

# FAQ: Implementation of Executive Order 25-09 – Personal Electronic Devices in K–12 Schools

Governor Kotek’s Executive Order 25-09 directs all K–12 public schools in Oregon to prohibit the use of personal electronic devices during the instructional day. School districts must adopt policies aligned with this order by **October 31, 2025**, with full implementation by **January 1, 2026** at the latest. Below are frequently asked questions to support districts and education partners in developing and implementing their policies.

*This document will be routinely updated as additional questions arise.*

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## 1. What is the purpose of Executive Order 25-09?

The [Executive Order](#) aims to help foster student learning, well-being, and belonging by reducing distractions and promoting healthy, focused school environments. It requires school districts to adopt policies that restrict student use of personal electronic devices during the school day, with specific provisions to ensure equitable and supportive implementation.

## 2. What must be included in district policies regarding personal electronic devices?

At minimum, each district’s policy must:

- **Prohibit student use of personal electronic devices during the instructional day.**
- **Provide clarity on how devices will be stored during the school day.**
- **Allow for specific exemptions** (see question 4 for more information).
- **Provide direction to staff on appropriate responses to policy violations.**
- **Be publicly posted** and accessible to school staff, students, families, on-site partners, and the Oregon Department of Education.

## 3. What qualifies as a “personal electronic device”?

"Personal Electronic Device" means any portable, electrically powered device that is capable of:

- Making and receiving calls
- Making and receiving text messages
- Accessing the Internet independently from the school's network infrastructure

This includes devices such as cell phones, smartphones, smartwatches, and other portable, internet-enabled devices capable of texting, calling, or accessing the internet independently. Personal Electronic Devices do not include laptop computers or other technology explicitly required to support academic instruction or learning accommodations.

#### 4. What exemptions, if any, are permitted under this policy?

The policy must allow for use in the following circumstances:

- **Medical necessity**, when use is part of a care or treatment plan ordered by a licensed medical provider.
- **Individualized education plans (IEPs) or Section 504 plans**, when use is required for access or accommodation.
- **Approved exemptions**, based on district-developed guidelines that allow administrators to consider a student's individual needs or specific educational outcomes.

#### 5. Are there times when the policy does not apply?

The Executive Order requires districts to implement a bell-to-bell cell phone policy to limit cell phones during the instructional day. A number of questions have emerged around different transportation scenarios during the school day, so ODE is providing some additional guidance around this area:

- Field Trips: When students are participating in a field trip during the instructional day, device use should align with the policy, as additional staff are typically present for supervision.
- Extracurricular Activities: When students are participating in extracurricular activities, such as athletics, band, or clubs that may start during the instructional day, districts may restrict PED use during these times, based on their local policies and the needs of their school communities. It is important for districts to consider these decisions carefully and engage staff, students, and families in the development of local policy.
- Transportation between Programs: When students are transported from one location to another during the instructional day, such as for TAG or CTE programming, districts may restrict PED use during these times, especially if additional staff are present on buses for supervision. It is important for districts to consider these decisions carefully and engage staff, students, and families in the development of local policy.

This provision is not intended to apply to general transportation to and from school, such as morning or afternoon bus routes, or travel between campuses for standard transitions. During these times, students may use personal electronic devices, as buses used solely for transportation are often supervised only by the driver, who is unable to monitor device use while operating the vehicle.

#### 6. How should districts handle the storage of personal devices during the day?

Each policy must clearly outline how and where student devices will be stored during the instructional day. Options may include secure lockers, backpacks, classroom storage or designated school-managed areas. Regular clear communication with families, caregivers and students will be essential to ensure understanding and compliance.

## 7. What actions can staff take when a student violates the policy?

Policies must include guidance for staff on how to respond to student violations. Importantly:

- Disciplinary actions must **not result in lost instructional time.**
- **Suspension or expulsion is not permitted as a consequence for violating the device policy** related solely to noncompliance with the personal electronic device ban.
- Disciplinary action **may still be appropriate if a student uses a personal electronic device to harass others, access inappropriate content, or engage in other prohibited behaviors** while at school.

Districts are encouraged to use educational and restorative approaches to support students in meeting expectations. Ongoing school culture and climate building around these new and / or updated policies will be important in gaining staff and student buy-in, which will be essential for implementation success.

## 8. How should policies be shared with the school community?

Once adopted, the policy must be:

- **Posted on the school district website,** and
- **Made available to:**
  - District and school personnel
  - Students
  - Parents and guardians
  - Partners present in school buildings during the day
  - The Oregon Department of Education

In addition to these requirements, it is strongly encouraged that districts engage the school community, including students, families, caregivers, educators, school-based partners, and Tribes, both during policy development and throughout implementation. Gathering input early will help identify potential concerns, increase transparency, and build trust and shared understanding of the policy's purpose. It will also enable schools and districts to identify the supports needed for effective implementation. Ongoing engagement during implementation also allows for continuous improvement of the policy to ensure it is equitable, supportive, and aligned with community needs. Districts may consider holding listening sessions, conducting surveys, or creating advisory groups to inform their approach as a part of their ongoing engagement efforts as required through the Student Investment Account and other state requirements.

## 9. Will ODE provide resources to support implementation?

Yes. The Oregon Department of Education has developed guidance and tools to support districts, including:

- **UPDATED:** [Fostering Student Learning, Well-Being, and Belonging: Guidance for Personal Electronic Device Policies](#)
- [Policy Highlights Slide Deck \(PDF\)](#)

Additional office hours and resources, including examples of storage procedures, enforcement strategies, and communication templates, will be shared throughout the implementation period.

## **10. Is there an opportunity to ask questions or receive additional support?**

ODE is hosting monthly Communities of Practice to support implementation of the EO with the goal of providing a collaborative space to:

- Work through common scenarios in small-group discussions
- Engage in problem-solving around real implementation challenges
- Learn from bright spots, practical insights and promising approaches from educators across Oregon

Whether you're just getting started or looking to strengthen current practices, this Community of Practice offers support, shared learning, and actionable strategies for creating focused, connected, and caring learning environments.

- September 17, 4 - 5 PM ([registration link](#))
- October 14, 4 - 5 PM ([registration link](#))
- November 12, 4-5PM ([registration link](#))
- December 9, 4-5PM ([registration link](#))
- January 21, 4-5PM ([registration link](#))
- February 17, 4-5PM ([registration link](#))
- March 11, 4-5 PM ([registration link](#))
- April 14, 4-5PM ([registration link](#))
- May 12, 4-5PM ([registration link](#))

## **11. Does Executive Order 25-09 apply to charter schools?**

Yes. Executive Order 25-09 applies to all public schools in Oregon, including charter schools. Charter schools are expected to implement policies that align with the requirements of the executive order regarding student use of personal electronic devices during instructional time.

## **12. Does Executive Order 25-09 apply to virtual learning environments, including virtual charter schools?**

While Executive Order 25-09 focuses on reducing distractions from personal electronic devices (PEDs) during in-person instructional hours, virtual learning environments (including virtual charter schools) present unique circumstances. In these settings, a student's device is often the primary means for accessing lessons, participating in discussions, and completing assignments.

To uphold the intent of EO 25-09, promoting focus, supporting mental health, and fostering engagement, virtual schools can:

- Clearly define appropriate device use for instruction versus non-instructional activities.

- Encourage platform settings and norms that minimize off-task notifications and distractions.
- Maintain equity and accessibility by providing alternatives for students without appropriate devices or with specific learning or accessibility needs.
- Integrate digital citizenship and self-management skills into the instructional program to help students develop healthy technology habits.
- Use mechanisms like a student code of conduct to support limiting non-instructional cell phone use during the school day.

By applying the EO's principles thoughtfully in digital settings, virtual schools can preserve its core goals while recognizing the realities of technology-enabled learning.

### **13. Can you clarify what a written exemption might look like, whether ODE provides a template for school districts, and if exemptions are limited to medical reasons under the Executive Order? Additionally, are schools required to allow exemptions if they can provide IEP/504 accommodations, and how can we address concerns about the potential overuse of individual exemptions?**

At this time, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is working in collaboration with the Governor's Office and key education partners to develop comprehensive guidance and sample policy templates to support school districts in implementing exemptions appropriately. We anticipate having these materials ready prior to the start of the 2025–26 school year.

Under the Executive Order, all districts must provide baseline exemptions, which include those based on medical needs, IEPs, and 504 plans. While the EO does not require districts to go beyond these categories, there is some flexibility within local policy to consider narrowly defined groups such as multilingual learners or students with specific counselor-identified needs, for exemptions that may not meet the formal criteria for IEP or 504 plans. This could include work-study participation, translation access needs, or other supports that don't rise to the level of a formal disability classification.

That said, it is important that districts think strategically about how individual exemptions are granted, to ensure they are used appropriately and not over-applied. A clear, equitable process, developed in collaboration with staff, students, and families, will be essential to maintaining the integrity of the policy and ensuring that all students' needs are considered thoughtfully.

We will be providing examples and templates as part of the forthcoming guidance, which will help districts navigate these decisions within the bounds of the EO and existing legal requirements. In the meantime, we encourage districts to consult with their district legal counsel if there are questions about what qualifies as a required exemption.

#### **14. Are travel during the school day to and from athletic or extracurricular events subject to the ban?**

The Executive Order allows districts some discretion in this area. When students are participating in extracurricular activities, such as athletics, band, or clubs that may start during the instructional day, districts may restrict PED use during these times, based on their local policies and the needs of their school communities. It is important for districts to consider these decisions carefully and engage staff, students, and families in the development of local policy.

Districts also have the authority to restrict PED use during these times, based on their local policies and the needs of their school communities. As with other elements of implementation, it's important for districts to consider these decisions carefully and engage staff, students, and families in the development of local policy.

#### **15. Would a tiered approach to personal device storage, ranging from less restrictive to more restrictive options, be allowable under the Executive Order?**

Yes, a tiered approach to personal device storage is allowable under the Executive Order, as long as it is clearly outlined in district policy. The specific method of storage is up to the district, provided it meets the requirements outlined in the EO.

Districts have the flexibility to implement a range of storage options, from less restrictive to more restrictive, depending on student needs and context. Examples may include storage pouches, collection in the office, or other locally determined methods. Whatever approach is chosen, it must be included in the district's written policy.

#### **16. Is the Executive Order applicable to staff use of cell phones during the school day, and how should districts approach this issue?**

The Executive Order applies only to students and does not regulate staff use of cell phones. However, we recognize that staff cell phone use will likely be a topic of concern. It is important for school and district staff to model positive device use as a way to set a good example for students.

#### **17. Can you clarify the meaning of "bell to bell" in the Executive Order? Do districts have flexibility regarding passing times and lunch periods in their local policies, especially for high school?**

"Bell to bell" essentially means from the start of the school day to the end of the school day, and according to the Executive Order, this includes passing times and lunch periods K-12 (including HS). The policy also applies during zero periods since they occur during the school day. For open periods, if a student remains on school grounds, the policy would apply during that time as well. However, during early release periods when the student is no longer on campus, the policy does not apply.

The Governor has been clear: the intent is to deliver a high-quality public education and protect all of Oregon's learners' safety, health, and well-being. The Executive Order restricts student use of cell phones and PEDs from the first bell in the morning through the final bell in the afternoon. When students are on school grounds, the expectation is that cell phone and PED restrictions will apply just as any other school rules and expectations.

### **18. If a teacher considers a cell phone an instructional tool, is its use permitted under the Executive Order?**

The Executive Order does not allow cell phones (or other personal electronic devices such as smartwatches or earbuds) to be used as instructional tools. While we understand that teachers may find cell phones convenient, the policy is designed to support focused learning environments by limiting cell phone use. That said, other devices such as laptops or Chromebooks are encouraged and permitted for instructional purposes, as they better support educational activities within the guidelines. Schools can explore ways to integrate these approved devices effectively to meet instructional goals.

### **19. If students need to use their cell phones for two-factor identification, would that be allowed under the policy?**

Given the Executive Order (EO) restricts general cell phone and other PED use during the school day, districts should work to explore the best, most equitable solutions they have.

For a small number of students who require two-factor authentication for dual-credit or other higher level courses they are enrolled in through institutions of higher education (IHEs), school districts could consider this an exemption (under the 3Diii EO exemption detail) to be included in their policies to help "accommodate the individual circumstances of a student or to further specific educational outcomes for a student." It is often the case that the IHE courses work with specific mobile device applications to generate the two-factor authentication codes necessary to login to these online course portals. These applications often work with no internet connection.

Lastly, another option districts can look at are low-cost USB 2-step authentication security keys (more info on what they are and how they work can be found here: <https://blog.1password.com/hardware-security-keys-explained/>). These keys work without a network / internet connection, offer great security and can be bought for under \$20 each, sometimes buying them in bulk quantities can decrease the cost even more. These hardware keys are an equitable solution as well, as they solve the 2-step authentication challenge for students who may also not own a cell phone that would allow for the 2-step authentication application they would need.



## **20. What if teachers use Square or other notification applications to inform students of information?**

While communication tools like ParentSquare and other notification applications are valuable for keeping students and families informed, to remain consistent with the Executive Order, messages intended for students should ideally be sent outside of the school day. This helps ensure that device use during instructional time is minimized and aligns with the goals of the policy. Districts may also consider alternative communication strategies that do not require student device use during the school day, such as announcements, printed materials, or messages sent directly to parents and guardians. This approach supports clear communication while maintaining the focus on student engagement and learning during school hours.

## **21. How should schools navigate situations where a medical provider's order permits a student to use a personal electronic device in ways that might seem to conflict with the intent of the cell phone restriction policy? Additionally, what qualifies as a valid medical provider for such exemptions?**

The Executive Order 25-09 Section 3.d.i is designed to support students with medical needs that necessitate the use of a personal electronic device (PED) during the school day. Examples include devices used to monitor insulin levels or manage other diagnosed health conditions as directed by a **licensed medical provider**. This exemption is intended specifically for medically necessary uses and is not meant to override school policies for general wellness, convenience, or concerns that are not medically diagnosed.

Concerns have been raised that medical notes might circumvent the 504 or IEP process and could be misused. Schools should carefully review medical documentation to ensure it comes from an appropriate licensed medical provider, such as a physician or nurse practitioner. The qualifications of medical providers should be clarified in district policy or through consultation with legal counsel. Ultimately, the exemption supports medical needs while maintaining the integrity of the school's broader cell phone policy.

## **22. Does Executive Order 25-09 prohibit any loss of instructional time when addressing personal electronic device (PED) violations, even for brief conversations or reteaching expectations?**

The intent of EO 25-09 is to prevent loss of instructional time due to disciplinary actions such as suspension or expulsion related to PED violations. However, brief conversations or reteaching of expectations around device use are permitted even if that means a student may need to be pulled from class for a short amount of time. The goal is to avoid punishments like in-school or out-of-school suspensions for PED issues and instead encourage restorative strategies. Districts should ensure that responses to non-compliance align with their existing discipline policies while supporting this approach.

### **23. How are Oregon school districts defining and managing the medical provider order exemption for personal electronic devices (PEDs) as outlined in the Executive Order? Specifically, how are districts interpreting terms such as “licensed medical provider” and “medical provider’s order”?**

The Executive Order does not provide explicit definitions for terms like “licensed medical provider” or “medical provider’s order,” which allows districts flexibility to determine local implementation of the medical exemption for PED use. Consequently, districts are handling this provision in a variety of ways, often integrating it with existing procedures for IEPs, 504 plans, or other medical accommodations based on their local policies.

Districts must also ensure that they comply with applicable privacy laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), when managing medical information related to these exemptions.

#### **Suggested Definitions for Consideration:**

- **Licensed Medical Provider:** Could include medical professionals such as physicians (MD, DO), nurse practitioners, physician assistants, licensed psychologists, school nurses, or others who are licensed to practice in Oregon within their professional scope.
- **Medical Provider’s Order:** Typically a signed and dated document from a licensed medical provider that includes:
  - Diagnosis or medical condition
  - Reason for PED use
  - Duration of exemption
  - Medical rationale supporting the exemption

#### **Recommendations for Districts:**

- Develop clear, local definitions for “licensed medical provider” and “medical provider’s order.”
- Establish a transparent process for submitting, reviewing, and renewing medical exemptions.
- Where appropriate, align these procedures with existing IEP or 504 plan processes to ensure consistency and compliance.

### **24. Can school districts and virtual charter schools include reasonable exceptions to Personal Electronic Device (PED) policies for students in online or virtual learning environments, especially when students are off-campus and not under direct staff supervision?**

Yes. School districts are encouraged to clearly define the scope of their PED policies to include reasonable exceptions for students engaged in district-run online or virtual programs where enforcement is limited because students are off school grounds and not directly supervised by staff. In these cases, PED use for instructional purposes is often necessary and appropriate.

Authorizing districts may also include specific, well-defined exceptions in their PED policies that apply to virtual charter schools they oversee. These exceptions must be consistent with the intent of Executive Order 25-09 and ODE guidance, which aim to limit distractions and support student engagement while recognizing the unique needs of online learners. District policies can clarify that in-person restrictions apply primarily to physical classroom settings, whereas virtual learning environments require tailored expectations around instructional device use and equitable access.

Furthermore, virtual charter school governing boards have the authority to adopt their own PED policies tailored to their online instructional model. These policies must align with EO 25-09's principles and be publicly posted for transparency. They may define appropriate device use during virtual learning, limit non-instructional use through conduct expectations, and include supports for digital wellness and healthy technology habits.

This approach balances the goals of reducing distractions and fostering focus with the practical realities of remote learning, ensuring students can effectively engage while maintaining digital equity and well-being.

While EO 25-09 focuses on reducing distractions from personal electronic devices (PEDs) during in-person instructional hours, virtual learning environments present unique circumstances. In these settings, a student's personal device is often their primary tool for learning used to access lessons, participate in class, and complete assignments.

As such, EO 25-09 is not enforced in the same way in virtual environments. However, virtual schools are encouraged to uphold the intent of the order, promoting focus, supporting mental health, and fostering engagement, through thoughtful application of its principles.

## **25. What guidelines should school districts follow when granting individual exemptions to the Personal Electronic Device (PED) policy?**

In alignment with EO 25-09, school districts must implement policies to limit student use of personal electronic devices (PEDs) during the school day to reduce distractions and promote learning. However, the Executive Order allows for written individual exemptions based on specific student needs. These exemptions accommodate unique circumstances that support student safety, well-being, equitable access to education, and academic engagement.

To assist districts, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) has [developed guidance outlining possible exemptions and suggested processes](#). This guidance provides a framework to help districts fairly and consistently evaluate exemption requests on a case-by-case basis.

Exemptions should be granted only when a student's individual situation justifies device use to:

- Ensure the student's safety, health, or legal obligations,
- Provide access to essential educational resources, or

- Support the student’s academic engagement and equitable access to instruction.

It is important to note that exemption language is intended for use within individual student plans rather than as general policy language to be included in the local PED policy. The chart included in the guidance above 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. This approach helps maintain consistency and fairness when documenting exemptions, ensuring that all students with legitimate needs receive appropriate accommodations.