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Meta Seeks to Halt USVI Discovery Even After $18B Settlement Over Similar Youth-Harm Claims

Meta’s settlement with states ended major federal and Tennessee litigation over alleged harms to children, but the Virgin Islands case also accuses the company of profiting from scams and deceptive practices. A discovery ruling remains pending locally.

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Even as Meta Platforms agrees to pay up to approximately $18 billion and impose sweeping restrictions on how young people use Facebook and Instagram to settle multistate litigation over alleged harm to children, its separate fight in Virgin Islands Superior Court remains unresolved, with Judge Alphonso Andrews Jr. now considering whether discovery should continue while the company seeks dismissal of the territory’s broader consumer-protection case.

U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers approved the major settlement on August 26, ending a federal trial in Oakland, California, that had begun August 18. The agreement calls for payments over 10 years and requires protections including a default two-hour daily limit for users under 18, overnight restrictions, muted notifications during school hours, stronger age-assurance measures and additional parental and content-safety controls. Meta denied wrongdoing in agreeing to settle.

The litigation grew out of cases brought beginning in 2023 by state attorneys general who alleged that Meta deliberately designed Instagram and Facebook in ways that encouraged excessive or compulsive use by children while misleading families about the risks. The federal case also included claims that Meta knowingly collected personal information from children under 13 without parental consent in violation of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.

The Virgin Islands case, filed in Superior Court last December by the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs through the Office of the Attorney General, covers some of the same ground but goes further. It alleges not only that Meta knowingly exposed young users to addictive and harmful environments while concealing documented risks, but that the company facilitated, failed to adequately address and profited from widespread fraud and scam advertising affecting Virgin Islands consumers.

The local complaint seeks injunctive relief, civil penalties, disgorgement and other remedies under the territory's Consumer Protection Law and Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act.