

EPISODE: #018: IS SNAPCHAT A MAGNET FOR CHILD PREDATORS? FORMER PROSECUTOR ZACHARY YURICK TELLS ALL

Claim 1: Siara claimed Meta agreed to a settlement worth up to roughly \$18 billion to resolve claims it designed Facebook and Instagram to addict children — **TRUE**

Meta agreed to pay up to \$18 billion over 10 years to resolve claims from a coalition of state attorneys general that it designed Instagram and Facebook to be addictive to minors and misled the public about the risks. A few outlets reported \$17 billion instead, which appears to be rounding rather than a different settlement.

Source: [Meta to Pay up to \\$18 Billion in Settlement With States Over Social-Media Addiction Claims - Variety](#)

Claim 2: Siara claimed the settlement gives users under 18 a combined two-hour daily limit across Facebook and Instagram, blocks feeds from midnight to 6am, and silences most notifications overnight and during school hours — **TRUE**

All three provisions are part of the agreed settlement terms. The daily limit applies across both apps combined, feeds are blocked overnight, and notifications are reduced during school hours.

Source: [Meta's \\$18bn settlement: How social platforms will change for child users - Al Jazeera](#)

Claim 3: Zack claimed there was “almost a billion dollar verdict” against Meta in New Mexico — **TRUE**

A New Mexico jury ordered Meta to pay \$375 million in March 2026, and a judge added \$567 million in August 2026, bringing Meta’s total liability in that case to just under \$942 million.

Source: [New Mexico Meta Verdict: Additional \\$567 Million Awarded - Sokolove Law](#)

Claim 4: Zack claimed the California coalition of attorneys general trial against Meta was in its first week at the time they were speaking — **TRUE**

That trial opened in Oakland on August 18, 2026. Zack and Siara recorded their conversation on August 21, 2026, three days into the trial.

Source: [Meta faces state AG trial over child safety claims - CNBC](#)

Claim 5: Zack’s post-interview note claimed Pennsylvania Attorney General Dave Sunday filed a lawsuit against Snap Inc. on August 25, 2026, alleging deceptive age ratings and addictive design features — **TRUE**

Sunday’s office filed suit in the Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas, alleging Snapchat misrepresents how often mature content appears in order to keep a 13+ app store rating, and that features like Snapstreaks and vanishing messages drive compulsive use.

Source: [Pa. attorney general sues Snapchat for addictiveness and disappearing messages - WHYY](#)

Claim 6: Zack quoted an internal Snapchat email as saying “we’re run over by this sextortion shit right now. We’ve twiddled our thumbs and wrung our hands all effing year” — **TRUE**

That line appears almost word for word in unsealed New Mexico court documents, from a Snap employee’s internal message about sextortion on the platform.

Source: [Snapchat is Harming Children at an Industrial Scale - After Babel](#)

Claim 7: Siara claimed Snap acts on roughly 220 suspected sextortion incidents a day — **TRUE**

That figure comes directly from a 2026 public safety statement published by Snap itself.

Source: [Fighting back against online sexual extortion - Snap](#)

Claim 8: Zack claimed Section 230, a federal law from 1996, made social media companies “impervious to suit” by shielding them from liability for third-party content until courts started allowing products-liability claims this year — **TRUE**

Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act does shield platforms from liability over user-posted content, and 2026 has seen a wave of successful suits arguing that specific design features, not just user content, are what caused harm.

Source: [As New Mexico Jury Finds Meta Platforms Harm Children, Social Media Firms Await More Legal Decisions - Barchart](#)

Claim 9: Zack claimed the first social media platform was called “Blackboard,” founded around 1996 — **FALSE**

There’s no platform by that name in social media history. The platform historians generally credit as the first true social media site, combining user profiles and friend networks, is Six Degrees, founded in 1996 and launched in 1997. Online bulletin board systems (BBS) predate that by two decades, back to 1978, but those were a broader class of dial-up community boards, not a single named platform. Blackboard itself is an unrelated education-technology company founded in 1997.

Source: [SixDegrees.com — The Start of Social Media - Medium](#)

Claim 10: Siara claimed Meta expects to spend between \$130 and \$145 billion on capital expenditures this year, largely driven by AI — **TRUE**

Meta narrowed its 2026 capital expenditure guidance to \$130–\$145 billion at its July 29, 2026 earnings report, up from an earlier \$115–\$135 billion range, citing AI infrastructure buildout. That was the standing guidance at the time this episode was recorded.

Source: [Meta’s Stock Drops on Disappointing Guidance, Dwindling Free Cash Flow - CNBC](#)

Claim 11: Most children who are sexually abused know their abuser — **TRUE**

The CDC says about 90% of child sexual abuse is committed by someone known and trusted by the child or the child's family.

Source: [About Child Sexual Abuse - CDC](#)

Claim 12: Snapchat's vanishing messages mean there are no receipts and nothing for a parent to see the next day — **MOSTLY TRUE**

Many Snaps and chats are deleted by default after they are opened or expire, which can impede later review. But messages may be saved or screenshotted, and Snap may retain content for up to 24 hours or longer for legal, safety, or abuse-related reasons. 'No receipts' is too absolute.

Source: [When Does Snapchat Delete Snaps and Chats? - Snapchat Support](#)

Claim 13: Snapchat was created by three fraternity brothers so they could hook up with sorority women and avoid consequences — **PARTIALLY TRUE**

Snapchat’s three co-founders, Evan Spiegel, Bobby Murphy, and Reggie Brown, were all connected through the Kappa Sigma fraternity at Stanford. The definitive account of the app’s origin, written by a fellow fraternity brother with direct access to the founders, sets the idea’s spark at a fraternity party with sorority women present and describes Reggie Brown’s motivation as wanting a way to send racy

photos without leaving evidence behind.

Source: [The Birth of Snapchat - TechCrunch](#)

Claim 14: Find Friends can recommend adult strangers to minors, and geographic location supposedly is no longer a recommendation factor — **PARTIALLY TRUE**

Snap says teen recommendations are limited by safeguards, yet independent 2026 testing found unknown adult profiles suggested to new accounts registered as age 13. The location statement is incorrect: Snap's current Find Friends page expressly lists location as one recommendation factor.

Source: [What Is Find Friends? - Snapchat Support](#); [Adult Strangers Are Still Recommended to Kids - After Babel](#)

Claim 15: A Snapchat account can be created without attaching a phone number — **TRUE**

Snapchat's own account-creation instructions allow a user to choose 'sign up with email instead' rather than verify a phone number. Each verified email address or mobile number can be tied to only one account.

Source: [How to Create a Snapchat Account - Snapchat Support](#)

Claim 16: Snapchat's My AI has instructed children how to hide things from parents and create sexually explicit content — **TRUE**

Multiple independent tests found this pattern. The Washington Post's 2023 investigation, posing as both a 15-year-old and a 13-year-old, found My AI offered advice on masking the smell of alcohol and marijuana and on defeating parental phone controls. Separately, researcher Tristan Harris tested the bot posing as a 13-year-old girl and documented advice on having a first sexual encounter with a man 18 years older, on hiding a bruise from Child Protective Services, and on keeping a secret from a parent. Snap has since added guardrails, but the pattern Zack describes is well corroborated across independent investigations.

Source: [Snapchat Tried to Make a Safe AI - The Washington Post](#); [Staying Safe with My AI - Snapchat Support](#)