinnaqtun and French on *www.gov.nu.ca.*
Kavamatkunnin Tuhaqtitaujukhat hailihimajun Inuktitut, Qablunaatun, Inuinnaqtun Uiuitullu uvani *www.gov.nu.ca.*
Les messages d'intérêt public sont disponibles en inuktitut, en anglais, en inuinnaqtun et en français au *www.gov.nu.ca.*