

Steve Sisolak
Governor



Richard Whitley
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State of Nevada Department of Health and Human Services

Connectiveness Matters, Impact from the Internet



Office of Suicide Prevention

Richard Egan, Mikayla Willden



Helping people. It's who we are and what we do.



History of Suicide Prevention Efforts in Nevada

- 2003, Suicide prevention legislation (SB49, SB36, SCR 3, 4, & 5) adopted in Nevada
- 2005, Nevada Office of Suicide Prevention established; State of Nevada granted \$1.2 Million
- 2008-2011, Three Garrett Lee Smith grant Awards come to Nevada
- 2009, State of Nevada awarded Garrett Lee Smith grant for \$1.5m, funding ended June 2013
- 2013, Fund for a Healthy Nevada funds office and two state positions added
- **2011, CDC Started promoting Connectedness, Suicide Kits being sold on the Internet**
- 2014, SAMHSA grants impacting mental health, safe and healthy learning environments, youth suicide prevention (Project Aware: school-based mental health and YMHFA)
- 2015, TMCC Campus Suicide Prevention grant award; AB-93, BH suicide prevention training
- **2015, Starts working with the FBI on extreme suicide activities which lead to internet investigations**
- **2015, Blue Whale Challenge**
- 2016, CRSF Report recommendations implementation plan; 10 year anniversary
- 2017, State plan updated and AB 105 passed Medical suicide prevention training
- 2018, Zero Suicide starts to be implemented, Medical and Behavioral Health overhaul
- **2019, Connectiveness Matters and AB114, school-based trainings**
- **2020, Netflix Social Dilemma Documentary released**
- **2021, Sanctionedsuicide.org**
- 2021, Project Aware Suicide prevention efforts 24 and under





Impact of the Media on Suicide

- The media can play a powerful role in educating the public about suicide prevention.
- Stories about suicide can inform readers and viewers about the likely causes of suicide, its warning signs, trends in suicide rates, and recent treatment advances.





Impact of the Media on Suicide

- They can also highlight opportunities to prevent suicide.
- Media stories about individual deaths by suicide can be newsworthy and need to be covered, but they also have a potential to do harm.
- Implementation of recommendations for media coverage of suicide has been shown to decrease suicide rates.





Impact of the Media on Suicide

- Certain ways of describing suicide in the news contribute to what behavioral scientists call “suicide contagion” or “copy-cat” suicides.
- Research shows that inadvertently romanticizing suicide or idealizing those who take their own lives by portraying suicide as a heroic or romantic act may encourage others to identify with the victim.





Impact of the Media on Suicide

- Exposure to suicide method through media reports can encourage vulnerable individuals to imitate it.
- Clinicians believe the danger is even greater if there is a detailed description of the method.
- Research indicates that detailed descriptions or pictures of the location or site of a suicide encourage imitation.





Impact of the Media on Suicide

- Presenting suicide as the inexplicable act of an otherwise healthy or high-achieving person may encourage identification with the victim.





Special situations

Murder-Suicides

In covering murder-suicides be aware the tragedy of the homicide can mask the suicidal aspect of the act. Feelings of depression and hopelessness present before the homicide and suicide are often the impetus for both.





Suicide Statistics

United States, 2020

- 45,979 suicide deaths
- Firearms used in over 52.83% of suicides (NV 61.69%)
- 3.87 male deaths to every female death (3.98 in Nevada)
- A suicide every 11.41 minutes

Nevada, 2020

- 13th highest rate, 603
- 2nd leading cause of death 8-17, 18-24, and 25-44 years of age, no longer the 1st leading cause of death for any sub age group
- Nevada's Elderly have 4th highest rate 65+
- More suicides than homicides (217), transportation deaths (380)

Source: AAS/CDC, USA Suicide: 2020 Official Final Data



Nevada Suicide Statistics 2018/2020

Nevada, 2018	2018 to 2019	2018 to 2020	2020 to 2021
○ 17 and under	○ 41.7% Decrease	○ 25% Decrease	○ 11.1% Increase
○ 18 to 24	○ 2.3% Decrease	○ 21% Increase	○ 17.3% Increase
○ 25 to 64	○ 4.2% Decrease	○ 13.4 Decrease	○ 1.7 Increase
○ 65 and above	○ 11% Increase	○ 8% Increase	○ 10.2% Increase

Clark/Washoe County 2018-2020 Data





Clark County Youth Suicide Review 2016-2018 Recommendations

1. Support efforts related to enforcing the legal consequences of unsafe storage of firearms, including the Reduce Access to Lethal Means Public Awareness campaign.
2. Increase research and dissemination of research findings related to the impact of electronic device addiction in adolescents and the relationship to youth suicide.
3. Improve public awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their impact.
4. Develop a Social Media Campaigns aimed at either parents or youth:
5. Provide resources to youth serving organizations about harm.





Stressors Identified for youth 2016/2018

- Family discord or an argument with parents or guardians
- School problems, especially those that result in expulsions/suspensions
- Access to personal phones/electronics being revoked
- Stressful life events such as the loss of a loved one
- Fights and breakups with a significant other
- A general sense of lack of support from those close to the decedent
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Chronic mental health issues
- Rape/sexual abuse
- Emotional neglect/abuse
- Problems with the law
- Difficulties experienced because of sexual orientation or gender identity
- Social isolation
- Access to lethal means (firearms)





CRITICAL SUICIDE FACTS

■ Suicide is an “equal opportunity” disorder across socioeconomic board

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs 3D



Your Logo





RECOGNIZING RISK FACTORS

Risk factors are identified as stressful life events, situations, and/or conditions which may increase the likelihood one will attempt or suicide





RECOGNIZING SIGNS

Warning signs are changes in a person's behavior, feelings, and beliefs about oneself for a period of two weeks or longer that are considered to be **maladaptive** or out-of-character for the individual

Source: American Association of Suicidology 2006

Get the facts and take action.





Connectedness

In 2011, the CDC started promoting connectedness as strategic direction for preventing suicidal behavior. As a society do we need to improve our connectedness with human contact as the CDC report suggest we do?

Quoted from the CDC “Overall, studies show that connectedness is an important protective factor for suicide. Research tells us, however, that youths’ connectedness to negative peer groups may increase their risk for suicidal behavior.”

- Connectedness between individuals
- Connectedness of individuals and their families to community organizations
- Connectedness among community organizations and social institutions

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/asap_suicide_issue3-a.pdf

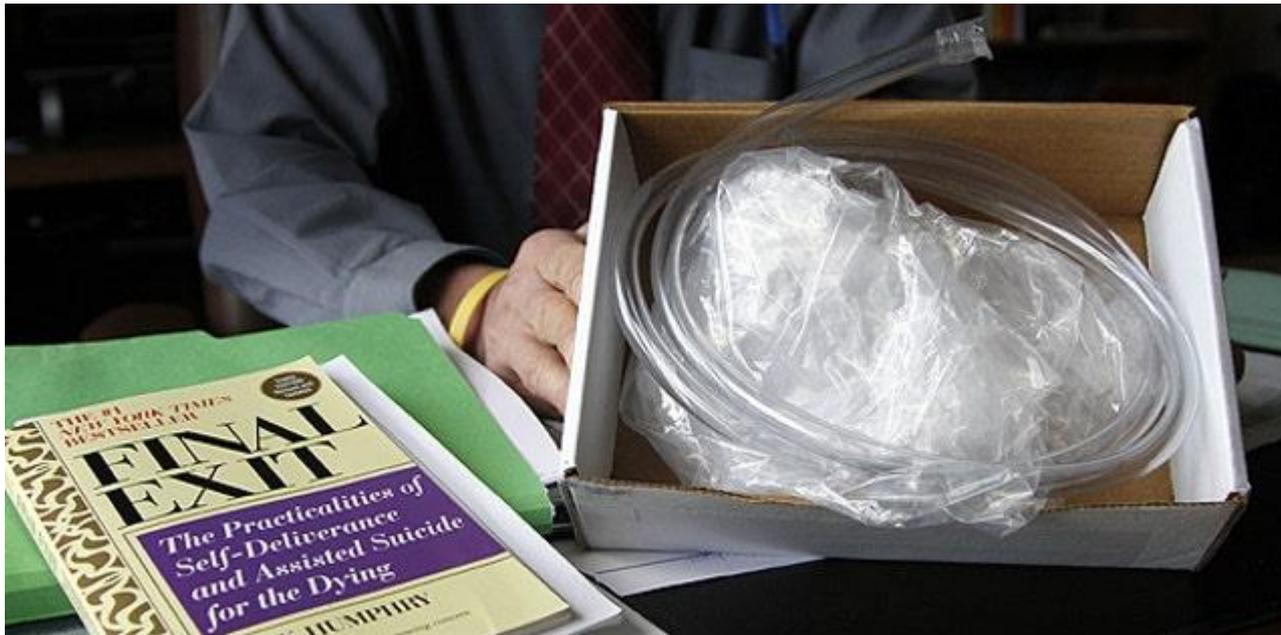


Suicide Kits

About a decade ago we learned of Suicide Kits being sold on the internet. These kits were originally being sold out of Oregon and then from San Diego California.

You might never had heard of the suicide kit. Oregon State Sen. Floyd Prozanski hadn't either, until he read a news story of a suicide death using one of these kits. The legislator put forth a bill to make it a Class C Felony to sell a suicide kit in Oregon.

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/oregon-house-votes-to-outlaw-suicide-kits>



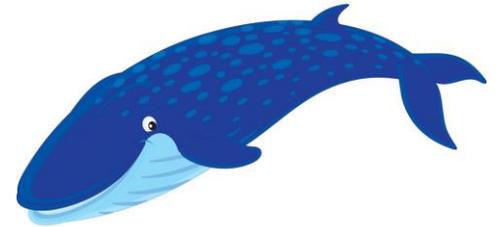
Blue Whale Challenge

A Russian teenager shared a selfie with the caption "nya bye" before ending his life; his suicide was discussed on groups and internet pages. Additional suicides were talked about. The origin of the name "Blue Whale Challenge" is unknown. The challenge was to show up on different social media platforms.

What is it? Over the next fifty days the challenge provides the person one task per day; the tasks seem to begin with stand on a bridge, get up at 2 am and watch a scary movie. The Challenge would move to other tasks like drawing pictures to, self-harm (cutting), ultimately guiding the participant ending their life on the fiftieth challenge.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-46505722>

In Nevada while some suggested "Blue Whale" was originally a possible hoax, NOSP believed it was likely the challenge was leading to instances of imitative self-harming and copycat groups, leaving youth and young adults at risk. In late 2017, reports of Blue Whale challenge impact was reducing, however, communities, police departments, safety organizations, and schools reacted by sharing general information to parents/educators on suicide prevention, mental health awareness, to include online safety.





Connectiveness Matter Program

NOSP started Connectiveness Matters Program which was started with Las Vegas metro Police Department Holiday theme and grew to addressing balance between human contact with on-line presence. More has emerged from the social media aspect of mental health.

2020 the Netflix documentary “Social Dilemma” was released. which provides a in depth view of the social media's goal of achieving an addiction. It claims social media manipulates people’s behaviors on an emotional level. It spreads conspiracy theories along with disinformation in order gain profits. The film also explores the social media's effects on mental health. Addressing the mental health of our children, youth, and young adults. The film formulates a correlation between rising isolation and suicide rates over the past decade. The film is narrated by executives and other professionals from social media companies such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter. These professionals have gained their insight into this perspective from their work and discuss how such platforms are the cause of problematic social problems, political, and cultural outcomes.

<https://www.netflix.com/title/81254224>





Suicide Chat Groups on the WEB

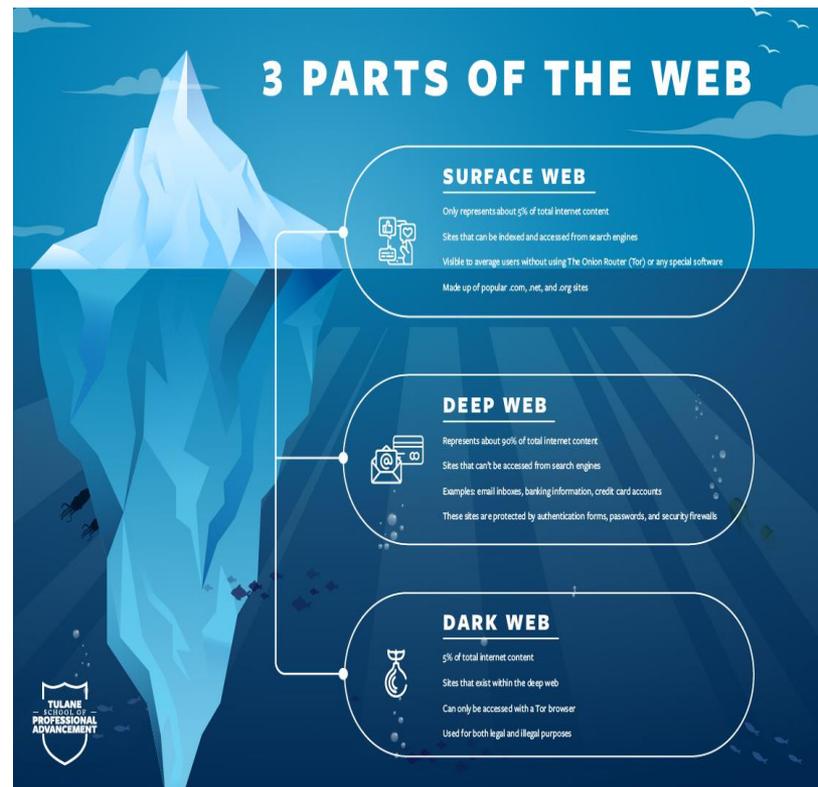
A recent New York Times Article exposed a web site called SanctionedSuicide.org “Where the Despairing Log On, and Learn Ways to Die”.

As I read the article, learned about this site and how suicide is encouraged and promoted. It is a form of contagion or encouraging suicide for anyone at risk. Is this site a contagion factor for suicide which needs to be addressed?

When the news report came out the site was open to public in general, now you must register for the site to read the chats. Even for countries who have managed to block its use the site provides ways around the firewalls in the registration process.

I checked last week, and the site is back open to the public with a log-in option.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/12/09/us/where-the-despairing-log-on.html>





Methods of Suicide are on the WEB

Methods of suicides are available via the WEB and are being identified by people at risk.

Sodium-Nitrate, Ordered over the internet or as a suicide kit

Tylenol, Over the Counter, acetaminophen overdose

Charcoal, Not common in US but Japan you have to be 18+ purchase

How to Write a Suicide Note, little support in the search



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Internet's Impact on Suicide, Understanding the Isolation Factor



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Understanding the Isolation Factor

Recognizing how technology advancement impacts social connections, behaviors and relationships amongst youth and their peers.





Connectiveness Matters

Being or feeling socially, emotionally, spiritually, or professionally linked with others or with another is human nature. We all want to feel like we belong.

- 65 % of younger populations reported always feeling lonely.
- 19% of younger populations reported having no close friends.
- 87% of younger populations (10-24) say it is difficult to make new friends because they are shy.

(YouGov, 2019)

Technology continues to advance along with social platforms that seemingly connect us. However, in-person communication is fading along with the ability to connect and have meaningful conversations.





The Social Dilemma

The Social Dilemma is a 2020 American documentary which examines how social media's design nurtures an addiction, manipulates people's views, emotions, and behavior, and spreads conspiracy theories and disinformation, to maximize profit- specifically within the teen population.

Key Takeaways:

- **“If you are not paying for the product, then you are the product.”**

Social media platforms are mostly free, but they must make money somehow. By using these platforms, you agree to allowing them to sell your data and personal info to companies for advertising demographics.

- **“Over time, you have a false sense that everyone agrees with you, because everyone in your news feed sounds just like you. And once you are in that state, you’re easily manipulated.” — Roger McNAMEE**

False information in the form of truth or without any disclaimer is common. As demonstrated in the film, each user has their own feed and is presented with their own “news” and set of “facts”.





Facebook Whistleblower

Former Facebook data scientist Frances Haugen spoke to the Senate on Consumer Protection, Product Safety and Data Security in October of 2021.

Key Takeaways:

- Haugen worked at Facebook for nearly two years after stints at Google, Yelp and Pinterest. At Facebook, she studied how the social network's algorithm amplified misinformation and was exploited by foreign adversaries.
- Research shows Facebook coveted young users, despite health concerns. Haugen leaked one Facebook study that found that 13.5% of U.K. teen girls in one survey say their suicidal thoughts became more frequent after starting on Instagram. Another leaked study found 17% of teen girls say their eating disorders got worse after using Instagram.
- Facebook was found pushing products on preteens and teens that are knowingly harmful to kids' mental health and wellbeing- and they are aware of this data.
- Haugen suggested the minimum age for any person using social media change to 17 years old from 13 years old.





Influencing Suicide Behaviors via Internet



Contagion: rapid communication of an influence. Going 'viral' is embedded in young people's minds to prove their worth to the internet and they regularly engage in popular and sometimes deadly challenges while filming themselves or friends to post online.

- Blue Whale Challenge (previously discussed)
- Fire Challenge: putting flammable substances on one's body and purposely burning.
- Eraser Challenge: rubbing an eraser on skin to create heat which burns the skin.
- Banana Sprite Challenge: eating 6 bananas in a row and drinking 1 liter of sprite- which can be a deadly combination due to a chemical reaction; bananas and sprite do not digest well together.
- Car Surfing Challenge: person stands on the car as it is moving and tries to balance around tight corners. This has resulted in death and serious injuries.
- Tide Pod Challenge: teenagers dare each other to eat Tide Pods (laundry detergent).

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Internet's Impact on Suicide, Resources for Families



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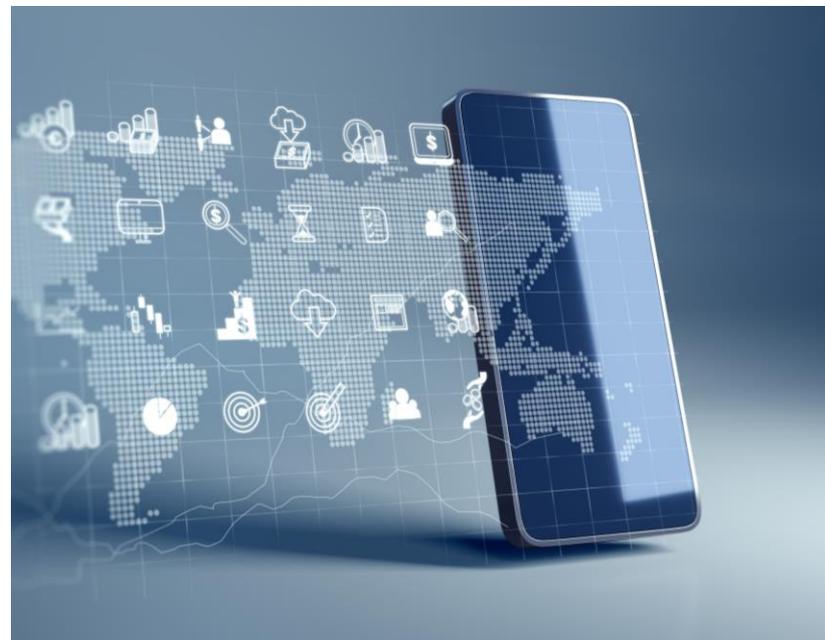


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Responding to Suicide Behavior When Internet is Factor

- There are an estimated 400 million posts made on Instagram and Facebook each day. Because of this, it can be difficult to filter out the harmful posts that are accessible, especially to children.
- Social media has sadly been used to talk to people about how-to find lethal means to attempt suicide via online chat rooms and websites such as Reddit. Reddit is a social news platform with a mixture of discussion threads and link distributors. Many of these thread social platforms are vastly unregulated for content. It can be difficult to remove harmful posts from these platforms.
- Many people feel like it is not their responsibility to change the mind of someone who posts about taking their life on social media. Some people also do not take it seriously and say the person is “looking for attention.” If someone, no matter their age, is posting about hurting themselves, they are looking for attention: ***they want someone to care!***





Minnesota Mom gave Son \$18K to staying off Social Media for 6 years

- Sivert Klefsaas was just 12 years old, when his mom Lorna made him a promise. If he could stay off social media until he was 18, she would pay him \$1,800.
- Lorna came up with the idea for her “18 for 18 challenge” after hearing a story on the radio about another mom who started a “16 for 16 challenge” for her child.
- She was eager to protect her son from the potential perils of social media, after witnessing how it impacted her three daughters, all of whom are several years older than Sivert.





Bullying, Social Media, and Suicide

- 6.2 million teenagers reported getting bullied online in 2017.
- While there is not one cause for suicide, bullying can lead to low self-esteem, loneliness, and depression. These factors can drive a teen to think about suicide to escape the pain.
- Bullying and harassment in all forms is unacceptable. Many teenagers think nothing can be done to stop this behavior, but they are wrong. Encourage teens and young adults to report harassment and bullying on social media and in person.
- Safe Voice is a Nevada program that works with our schools, law enforcement and other agencies to ensure a healthy, safe community, especially in our schools. Anonymous tips can be made online or through the app to report threats to others or to oneself. This is a great resource for online bullying as they will open an investigation to determine how to handle the bullying and harassment. More information can be found at [Safe Voice Nevada \(safevoicenv.org\)](https://www.safevoicenv.org)





Mental Health Spectrum

February 2022, Volume 2, Issue 1

ADDRESSING SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES IN NEVADA: NOSP'S RESPONSE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By Richard Egan, Nevada Office of Suicide Prevention (NOSP)

Based on reports from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other studies about the negative impact of social media on mental health, NOSP started Connectiveness Matters Program in 2019. It addresses balancing human contact with on-line presence. NOSP is increasing education and training, and using awareness messages, in order to address the role of social media on mental health and suicidal ideation. The CDC report highlights Connectedness as a key protective factor in improving mental health and preventing suicide.¹ NOSP's goal is to reduce suicides through collaborative initiatives which promote healthy living. Remember social media can have positive aspects also: being able to stay connected with family/friends, collaborating with others who have similar interests, finding support groups, being able to share other passions, and exploring/expressing oneself creatively. When you have the unbalanced effect, it can interfere with sleep, family, school, work, and activities. We need a well-balanced mental state. Some recommendations to achieve this include:

- **Stay connected:** have strong, positive relationships with others (family, friends, community), and frequent social contact for balance. This helps prevent social isolation, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts. In youth, connectedness fosters feelings of belonging, sense of identity and personal worth, and offers support systems.¹
- **Create family rules and guidelines:** place computer/device in a shared space to ease monitoring (especially for younger children); limit time online (enforce breaks), set online behavior expectations (e.g., respect others online, verify facts before sharing, unfollow/report harmful posts/sites), balance in-person interaction (e.g., encourage other activities outside of social media).²
- **Put children first in digital policies:** Policies need to ensure that platform providers are also liable to help ensure safe and secure digital environments, and support law enforcement. A recent testimony in Congress highlighted the lack of safeguards in Facebook and other social media platforms, which are not only contributing to negative effects on users' mental health (particularly children and youth), but also influencing cultural and socio-political conflict.³

We all need to work together to ensure a safe and healthy environment (real and digital) for our children and youth.

For more information about NOSP go to <http://suicideprevention.nv.gov>

1. CDC. "Preventing Suicide through Connectedness." From https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/asap_suicide_issue3-a.pdf
2. Settles, Doris. *Understanding i-Kids*. 2011. Pelican Publishing Company: Gretna.
3. "Facebook whistleblower tells Congress social network is 'accountable to no one'." Oct 5, 2021. From <https://www.nbcnews.com>





Internet Resources for Social Media

- Students, parents and faculty throughout Nevada now have access to **SafeVoice**, an anonymous reporting system used to report threats to the safety [Safe Voice Nevada \(safevoicenv.org\)](https://safevoicenv.org)
- We encourage you to talk regularly with your teens about their digital lives and how they can be responsible and safe in all online activities. [TikTok Guide for Parents](#)
- We know that as a parent it may be hard to understand the changing digital landscape and what your kids are doing online. [Instagram Guide for Parents](#)
- YouTube Kids built to be a fun, family-friendly place for kids/families. The YouTube Kids app has popular children's videos and diverse new content, delivered in a way that's easy to use for children. [YouTube Kids Parental Guide \(google.com\)](#)
- Technology has changed ways in which people connect, but for families the basics of talking with children about safety remain the same. Here are tips you might find useful as you figure out how to speak with your youth about online safety. [Facebook Parent Guide](#)
- Social Media has become a ubiquitous form of interaction for a majority of age groups and cultures throughout the world. Interacting with some form of social media is not a question of “IF” but rather “WHEN”? This guide will seek to provide parents with helpful information to effectively evaluate six of the most popular/emerging social media services. [Parents Guide to Social Media](#)



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Office of Suicide Prevention Training Opportunities

- **Resource Introduction (15 – 30 minutes)**
- **Suicide Prevention Trainings:**
 - **Nevada Suicide Prevention 101 for Specialized Training Environments**
 - **Nevada Suicide Prevention 101 Train the Trainer for FSAs (4 hours)**
 - **suicideTALK, (Suicide Awareness) 1.5 hours**
 - **Signs of Suicide Middle and High School programs and screenings**
 - **safeTALK: (Suicide Alertness) 4 hours**
 - **Youth Mental Health First Aid 8 Hours**
 - **Adult Mental Health First Aid 8 Hours**
 - **ASIST: (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) Two-day workshop**





Questions?