

# Media Toolkit for Partners

## Amplifying Your Efforts to Reduce Screen Time Harms in Early Childhood



This toolkit is designed to help our partners share their stories, reach new audiences, and inspire action to reduce the harms of screen time for young children. Below, you'll find practical guidance, story ideas, pitch templates, and tips for engaging with the media.

### Why Media Matters

When you share your message through news stories, blogs, or podcasts, you can reach far more people than you could on your organization's owned channels. Media coverage helps families, community leaders, and decision-makers understand why reducing screen time for young children is so important—and it can inspire them to take action.

Media coverage can:

- Raise awareness about the risks of excessive screen time for young children
- Share your organization's solutions and success stories
- Influence parents, educators, doctors, and policymakers to take action

### Whom to Reach (Key Audiences)

When communicating broadly, it's smart to focus on the people who can make the biggest difference in changing narratives and taking action. Parents and primary caregivers undoubtedly have the greatest impact on how much screen time their young children receive. Through polling research, Fairplay found that parents and other primary caregivers were most likely to take advice on screen time for their young children from three groups: doctors, educators, and elders. On a bigger scale, policymakers can take regulatory action to change how technology is able to advance and progress.

These are the folks who have the greatest impact on kids' daily lives and routines, and therefore are the groups that make sense to target:

- Parents of young children
- Pediatricians, family doctors, obstetricians, and other doctors
- Educators
- Grandparents and other elders
- Policymakers

### Where to Reach Them

Meet your audiences where they already are. Parents, teachers, and other key groups get their information in different places—some scroll social media, some read magazines, others tune in

to podcasts or the evening news. Sharing your message in the right spot makes it much more likely to be seen and heard. If you need specific ideas for outlets for each of these categories, please reach out, and we are happy to help.

- **Parents:** Social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube), blogs, podcasts, parenting magazines, traditional media (newspapers, radio, television)
- **Doctors:** Medical newsletters, traditional media, social media, podcasts, professional magazines
- **Educators:** Education blogs, social media, podcasts, teaching magazines
- **Elders:** Local newspapers and broadcast news, radio, magazines
- **Policymakers and their staff:** National news outlets, cable news, political newsletters, policy podcasts, Twitter/X

## What Makes a Good Story?

A great story grabs attention and sticks with people. Journalists and their audiences love stories that feel timely, personal, and real. If you can share a story with a human face, some surprising facts, or a hopeful solution, you'll have a much better chance of getting your message out.

Journalists love stories that are:

- Timely (connected to current events or trends)
- Personal (real families, real children, real stories)
- Data-driven (new research or surprising statistics)
- Solutions-focused (what's working, not just what's wrong)

## Story Ideas & Media Angles

When you want the media to cover your work, you need to offer them an idea of how to talk about your issue that is interesting, timely, and relevant to their audience. Think of a story angle as the “hook” that makes a journalist, blogger, or other messenger want to tell your story. It can be helpful to think about what your ideal headline would be if the reporter wrote a story.

Instead of pitching a story to a journalist, you can also write an opinion piece (or “op-ed”) and submit it to the news outlet's opinion editor.

Below are a few examples of potential angles, headlines, targets, and op-ed themes. These are the narratives to think about when pitching. We also include a few suggested messages that should be used when having conversations with reporters. More messages can be found in Fairplay's [Messaging Guide](#) for partners.

### Back-to-School Reset

**Angle:** How families can reset screen time habits as kids return to school

**Target headline:** “Back-to-School Reset: How Families Are Rewriting Their Tech Routines for a Healthier Year”

**Op-ed:** “Screens in the Classroom Are Harming Our Youngest Learners—Here’s What Parents Can Do”

**When to pitch:** August

**Who to pitch:** Parenting outlets, education outlets, parenting blogs, morning television (like TODAY)

**Key messages:**

- It has never been harder to be a parent, and many are increasingly turning to screens for help to occupy, entertain, and educate their children.
- Global health experts agree that too much screen time can be harmful for children and babies, and many children get more than the recommended amount of screen time.
- Parents can’t tackle this issue alone—Big Tech designs its products to manipulate young children into spending more time on screens, making it more challenging for kids to disengage and for parents to limit screen time.
  - Content for young children is often created not with their development in mind, but with the goal of maximizing engagement and generating profit for Big Tech.
  - These manipulative design tactics create an unfair fight for parents who are trying to do what is best for their children.
- While manipulative design has made individual behavior change challenging, when parents recognize the need for new screen time habits for their families, it’s best to attempt these habit shifts when routines are shifting anyway, like at the end of the summer and when kids are going back to daycare or school.
- Until lawmakers institute policies that reduce manipulative design and make managing childhood screen use easier, these individual tips can help parents manage screen time and reduce potential harmful effects.

## AI and Toddlers

**Angle:** How new technologies (like AI and autoplay videos) are changing childhood for the youngest kids

**Target headline:** “From Autoplay to AI Storybooks: What Parents Need to Know About Tech’s Youngest Users”

**Op-ed:** “We Talk About AI and Teens. It’s Time to Talk About AI and Toddlers”

**When to pitch:** Ongoing, especially when AI platforms update offerings

**Who to pitch:** Tech reporters, parenting magazines, podcasts

**Key messages:**

- Global health experts agree that too much screen time can be harmful for children and babies, and many children get more than the recommended amount of screen time.
- Big Tech designs its products to manipulate young children into spending more time on screens, making it more challenging for kids to disengage and for parents to limit screen time.

- Content for young children is often created not with their development in mind, but with the goal of maximizing engagement and generating profit for Big Tech.
- Even our youngest children are targeted by these tactics.
- Addressing early childhood screen overuse requires the same urgency, resources, and policy attention as social media harms in older children and teens.
  - Harms caused by social media among children and teens is an issue that many policymakers have rightfully dedicated time and resources.
  - Screen time in early childhood can have similar impacts on young kids and can even exacerbate harms caused by social media when kids grow older.
- Parents alone cannot counteract these powerful systemic forces—regulation and industry accountability are needed.

## New Data or Research

**Angle:** Share new findings about screen time’s impact on learning, sleep, or mental health

**Target headline:** “New Survey Reveals Parents Are More Concerned Than Ever About Screen Time—Here’s Why”

**Op-ed:** “We’re Finally Seeing the Numbers—and Screens Are Hurting Toddlers’ Development”

**When to pitch:** As new data or polling are released

**Who to pitch:** Health reporters, education magazines, local news, political reporters for polling news

### Key messages:

- New research continues to show the negative impacts of excessive screen time on young children’s learning, sleep, and mental health.
- Parents can’t solve screen time challenges alone. Larger systemic and profit-driven forces—like Big Tech—are driving the quality and quantity of screen time for young children.
- Big Tech designs its products to manipulate young children into spending more time on screens, making it more challenging for kids to disengage and for parents to limit screen time.
  - Content for young children is often created not with their development in mind, but with the goal of maximizing engagement and generating profit for Big Tech.
  - These manipulative design tactics create an unfair fight for parents who are trying to do what is best for their children.
- Making tech safer for kids is popular and nonpartisan. Parents across the political spectrum support a variety of policies to manage childhood screen use.
- Addressing early childhood screen overuse requires the same urgency, resources, and policy attention as social media harms in older children and teens.

## Family Success Stories

**Angle:** Share the story of a family your organization has worked with that's made positive changes—less screen time, more play, better sleep

**Target headline:** “Meet the Family Who Broke Up with Big Tech—And Found Each Other Again”

**Op-ed:** “We Turned Off the Screens—And It Changed Our Family”

**When to pitch:** Evergreen; ideal for features or weekend lifestyle pieces

**Who to pitch:** Human interest reporters, parenting blogs

**Key messages:**

- It has never been harder to be a parent, and many are increasingly turning to screens for help to occupy, entertain, and educate their children.
- But global health experts agree that too much screen time can be harmful for children and babies, and many children get more than the recommended amount of screen time.
- Parents are not to blame—Big Tech designs its products to manipulate young children into spending more time on screens, making it more challenging for kids to disengage and for parents to limit screen time.
- Families who are changing their screen time habits often do so with significant effort and support—and this story is meant to share how one family has seen positive effects from making these changes.
- Ultimately, widespread change will require systemic solutions; families need policy changes that will hold Big Tech accountable.

## Professional Spotlights

**Angle:** Interview a pediatrician or teacher who's seen the effects of screen time and is helping families make changes

**Target headline:** “What This Pediatrician Noticed When Her Patients Ditched Screens”

**Op-ed:** “I’m a Pediatrician—and I’m Alarmed by What I’m Seeing in My Youngest Patients”

**When:** Evergreen

**Who to pitch:** Local news, morning news programs, parenting blogs, medical newsletters, education podcasts

**Key messages:**

- Health professionals are seeing more sleep, attention, and behavioral challenges linked to excessive screen time in young children and babies.
- Despite the best efforts of parents and doctors, children and babies continue to get more than the recommended amounts of screen time.
- It's not their fault—Big Tech designs its products to manipulate young children into spending more time on screens, making it more challenging for kids to disengage and for parents to limit screen time.
- Families who are changing their screen time habits often do so with significant effort and support—and this story is meant to share how one pediatrician has seen positive effects in her patients when they have reduced screen time.

- Ultimately, widespread change will require systemic solutions—families need Big Tech to be held accountable for manipulative design, and doctors should parents and advocates in pushing for these policy changes.

## Policy Change

**Angle:** Legislation creates a timely hook for expert explanation and advocacy—explain what new laws or regulations could mean for families, in plain language

**Target headline:** “How the Bill Passed in the State Legislature Tuesday Will Hurt/Help Our Youngest Children”

**Op-ed:** “Congress Finally Passed [new legislation]—Here’s How it Will Affect Your Family”

**When:** There are new laws passed, high-profile hearings held, or other technology policy-related news

**Who to pitch:** Policy reporters, opinion pages, local government reporters

### Key messages:

- It has never been harder to be a parent. Many are turning to screen time to occupy, entertain, and educate their children, despite its detrimental effects on young children and babies.
- Parents cannot solve this issue alone. This latest legislation will [insert impact here].
- Our lawmakers must continue to pass laws that make tech safer for young children.
- These kinds of policies are popular and nonpartisan: parents across the political spectrum support a variety of policies to manage childhood screen use. (% total support)
  - Requirements for clearer and easier-to-understand information for families about whether content marked as “educational” meets specific child development standards. (85%)
  - Restrictions that prevent companies from advertising to children under age 13 or placing ads in apps, games, or content primarily used by children under age 13. (84%)
  - A ban on strategically timed advertisements in apps or games designed for children. (77%)
  - A ban on the use of artificial characters, influencers, or animated figures to pressure or shame children into taking actions like staying in the game, spending money, or sharing personal information. (77%)
  - A ban on autoplay, infinite scroll, and features in apps or games designed for children that make it hard for kids to exit without viewing additional content. (75%)
  - Requirements for warning labels on digital devices designed for children. (75%)

## How to Pitch Your Story

Outreach to journalists should include a short message (usually an email) that suggests a story about your work or offers access to an expert they may want to quote in future articles. A good pitch helps journalists quickly understand why your story is timely, relevant, and valuable for

their audience. It also builds your reputation as a helpful, reliable source for future stories. Below is an example of a few pitches based on the above recommended angles.

## Back-to-School Reset

Subject: As School Starts, Local Families Reset Screen Time Habits

Hi [Reporter Name],

With the new school year beginning, many parents are looking for ways to help their young children develop healthier screen habits. At [Your Organization], we've worked with families in [your community] to create simple routines—like device-free dinners and outdoor play—that help kids focus and sleep better.

I can connect you with a local parent who's made these changes, or share tips from an expert at [Your Organization] about how healthier screen time habits for young children and babies can make a positive difference.

Would you be interested in a story about how families are making this back-to-school reset?

Thank you,  
[Your Name]  
[Contact Info]

## AI and Toddlers

Subject: How AI Is Quietly Shaping Childhood for Toddlers

Hi [Reporter Name],

AI is everywhere in the news, but few are talking about how it's changing life for our youngest children, toddlers, and babies. From YouTube autoplay to AI-powered storybooks, our young ones are spending more time with technology than ever before.

Our team at [Your Organization] can offer insights on how these tools affect attention and learning in young kids and later in life.

Would you be interested in exploring this overlooked angle?

Best,  
[Your Name]  
[Contact Info]

## New Data or Research

Subject: New Study: Screen Time and Sleep in Young Children

Hi [Reporter Name],

A new study from [source, e.g., our organization/university partner] finds that [children under five who spend more than two hours on screens daily are twice as likely to have trouble sleeping] OR [babies who are exposed to screens in infancy struggle with screen addiction in later years].

We'd be happy to share the findings, provide plain-language summaries, and connect you with a local family or pediatrician who can speak to the real-life impact. [Name] at [your organization] can also speak to how Big Tech has designed products to hook young people on screens and ultimately cause these harms.

Would you be interested in covering this story?

Thank you,  
[Your Name]  
[Contact Info]

## Family Success Story

Subject: Local Family Finds Joy in Breaking Up with Big Tech

Hi [Reporter Name],

I wanted to share the story of the [Family Name] in [your town], who recently cut their young children's screen time in half by eliminating apps that have been proven to be addictive. The result? More family connection, better sleep, and happier kids.

They're eager to share their journey and tips with other parents. If you'd like to meet them or learn more, please let me know!

All the best,  
[Your Name]  
[Contact Info]

## Professional Spotlights

Subject: Pediatrician Sees Big Changes in Kids' Health from Screen Time

Hi [Reporter Name],

Dr. [Name], a pediatrician in [your city], has noticed more sleep and attention problems in young patients as screen time increases. She's helping families find practical solutions for healthier routines from newborns to older children.

Dr. [Name] is available for interviews about what she's seeing and simple steps parents can take.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[Contact Info]

## Policy Change

Subject: What New Tech Laws Mean for Local Families

Hi [Reporter Name],

As lawmakers debate new child safety and technology bills, families are looking for real solutions to protect young children and babies from the risks of too much screen time.

These new laws could finally put guardrails on Big Tech and make digital spaces safer for kids. Our team at [Your Organization] can help explain what's at stake and connect you with parents, educators, or pediatricians who see the effects of screen time every day.

If you're covering this issue, we'd be happy to offer insights on what these changes could mean for families in your community—and why they matter now.

Thank you,  
[Your Name]  
[Contact Info]

## Tips for Media Interviews

Getting ready for a media interview can feel a little nerve-wracking, especially if it's your first time. But remember: reporters want to hear from real people who care about their work. You don't need to be perfect—you just need to be clear, honest, and prepared. Here are some simple tips to help you feel confident and make sure your message comes through loud and clear.

- **Be clear and concise:** Use simple language and avoid jargon.
- **Share stories:** Real-life examples are powerful.
- **Pick 2-3 messages ahead of time:** Reference Fairplay's [Messaging Guide](#) for partners.

- **Stick to your messages:** What do you want people to remember? Repeat it.
- **Be honest:** If you don't know an answer, say so and offer to follow up.
- **Practice:** Rehearse your main points with a colleague or in the mirror.

This toolkit is designed for practical use—feel free to copy, adapt, and share! We are grateful for your partnership in our mission to reduce the harms of early childhood screen time.