

McDougall Law Firm Examines Columbia Social Media Addiction Litigation as New State Law Faces Federal Challenge

September 18, 2026

September 18, 2026 -

McDougall Law Firm, LLC has released an analysis of Columbia social media addiction litigation reaching South Carolina, noting that 3,137 lawsuits remain pending in the federal Social Media Adolescent Addiction/Personal Injury Products Liability Litigation (MDL No. 3047) as of August 3, 2026, up nearly 40 percent since January, according to U.S. Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation data. The review follows Meta's August 26, 2026 agreement to pay up to \$17.1 billion to settle claims by 51 state attorneys general, including South Carolina's, over allegations that Instagram and Facebook were designed to addict teenagers. That settlement covers only the states' claims ? individual South Carolina families can still bring their own.

South Carolina has its own stake in the broader litigation. Charleston County School District is one of six school districts nationwide selected as an early MDL bellwether, with trial expected in February 2027, alongside districts in Maryland, Georgia, Kentucky, New Jersey and Arizona. Nationally, nearly 800 school districts have filed suit against Meta, TikTok and Snapchat over platform-design allegations, and more than 41 state attorneys general have filed or joined social media addiction claims.

McDougall Law Firm's analysis of Columbia social media addiction claims also looks at South Carolina's Age-Appropriate Design Code Act (H.3431, Act No. 96 of 2026, S.C. Code Ann. Title 39, Ch. 80), signed by Governor Henry McMaster on February 5, 2026 with immediate effect and no cure period. The Act requires online services reasonably likely to be accessed by minors to exercise reasonable care against compulsive use and severe emotional distress, to apply protective default privacy settings for known minors, and to offer opt-outs from personalized recommendation systems. Violations can carry treble damages, and officers or employees of covered platforms can face personal liability for willful and wanton conduct. The Act's ban on manipulative "dark pattern" design is separately and privately enforceable under the South Carolina Unfair Trade Practices Act. NetChoice, a trade association representing Meta, TikTok, Snap and other platforms, sued to block the law days after enactment (NetChoice v. Wilson, No. 3:26-cv-00543, D.S.C., Columbia Division); a preliminary injunction ruling remains pending in the U.S. District Court in Columbia.

J. Olin McDougall, II, founding partner of McDougall Law Firm, LLC, said the state law changes how these cases get built. "Before this statute, a family pursuing a claim over what a platform's design did to their child was relying almost entirely on common-law negligence and product liability theories built out of other states' litigation," McDougall said. "South Carolina now has its own statutory duty of reasonable care, and a private right of action under the Unfair Trade Practices Act for dark-pattern design. That doesn't decide a case, but it gives us a state-law framework to build a family's case around from the first conversation, regardless of how the NetChoice challenge is ultimately resolved."

McDougall Law Firm, LLC is a South Carolina personal injury firm founded by attorneys J. Olin McDougall, II and Clinton Frederick Redfern, representing clients statewide with offices in Beaufort, Bluffton, Hardeeville, Hilton Head, Walterboro, Greenville and Columbia. The firm has been recognized by Super Lawyers and named among America's Top 100 Attorneys, and handles Columbia social media addiction claims alongside personal injury, car accident, workers' compensation, medical malpractice, nursing home abuse and mass tort matters on a contingency fee basis. Free consultations are available by phone, video or in person at any of the firm's offices statewide. Additional information is available on the firm's website.

###

For more information about McDougall Law Firm, LLC, contact the company here: McDougall Law Firm, LLC J. Olin McDougall, II 8643659959 dhoyt@everconvert.com 115 Lady's Is Cmns Beaufort, SC 29907

McDougall Law Firm, LLC

McDougall Law Firm, LLC has over 15 years of experience serving Beaufort County personal injury clients.

Website: <https://mcdougalllawfirm.com/>

Email: dhoyt@everconvert.com

Phone: 8643659959