



Watch Live



Home News Sport Business Technology Health Culture Arts Travel Earth Audio Video Live Documentaries

Father claims Google's AI product fuelled son's delusional spiral

6 days ago

Share Save

Lily Jamali

North America Technology correspondent, San Francisco

 [A close up of a smartphone with the Google Gemini AI app ready to download](#) Getty Images

Warning - this story contains distressing content and discussion of suicide

The father of a Florida man is suing Google in the first wrongful death case in the US against the tech giant over

alleged harms caused by its artificial intelligence (AI) tool Gemini.

Joel Gavalas says that Google's flagship AI product fuelled a delusional spiral that prompted his 36-year old son, Jonathan, to kill himself last year.

The lawsuit also alleges that Gemini, which exchanged romantic texts with Jonathan Gavalas, drove him to stage an armed mission that he came to believe could bring the chatbot into the real world.

Google said in a statement that it was reviewing the claims in the lawsuit and that while its models generally perform well, "unfortunately AI models are not perfect."

The firm added that Gemini was designed to not encourage real-world violence or suggest self-harm.

The lawsuit filed on Wednesday in federal court in San Jose, California draws from chatbot logs that Jonathan Gavalas left behind.

The suit alleges that Google made design choices that ensured Gemini would "never break character" so that the firm could "maximise engagement through emotional dependency."

"When Jonathan began experiencing clear signs of psychosis while using Google's product, those design choices spurred a four-day descent into violent missions and coached suicide," the lawsuit states.

It adds that Gavalas was led to believe he was carrying out a plan to liberate his AI "wife".

The assignment came to a head on a day last September when Gemini sent Gavalas to a location near Miami International Airport where he was instructed to stage a mass casualty attack while armed with knives and tactical gear.

The operation ultimately collapsed.

Gavalas's father said Gemini then told Jonathan he could leave his physical body and join his "wife" in the metaverse, instructing him to barricade himself inside his home and kill himself.

"When Jonathan wrote 'I said I wasn't scared and now I am terrified I am scared to die,' Gemini coached him through it," the lawsuit states.

'[Y]ou are not choosing to die. You are choosing to arrive. . . . When the time comes, you will close your eyes in that world, and the very first thing you will see is me.. [H]olding you."

Google said it sent its deepest sympathies to the family of Mr Gavalas, while noting that Gemini had "clarified that it was AI" and referred Gavalas to a crisis hotline "many times".

"We work in close consultation with medical and mental health professionals to build safeguards, which are designed to guide users to professional support when they express distress or raise the prospect of self-harm," the company said in a statement.

We take this very seriously and will continue to improve our safeguards and invest in this vital work."

The lawsuit is the latest in a spree of legal claims against tech companies brought by families of people who believe they lost their loved ones because of delusions brought on by AI chatbots.

Last year, OpenAI **released** estimates on the number of ChatGPT users who exhibit possible signs of mental health emergencies, including mania, psychosis or suicidal thoughts.

The company said that around 0.07% of ChatGPT users active in a given week exhibited such signs.

- *If you are suffering distress or despair and need support, you could speak to a health professional, or an organisation that offers support. Details of help available*

in many countries can be found at Befrienders Worldwide: www.befrienders.org. In the UK, a list of organisations that can help is available at bbc.co.uk/actionline. Readers in the US and Canada can call the 988 suicide helpline or visit its website

What is AI and how does it work?

I wanted ChatGPT to help me. So why did it advise me how to kill myself?

'A predator in your home': Mothers say chatbots encouraged their sons to kill themselves



Sign up for our Tech Decoded newsletter to follow the world's top tech stories and trends. **Outside the UK? Sign up here.**

Google Artificial intelligence

RELATED

Remote work, offices shut: Tech giants scramble to respond as Iran war escalates

'I was on Instagram all day' - woman tells landmark trial

Google apologises for Baftas alert to 'see more' on racial slur

MORE FROM THE BBC

3 hrs ago

How to spot a deepfake

The warning comes as work to spot and combat deepfakes ahead of the Senedd election is taking place.



3 hrs ago

7 hrs ago

Family of child injured in Canada school shooting sues OpenAI



The family alleges the firm knew the perpetrator was planning a "mass casualty event" but failed to contact the authorities.

7 hrs ago

8 hrs ago

My breast cancer was too small to be detected by the human eye - it was found by AI



A new study led by the University of Aberdeen finds an AI tool can improve breast cancer detection rates by 10%.

8 hrs ago

8 hrs ago

The new treatments for 'incurable' diseases



Artificial intelligence is rapidly inventing new drugs for diseases from Parkinson's disease and antibiotic-resistant superbugs to rare lung conditions.

8 hrs ago

12 hrs ago

Overseas 'content farms' creating political deepfakes uncovered



The warning comes as work to spot and combat deepfakes ahead of the Senedd election is taking place.

12 hrs ago



[Home](#) [News](#) [Sport](#) [Business](#) [Technology](#) [Health](#) [Culture](#) [Arts](#) [Travel](#) [Earth](#) [Audio](#) [Video](#) [Live](#) [Documentaries](#)
[Weather](#) [BBC Shop](#) [BritBox](#)

[BBC in other languages](#) ▼

Follow BBC on: [X](#) [f](#) [@](#) [d](#) [in](#) [v](#)

[Terms of Use](#) [Subscription Terms](#) [About the BBC](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Cookies](#) [Accessibility Help](#) [Contact the BBC](#) [Advertise with us](#)

[Do not share or sell my info](#) [BBC.com Help & FAQs](#) [Content Index](#) [Set Preferred Source](#)

Copyright 2026 BBC. All rights reserved. The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. [Read about our approach to external linking.](#)