

Landmark 2026 Social Media Cases

In 2026, major social media companies Meta, Google, TikTok, and Snap face coordinated legal action from thousands of plaintiffs – families, school districts, local governments, and state attorneys general – alleging that executives knowingly designed addictive products that harm young users' mental health. These cases, considered the most significant social media accountability litigation to date, draw parallels to landmark product liability cases against Big Tobacco and the automotive industry.

What Big Tech knew, when

Evidence indicates executives – including Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Snap CEO Evan Spiegel, and Instagram's Adam Mosseri – knew their platforms contributed to:

- Compulsive use
- Sleep disruption
- Negative social comparison
- Body dysmorphia
- Anxiety and depression
- Eating disorders
- Self-harm and suicidal thoughts
- Child exploitative images (CSAM)

Who will testify (as of 1/27/26)

- Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg
- Instagram CEO Adam Mosseri

Key plaintiff arguments

Defective Product Design: Social media platforms are defective products that cause psychological harm to minors; design features like infinite scroll, autoplay, and algorithmically-curated content were engineered to maximize engagement at the expense of user wellbeing; companies failed to implement adequate safety features despite having the technical capability to do so.

Executive Knowledge and Inaction: Internal documents and depositions reveal that executives were repeatedly warned about harms to young users. Despite clear evidence of danger, companies prioritized and targeted growth and engagement metrics over user safety, misleading the public, parents, lawmakers, and Congress about the risks and impacts.

Accountability: Tech companies must be held liable for design choices that profoundly impact youth mental health; platforms should face consequences similar to other industries that knowingly sold harmful products. The goal is to force meaningful design changes and establish industry-wide safety standards.

Case details

	California State Case (JCCP 5255)	Federal Case (MDL 3047)
Case name	Judicial Council Coordination Proceeding No. 5255 Social Media Cases	Personal Injury Products Liability Litigation No. 3047 In re: Social Media Adolescent Addiction
Case abbrev./Docket No.	JCCP 5255	MDL 3047
Court/location	Los Angeles Superior Court	U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California
Judge	Judge Carolyn Kuhl	Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers
Key dates	January 27, 2026 - first personal injury bellwether trial begins (KGM)	May 2026 – first school district bellwether trials begins (Breathitt County School District, KY)
Plaintiffs	1,600+ total plaintiffs including 350+ families and 250+ school districts	235+ total plaintiffs including local & state govs/AGs, school districts, families
Defendants	Meta (Facebook & Instagram); Snapchat; TikTok; Alphabet (YouTube & Google)	Meta (Facebook, Instagram & WhatsApp); Snapchat; TikTok; Alphabet (YouTube & Google)
Key witnesses	Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg; Snap CEO Evan Spiegel; Instagram's Adam Mosseri	TBD
Docket access instructions	<p>1. Go to https://www.lacourt.ca.gov/home 2. Click "Access a Case" 3. Click "Find Case Information" 4. Click "Civil Case Access" 5. Enter "22STCV21355" in the "Case Number" field and click "Search"</p> <p>To download documents:</p> <p>1. Go to https://www.lacourt.ca.gov/home 2. Click "Access a Case" 3. Click "Access Court Documents" 4. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click the green "Continue" button 5. This will prompt you to create an account; then enter "22STCV21355" in the "Case Number" field and it will pull up all of the available documents that you are able to purchase</p>	<p>1. Go directly to the URL https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/65407433/in-re-social-media-adolescent-addictionpersonal-injury-products-liability/?order_by=desc&</p> <p>Alternatively:</p> <p>1. Go to courtlistener.com 2. Click on the "RECAP Archive" dropdown menu and click "Search Pacer Data" 3. Enter "4:22-md-03047" in the "Docket Number" field and click "Search"</p>

Historical context & precedents

Grimshaw v. Ford Motor Co. – “Pinto case” - In 1981 a California appeals court ordered Ford to pay \$125 million in punitive damages after evidence showed the company knew the Pinto's fuel tank could explode in rear-end collisions but failed to issue recalls for an estimated \$11-per-vehicle repair. The massive punitive award signaled that companies would face severe consequences for prioritizing profit over safety when they knew about dangerous defects.

Big Tobacco - During the 1990s state attorneys general and private plaintiffs sued tobacco companies for deceiving the public about smoking's health risks. Internal documents revealed executives knew cigarettes were addictive and deadly, especially for young people, but publicly denied it for decades.

Opioids - Over the past 15 years states, counties, and families have sued pharmaceutical companies including Purdue Pharma for aggressively marketing opioids while downplaying addiction risks, fueling a nationwide epidemic.

Resources

Legal resources:

- Courtlistener.com
- SMVLC Law blog
- Evidence microsite

Advocacy groups:

- The Tech Oversight Project
- ParentsTogether Action
- The HEAT Initiative
- Design It For Us
- ParentsRISE!