

TikTok and “Devious Licks”

Tips for Mitigating Destructive Social Media Trends

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With more than 95% of teens across America now in possession of a smartphone (Pew Research Center, 2018), students’ real-time photo sharing, messaging, and video streaming capabilities are nearly unlimited, as are the variety of **social media apps** and online platforms they can use to do so. Teens can live stream themselves to groups or individuals, voice chat with strangers while playing online games, or even seek anonymous feedback on their appearance. These new means of communication took a mischievous turn around September 2021, leading to student challenges such as the “Devious Licks” or “TikTok School Challenge”.



Though Members are likely well-versed in responding to vandalism, bullying, and other behavioral issues, the organized and widespread nature of this situation presents new challenges for educators. Understanding the moving parts of this issue could improve Member response efforts.

What is the TikTok School Challenge?

TikTok, a mobile app that allows users to easily create and share short videos, was the most downloaded app of 2020 (Blacker, 2021). TikTok’s appeal to teens is largely twofold. First, TikTok’s millions of users create a ready-made audience for content creators, meaning that teens can expect their videos to gain views, no matter what the content. Second, TikTok’s platform makes that content generation very easy. Users can create and share a video on TikTok in a matter of minutes.

This low-effort high-reward situation is a prime environment for copycat and “one-upping” type behavior, which is likely what precipitated the Devious Licks / TikTok Challenge. Students who hop on board do not even have to think up original content ideas, instead they can just add their version of the latest dance, lip-sync, or prank and ride the trend. But as these challenges sweep through student populations, they often leave schools as collateral damage. The challenges’ ramifications so far include both vandalism and assault. The monthly challenges present ongoing safety concerns for school administrators and staff.

Complete list of monthly TikTok school challenges circulating the internet, and their potential consequences:

- **September:** Vandalize school bathrooms – Criminal mischief/criminal tampering
- **October:** Smack a staff member – Harassment/unlawful sexual contact
- **November:** Kiss your friend’s girlfriend at school – Harassment
- **December:** Deck the halls and show your balls – Indecent exposure
- **January:** Jab a breast – Harassment/unlawful sexual contact
- **February:** Mess up school signs – Criminal mischief
- **March:** Make a mess in the courtyard or cafeteria – Criminal tampering
- **April:** “Grab some eggz” (another stealing challenge) – Theft
- **May:** Ditch Day – School based consequences
- **June:** Flip off in the front office – Disorderly conduct
- **July:** Spray a neighbor’s fence – Criminal mischief

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Other Apps to Watch

SnapChat

One of the most popular social media apps out there, Snapchat lets users share photographs or short videos that are meant to disappear shortly after having been viewed. Because of the disappearing nature of content on this platform, oversight can be extremely difficult. The application also lets users know if a recipient has taken a “screenshot” of a sent image, meaning any attempts at documenting concerning media are likely to be noticed by users.

Instagram (“IG”)

Instagram is a popular photo-sharing app owned by Meta (formerly Facebook). Like TikTok and SnapChat, concerns about Instagram predominantly center around its ubiquity and large audience size.

Is there Insurance Coverage for the TikTok Challenge?

Coverage for TikTok Challenge-related losses depends upon what the loss is, what the facts of the incident are, and the allegations made. All claims are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and subject to the terms and provisions of your policy.

CSDSIP’s Property Coverage provides coverage for first-party claims resulting from covered causes of loss for the Member’s premises and/or contents. Property Coverage would be triggered for claims arising out of vandalism, malicious mischief and theft that is suggested in many of the previously listed TikTok monthly school challenges.

CSDSIP’s School Entity Liability Coverage provides coverage for third-party claims including the defense of suits against the Member and payment of damages that the Member is legally liable for subject to the terms, policies, and conditions. We can imagine that liability claims may arise out of the challenges suggested for several of the listed TikTok monthly school challenges.

Please keep in mind that CSDSIP does not provide coverage for Worker’s Compensation for injuries that occur because of a TikTok Challenge.

We recommend that you review your policy for a complete description of terms, conditions, and exclusions.

How Members can Protect Themselves

Though the TikTok Challenge masquerades as novel, social media trends themselves are not new. Members should never condone acts of violence and vandalism, especially when the trends involve damage to school campuses and assaults on District staff or students. The following is a list of guidelines Members can use to discourage student engagement in viral trends on campuses:

- Distribute your discipline policy and code of conduct and emphasize the types of behaviors that are not acceptable.
- Remind parents they could be subject to restitution payment if their student damages school property.
- Encourage a positive school culture, create monthly challenges that counteract the potentially negative behavior, and increase student awareness in other areas such as bullying, mental health, or suicide prevention.
- Promote positive behavior and positive reinforcement.
- Review your policies for on-campus student cell phone and social media use.
- Consider prompting students to anonymously report potential incidents through Safe2tell.

Ensure you have and implement the following:

- Policies related to the use of cell phones in schools
- Effective, consistent methods of monitoring/controlling district internet use

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- This is especially important when you are providing students with device to use off-campus as you MUST consider how the internet is to be filtered regardless of location especially if you are receiving E-Rate funding. E-Rate requirements are specific and we recommend contacting an expert regarding those requirements.
- A well-advertised means to report and address cyber bullying such as Safe2Tell
- For more information, please visit the Safe2Tell website at www.safe2tell.org
- Procedures to control internet/intranet passwords
- A sexting policy that states students may not possess, view, send, or share pictures or text having sexual content while the student is on school grounds, at school sponsored events or on school buses or other vehicles you provide
- A clear understanding of laws that impact social networking issues
- Effective policies and procedures for monitoring Member owned iPads and other take home devices, as well as inventory management, internet filtering, and acceptable use policy and insurance
- Updated version of your Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

Have your schools do the following:

- Review and discuss social networking, school policies and procedures with students, staff, and parents.
- Limit electronic communication between students and staff to your official systems.
 - Prohibit use of personal emails, texting, or social networking for student communication.
- Ensure appropriate supervision where cyber activities occur.
- Implement practices that guide use of social networks for hiring or monitoring employees.
- Have procedures that guide the use of social networks by teachers and students for school use.
- Provide training and education on sexting for employees, students, and parents.

Other cyber risks to be aware of:

- Cyberbullying
- Sexting/Texting
- Identity theft
- Cheating
- Harassment or Stalking
- Defaming character or reputation
- Take-home electronic device theft and misuse

No matter how long this particular trend sticks around, malicious social media trends are likely here to stay. Taking steps now to manage social and cyber risk can help secure your community into the increasingly digital future. Please contact Risk Control and/or Risk Programs if you have any further questions.

References

- Blacker, A. (2021, January 7). *Worldwide & US Download Leaders 2020*. Retrieved from Apptopia: <https://blog.apptopia.com/worldwide-us-download-leaders-2020>
- Pew Research Center. (2018, May 31). *Teens, Social media and Technology 2018*. Retrieved from Pew Research Center: <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/>