



MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties
From: Coalition to Empower our Future
Re: Three-in-four TX Parents Support Comprehensive Youth Mental Health Solutions Over Narrow Ones and Believe Heavily Restricting Technology Will Have Unintended Consequences
Date: June 2026

Overview

The Coalition to Empower our Future partnered with Mercury Analytics to conduct an online survey among 600 parents in Texas, as well as live conversations with parents across Texas. This research took place between April 2 and April 10, 2026.

This research finds that when it comes to solving the youth mental health challenge, parents in Texas strongly support comprehensive solutions and believe that narrow, ban-based solutions will cause negative unintended consequences. They want digital literacy solutions that equip young people to use technology responsibly and succeed in a highly digital world.

Key Research Insights

Three-in-four parents in Texas support comprehensive solutions to youth mental health over narrow ones. Texas parents believe that a varied range of factors drive today's youth mental health challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, peer and academic pressure, and exposure to violence. They want many parties to be involved in implementing comprehensive solutions, including parents and faith-based groups.

Q: Thinking about solutions to youth mental health and wellbeing, which of the following do you think is the best approach, even if neither is perfect?



QUOTES FROM TX PARENTS ON THE FACTORS DRIVING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AND WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS:

*“COVID did a number on kids. Just the lack of social interaction... And, you see a lot of **bullying and cyberbullying**. There’s a lot of judgmental people out there, and that really takes a toll on someone’s mental health.”*

*“It takes a village – faith-based groups, schools, and parents all need to work together. **A one-size-fits-all approach from schools just isn’t the right solution.**”*

*“It’s kind of like **whack-a-mole**. You do one thing and people figure out a workaround [for] it. You’re not going to do one thing once and be able to fix the problems.”*

Three-in-four Texas parents agree that a narrow, ban-based approach to youth mental health can have unintended negative consequences. Parents in Texas say bans and sweeping restrictions will be counterproductive and that young people will always find a way to use technology, with or without their parents’ supervision. Some also say they could inadvertently cut off young people who benefit from access to technology, such as those with disabilities.

Q: Please indicate if you **agree or disagree** with the following statement:

*“A narrow approach to youth mental health and wellbeing that **bans or heavily restricts youth access to phones and technology** will cause negative unintended consequences for young people.”*



QUOTES FROM TX PARENTS ON THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF A NARROW, BAN-BASED APPROACH:

*“I’ve got family in [the] middle of nowhere. When they’re online, they’re able to communicate... And I’ve got friends that I’ve known for two decades that I met online. **I could definitely see bans impacting people wo don’t have another way to reach out.**”*

*“Having a daughter on the spectrum, **the technology is what helps bring her out of her shell sometimes.** It helps her express and be creative.”*

*“If you start making something taboo, **kids are going to be more drawn to it.**”*

More than four-in-five Texas parents say that young people need to be taught how to use technology safely, and nine-in-10 agree that parents themselves need to be taught to do so as well. Specifically, they say artificial intelligence (AI) is a significant part of this conversation. Parents feel responsibility in teaching their kids how to navigate AI and other technology, and they don't feel young people are properly educated to do so.

Q: Do you **agree or disagree** that **young people** should be taught how to use AI safely?



Q: Do you **agree or disagree** that **parents** should be taught how to use AI safely?



QUOTES FROM TX PARENTS ON WHY DIGITAL LITERACY IS IMPORTANT:

*"I think **kids are technologically savvy, but not digitally literate.** A lot of them are unable to use higher-order thinking skills to understand what they are watching or experiencing."*

*"A lot of children, unless you're able to have prior talks on 'navigating technology safely', use it in ways they don't need to be using it. **I don't think they just have the knowledge to use [technology] the right way,** and I don't think they learn it from their friends or in school."*

Parents in Texas overwhelmingly support implementing digital literacy solutions for young people, parents and educators. They say effective solutions equip young people, parents and educators to harness technology for good – for example, media literacy training programs for teachers; digital wellness guides for parents and families; and social media literacy curriculums for students. They believe these solutions establish smart, clear guardrails for young people and actionable guidance for parents and educators.

Q: Below is a list of resources and tools some people have said can help support youth mental health. Please indicate how **effective or ineffective** each would be.

(Showing % EFFECTIVE)

Training programs for teachers on digital and media literacy to help them teach students how to evaluate online information	91
Parent/family digital wellness guides , resources that give parents research-based strategies and conversation tools to help manage their children's technology use	89
Social media literacy curriculum for students to help them understand how social platforms shape attention, behavior, and online experiences	89
Online safety lessons for students , covering topics like cyberbullying, privacy and responsible online behavior	88
Student-led digital wellbeing groups , organized to promote healthier online behaviors and support mental and social well-being	87
News and information literacy resources for the age of AI to help students evaluate whether online information is credible, especially when AI is involved	86
AI and online literacy lessons for students to teach them how algorithms, AI and online platforms work	85
Lessons on app engagement and design to teach students how platforms are built to influence behavior and hold attention	84