Social Media Harm Reduction®

The Social Media Harm Reduction approach aims to equip adults and youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify, prevent, and respond to harmful online behaviors and situations.

The following is an overview of Social Media Harm Reduction:

I. Social Media Harm Reduction

Social Media Harm Reduction is an answer to the public health challenge of social media, and its potential and realized harm to users. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA), harm reduction approaches have been proven to prevent death, injury, disease, overdose, and substance misuse. Social media is the next frontier.

Social Media Harm Reduction strategies and programs offer students, teachers, parents, and the community solutions to the problems driven by social media use that have only worsened in recent years, like increases in anxiety, depression, suicidality, eating

disorders, and a decrease in productivity amongst its users.

Social Media Harm Reduction seeks to uphold the following core principles:

- Acknowledge there are benefits and consequences to social media use.
- Focus on reducing the immediate harm of social media use, rather than a use-free society.
- Focus on the harm of social media, and not just the technology itself.
- Give people choices and options that give them access to resources and support.
- Understand – small changes add up over time.

II. Understanding Social Media Use and its Impact on Youth

- A. Overview of the prevalence and impact of social media use on youth mental health and well-being.
- B. Identification of common negative consequences of social media use, such as cyberbullying, addiction, and misinformation.
- C. The Whole-Self and how it helps understand the impact of social media use.

III. Identifying and Preventing Harmful Online Behaviors

- A. Introduction to tools and strategies for identifying harmful online behaviors, including monitoring social media accounts and conversations.
- B. Discussion of effective prevention strategies, such as educating students about online safety and etiquette, promoting positive social media use, and developing school-wide policies and protocols for addressing harmful online behaviors.
- C. Bertrand-Wicks scale(s) for identifying the impact of social media use.

IV. Responding to Harmful Online Behaviors and Situations

- A. How to respond appropriately and effectively to harmful online behaviors and situations, such as cyberbullying and online harassment.
- B. Overview of legal and ethical considerations related to social media use and harm reduction efforts.
- C. Discussion of available resources for addressing harmful online behaviors and supporting students who have experienced harm.
- D. **Social Media First Aid®** and how it can be used on campus to address the impact of social media use

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through a "Train-the-Trainer" model.

E. **Unplug**, a mentorship program for pre-teens and teens that incorporates **Social Media First Aid®** to help integrate pre-teens and teens into their communities and develop a better balance with social media in their activities.

v. Implementation of a Harm Reduction Program in the Classroom

A. Practical tips and suggestions for implementing harm reduction strategies and policies in the classroom.

B. Social media games and activities designed to increase engagement and retention.

C. Discussion of how to effectively communicate with students and parents about the importance of Social Media Harm Reduction efforts and the school's role in promoting online safety and well-being.

D. Call to action for teachers to prioritize harm reduction efforts and support their students in navigating social media use safely and healthily.

Existing Programs

1. **Social Media First Aid®** online courses for teens and parents

2. **Social Media First Aid®** workshops (California)

3. **Unplug** mentorship program (Tennessee)

4. **Social Media First Aid®** train the trainer programming (Nationwide)

5. **Social Media First Aid®** ambassador program (California)

6. **Social Media Harm Reduction®** presentations (Nationwide)

Future Developments:

The Social Media Research Institute is committed to helping social media users find the support and resources needed to live healthy lives. Funding is needed to continue the work – but also to expand into the areas mentioned above of development:

1. **Social Media Hotline** Access point for support and resources for social media-induced challenges.

2. **Social Media Case Management** Linkage to psychoeducation and/or supportive services (i.e. psychotherapy).

3. **Online course - Social Media First Aid®** Expansion of self-paced course for caregivers, educators, and professionals.

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