

Individual Exemptions to Personal Electronic Device Policy

In alignment with EO 25-09, school districts are required to implement policies regarding the use of personal electronic devices (PEDs) by students during the school day. While the overarching goal is to minimize unnecessary device use that may distract from learning, the Executive Order provides for written individual exemptions based on specific student needs. **These exemptions are not blanket permissions but are intended to accommodate unique circumstances that support student well-being, access to education, and safety.**

Districts must adopt a clear process and guidelines that empower school administrators to evaluate exemption requests on a case-by-case basis. Exemptions should be granted **only when a student's individual situation warrants the use of a device**, and when doing so is necessary to:

- Ensure the student's **safety, health, or legal obligations**,
- Provide access to **essential educational resources**, or
- Support the student's **academic engagement or equitable access** to instruction.

Please note: The language provided here is not intended for inclusion in a district's overall Personal Electronic Device (PED) policy. Rather, it is designed to be used within individual student plans when an exemption or exception is granted based on a documented, identified need. The chart below outlines example categories where students may qualify for an exemption, the rationale behind each, and suggested sample language to support consistent and equitable documentation of individual exemptions. These examples are not exhaustive but serve as a framework to guide thoughtful, fair implementation across diverse school settings.

Exemption Category	Rationale	Sample Language for Plan/Documentation for Individual Exemptions
Students Experiencing Houselessness	Students experiencing houselessness may rely on phones/devices for safety, housing, and resource access.	<i>"The student qualifies under the McKinney-Vento Act¹ and requires a personal device to maintain access to essential services and communication related to housing, safety, and basic needs."</i>

¹ SEAs and LEAs must develop, review, and revise policies to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment, and retention of homeless students in school, including barriers due to fees, fines, and absences. 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(1)(I). States must have procedures to ensure that homeless children and youth do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities. 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(1)(F)(iii).

Exemption Category	Rationale	Sample Language for Plan/Documentation for Individual Exemptions
Pregnant or Parenting Students	May need contact with medical providers, childcare, or parenting resources during school hours.	<i>"The student is a pregnant or parenting youth and requires personal device access to coordinate health or childcare needs during the school day."</i>
Students in Early College / Dual Enrollment Programs	May require multi-factor authentication (MFA) or device access to log in to college platforms.	<i>"The student is enrolled in a dual enrollment or early college program that requires device-based MFA or platform access for coursework during school hours."</i>
Multilingual / English Learner Students	May rely on translation apps or communication tools to support comprehension and participation.	<i>"The student is an English learner who uses translation or interpretation technology to access instruction."</i>
Students Who Are Family Caregivers	Some students serve as caregivers and need to stay connected to family responsibilities (siblings, elders).	<i>"The student serves in a caregiving role for a family member and requires access to a device for coordination of care, emergency communication, and translation for family members, siblings, or caretakers."</i>
Students with Immigration-Related Safety Needs	May require contact with legal services, guardians, or emergency services due to family circumstances.	<i>"The student has immigration-related safety needs that necessitate device access for legal communication or emergency contact."</i>
Justice-Involved Students	May need to check in with probation officers, legal aid, or other caseworkers.	<i>"The student is involved in the justice system and requires device access to maintain contact with court-appointed officials or comply with legal obligations."</i>
Students with Off-Campus Work Responsibilities (e.g., CTE students)	May need to coordinate with employers, especially for internships, apprenticeships, or work-based learning.	<i>"The student participates in off-campus career or work-based learning opportunities that require device access for coordination or communication with employers."</i>

Exemption Category	Rationale	Sample Language for Plan/Documentation for Individual Exemptions
Students with Safety Plans	May need to contact a safety/support person if the student has experienced discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, or bias incidents that have affected mental or physical safety.	<i>"The student has a documented safety plan that requires device access to contact a designated safety/support person to ensure continued educational access."</i>