

Character.AI and Google agree to settle lawsuits over teen suicides and self-harm

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Google and Character.AI agree to settle lawsuits over teen suicides

* Ashley Gold

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Character.AI and Google have agreed to settle multiple lawsuits brought by families of teens who harmed themselves or died by suicide after interacting with Character.AI's chatbot online, per court documents made public this week.

****Why it matters:****The settlements would mark the first resolutions in the wave of lawsuits against tech companies whose AI chatbots encouraged teens to hurt or kill themselves.

****Driving the news****: Parties have agreed to settlements in cases filed in Florida, New York, Colorado and Texas, per court filings.

* The settlements were first reported by the Wall Street Journal.

****The big picture:****Families allege that Character.AI's chatbot encouraged their children to cut their arms, suggested murdering their parents, wrote sexually explicit messages and did not discourage suicide, per lawsuits and congressional testimony.

* OpenAI and Meta are facing similar lawsuits as families and online safety groups urge Congress to pass stricter laws for tech companies to protect minors.

****Context:****Character.AI was founded by former Google engineers and has been funded and licensed by Google.

* Last October, Character.AI barred users under the age of 18 following high-profile youth suicides and tearful testimony by parents in Congress.

****What they're saying:****"Parties have agreed to a mediated settlement in principle to resolve all claims between them in the above-referenced matter," one document filed in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida reads.

* The documents do not contain any specific monetary amounts for the settlements. * Google did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Character.AI declined to comment.

****Our thought bubble:**** Pricy settlements could deter companies from continuing to offer chatbot products to kids. But without new laws on the books, don't expect major changes across the industry.

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