

School Cell Phone Bans

Gus J. Solomon Inns of Court

March 18, 2025

Please Put Your Cell Phones in the
Center of Your Tables

PPS Plans to Implement an “Off and Away” Policy



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STAFF REPORT

Date: November 15, 2024

To: PPS Board of Education

From: Dr. Jon Franco, Chief of Schools

CC: Superintendent Kimberlee Armstrong

Subject: Student Use of Personal Electronic Devices in Schools

Student Use of Personal Electronic Devices in Schools X-XX-XXX-P

We are committed to supporting student mental health and wellbeing and to creating environments where students feel safe, welcome, and excited to learn. Peer and student-to-teacher interactions are fundamental to learning, and we must create the conditions that allow students to be engaged, focused, and challenged so they can reach their full potential. We are committed to understanding quality research on the use and impact of Personal Electronic Devices on the educational environment and adopting best practices as they evolve.

1. Definitions

“Personal Electronic Device” is a device that is capable of electronically communicating, sending, receiving, storing, recording, reproducing and/or displaying information, depictions, and/or data.

2. General Guidelines

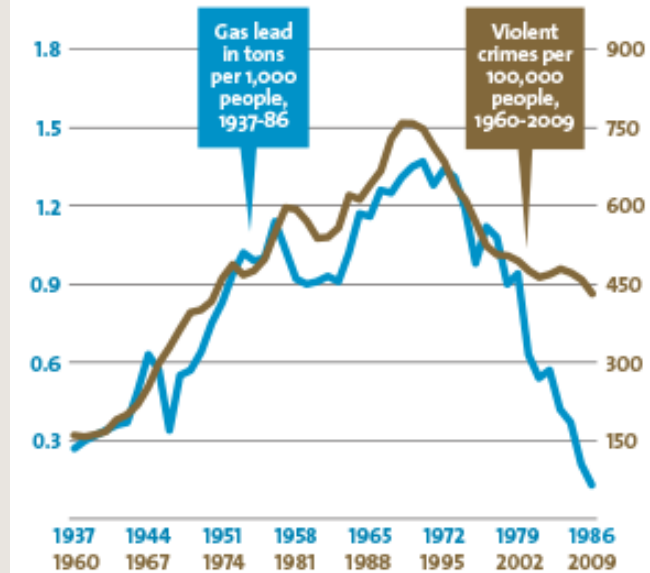
- a. Personal Electronic Devices must be “off and away” throughout the school day so that the device cannot disrupt students or the learning environment unless otherwise permitted under this policy or the related Administrative Directive.
- b. **Additional Restrictions May Be Adopted by a School:** Nothing in this policy prevents a building administrator from adopting additional restrictions on the use of Personal Electronic Devices during school hours.
- c. **Discipline:** Students who do not comply with this policy or the Personal Electronic Device requirements of their school may be subject to discipline as outlined in the District’s Student Rights and Responsibility Handbook [<https://www.pps.net/Page/13621>], including having their Personal Electronic Devices confiscated.
- d. **Exceptions:** Categories of exceptions to this policy, shall include, but not be limited to:
 - complying with a student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP), 504 Plan, or other requirement to access the educational programming or communication at school;
 - supporting specific academic activities as determined by a building administrator;
 - application of the policy in the District’s alternative educational programs;
 - and others as defined by the Superintendent.
- e. **No Bullying or Harassment:**

Toxic Lead Exposure in America: A Cautionary Tale

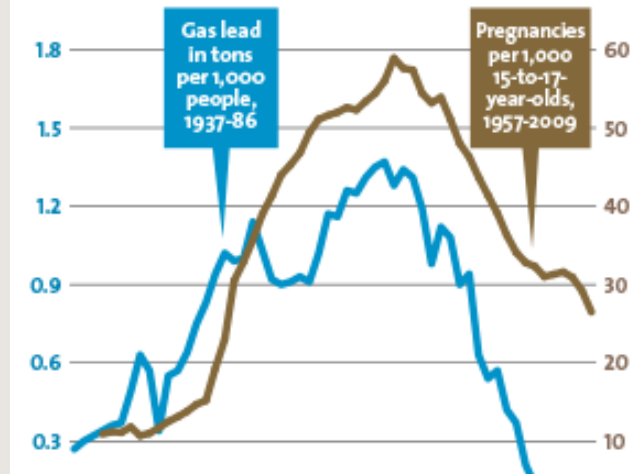
THE PB EFFECT

What happens when you expose a generation of kids to high lead levels? Crime and teen pregnancy data two decades later tell a startling story.

Gasoline lead and violent crime



Gasoline lead and teen pregnancy



The Anxious Generation

How the Great Rewiring of
Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic
of Mental Illness



A
WALL STREET
JOURNAL
TOP 10 BOOK
of 2024

Jonathan Haidt

Coauthor of *The Coddling of the American Mind*

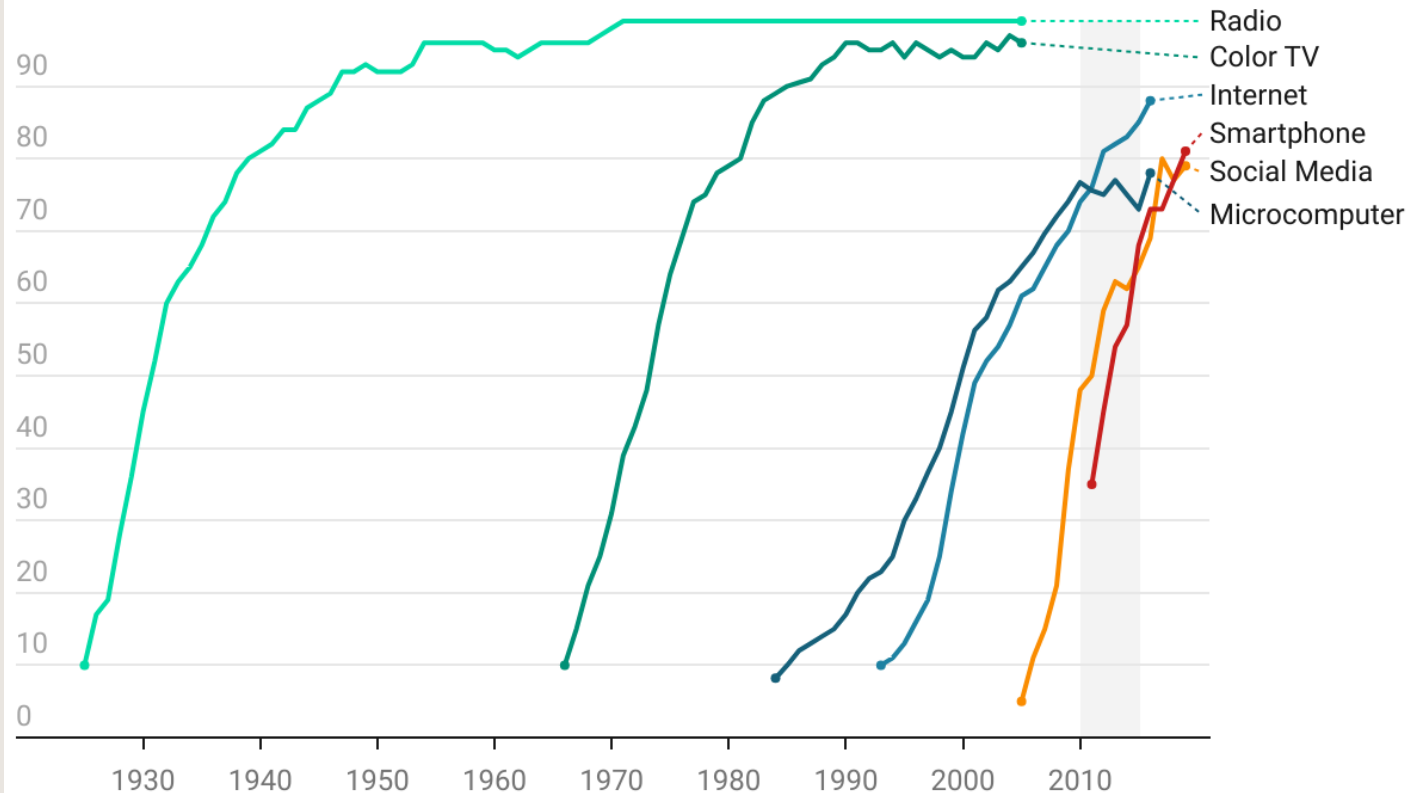
Background:
Generation Z: The
Anxious Generation?

Smartphones + Social Media + Children = ?

Rapid Adoption of Smartphones and Social Media since the late 2000s

Share of US Households with Specific Technology (1925-2019)

Percent of U.S. Households



Gen Z: Ground Zero for smartphones and social media

Daily Social Media Users (U.S. Adolescents)

Percent of high schoolers using social media "nearly every day"

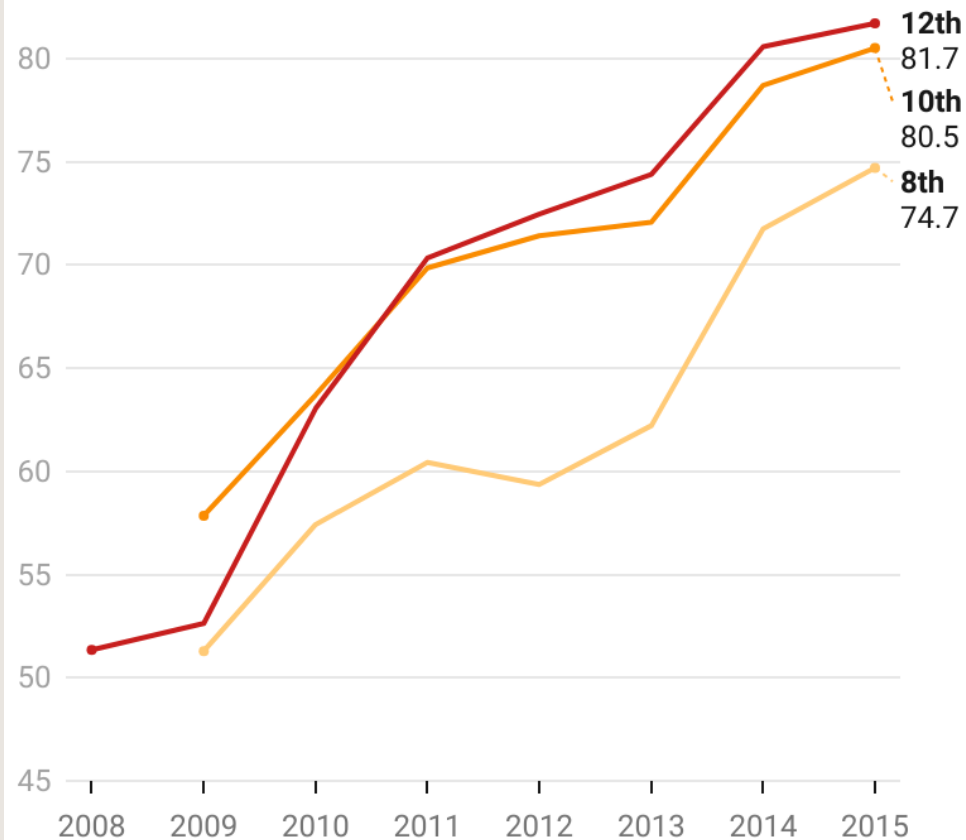
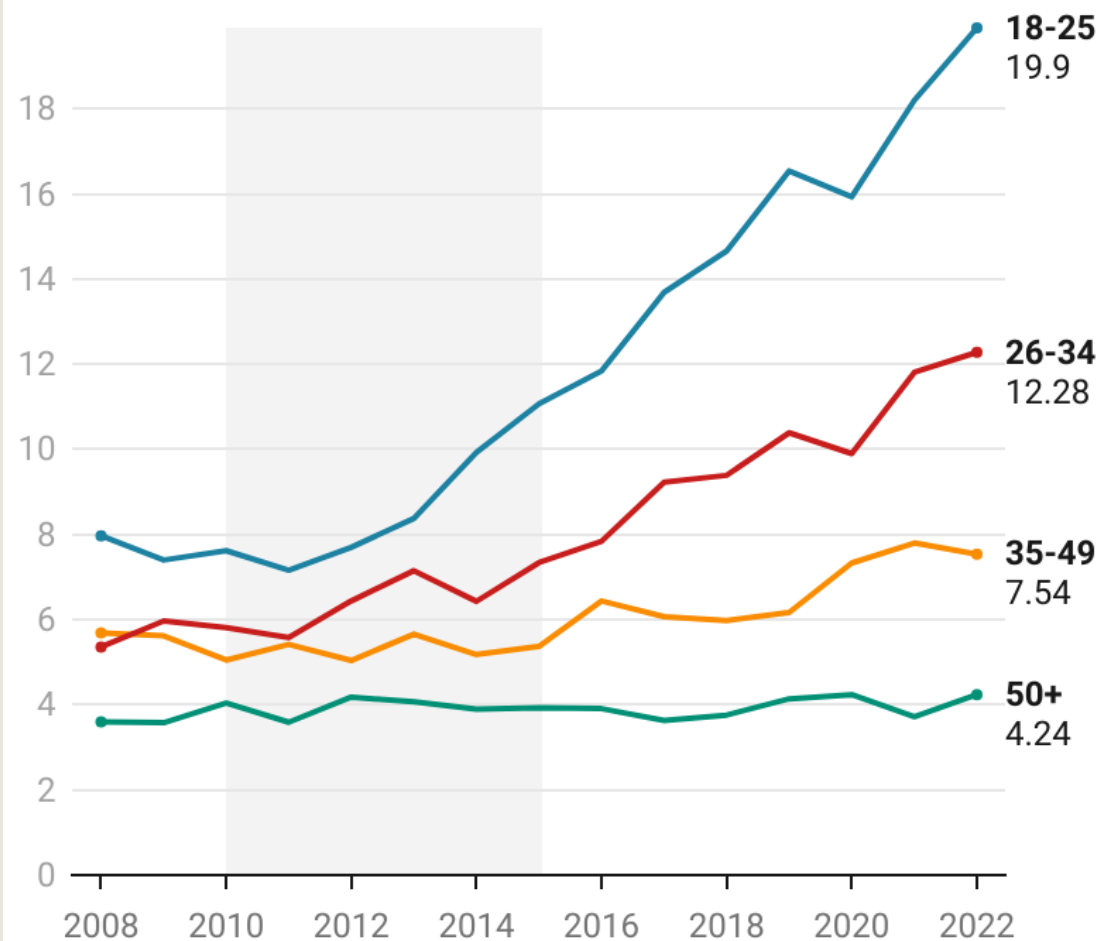


Chart: Zach Rausch • Source: Monitoring the Future • Created with Datawrapper

The results...Anxiety

Percent U.S. Anxiety Prevalence



...Depression

Major Depressive Episodes in the Last Year (U.S. Teens)

Percent of 12-17-Year-Olds

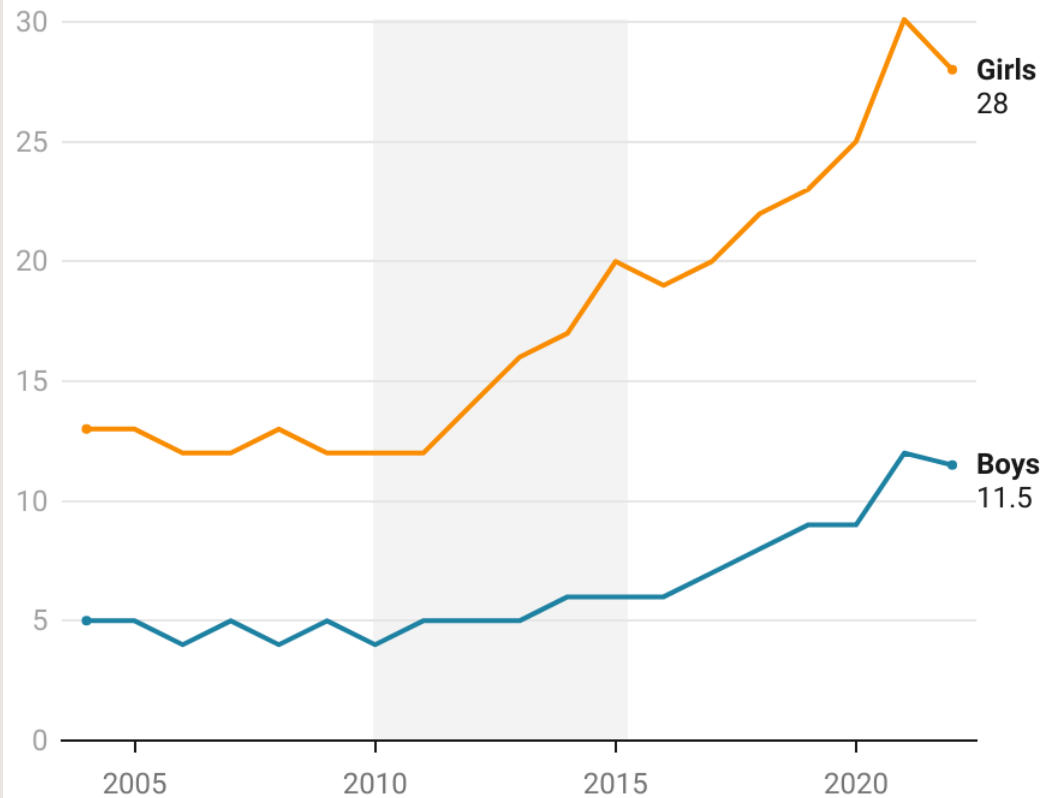


Chart: Zach Rausch • Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health • Created with Datawrapper

...Self-Harm

U.S. Emergency Department Visits for Self-Harm (Ages 10-14)

Rate per 100,000 Population

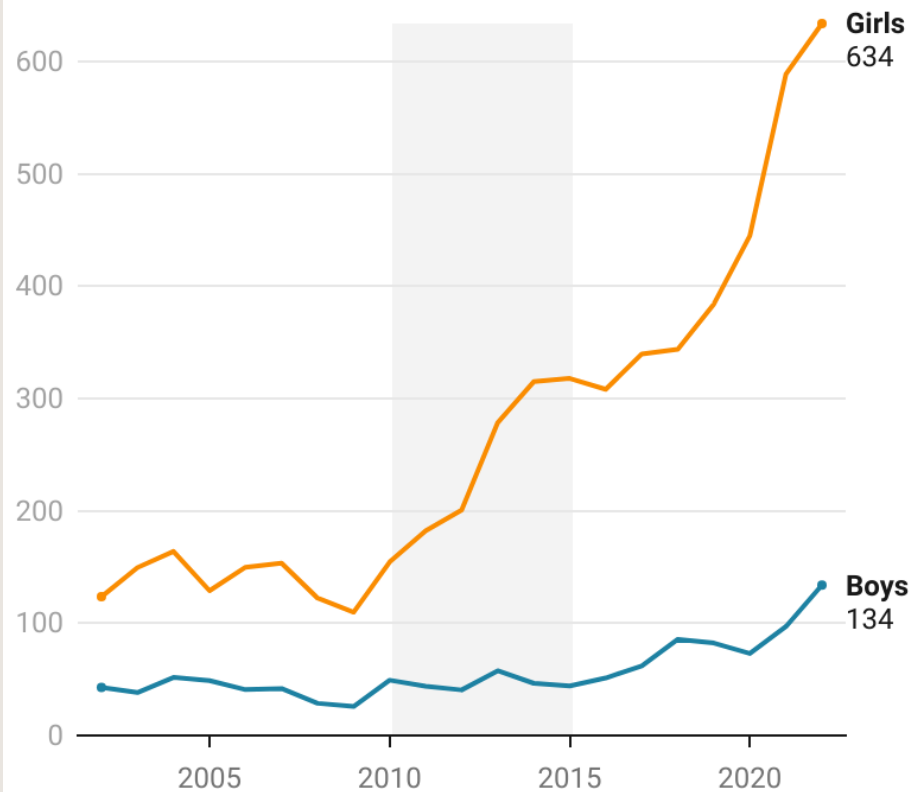


Chart: Zach Rausch • Source: CDC Non-Fatal Injury Reports • Created with Datawrapper

Haidt's Recommendations

- Assert a duty of care against tech companies
- Raise the age of "internet adulthood" from 13 to 16
- Facilitate age verification
- Encourage phone free schools



What Haidt says that Government can do

- States can change neglect laws to allow reasonable independence for children
- Encourage more play in school
- Design public spaces with children in mind
- More vocational education, apprenticeships, and youth development programs



Four Foundational Harms

- 1) Social Deprivation
- 2) Sleep Deprivation
- 3) Attention Fragmentation
- 4) Addiction



People of the State of California v. Meta Platforms, Inc., 4:23-cv-05448 (N.D. Cal 2024)

34 State Attorneys General (including Oregon) have sued Meta alleging it knowingly contributed to a youth mental health crisis by profiting from the addiction of young people to their products.

- Allege Despite research showing use is associated with depression and other MH issues, Meta won't remove harmful features.
- Alleges unlawful collection of data from children under 13 in violation of Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) 15 U.S.C. § 6501 *et seq.*
- Accuses company of deceiving users about child safety tools and using harmful features to keep children on the platform longer to maximize profits.
- Seeks injunctive relief, damages per violation, and restitution, including costs of emergency medical treatment.

History of Cell Phone Bans



Banning cell phones began decades ago because of fear of drug- dealing


2009 - 91% of public schools banned cell phones

But number of public schools banning phones
decreased:

2015 - 66% of school banned cell phones*

**N. Pancahl, A look at state efforts to ban cell phones in schools and
implications for youth mental health, Kaiser Family Foundation
(Sept 5, 2024)*



A photograph of four children sitting on a couch in a living room. From left to right: a girl with braids holding a smartphone, a child holding a large tablet, a boy holding a smartphone, and a girl holding a tablet. The background is a warm, slightly blurred interior with a hot air balloon poster on the wall.

As of Q4 2024:

8 states had state-wide bans/restrictions

16 states had state-wide legislation
pending

8 states had policy statements

Gist of Statewide Bans

Florida: K-12 classrooms prohibit cell phone use during class time and blocks access to social media for all device on district wi-fi (effective July 2024)

Indiana: prohibits wireless during instructional time, with some exceptions for teachers or emergencies. Requires each school board drafts specific policies ... e.g., schools can allow use during lunch. (effective July 2024)

Ohio: is essentially identical to Indiana




Gist of Statewide Bans

California: similar to Indiana—*Phone Free School Act*, which puts the onus of school districts and charter schools to adopt policies that restrict or eliminates smartphones use during school day by July 2026 (exceptions to same with faculty approval).

South Carolina: Governor Budget provision, schools receiving aid must adopt state's model policy adopted by State Board of Ed.



A photograph of five diverse students sitting on a wooden bench outdoors. From left to right: a young woman with blonde hair in a blue plaid shirt, a young woman with dark hair in a white sweater, a young man with blonde hair in a blue and red long-sleeved shirt, a young woman with dark hair in a blue and red long-sleeved shirt, and a young man with dark hair in a white and red long-sleeved shirt. All five students are looking down at their smartphones. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a building.

States taking a softer approach:

- **Alabama:** In February 2024, its Board of Ed. issued a statement that “strongly encourages” school boards to implement policies to restrict the use of cell phones
- **Washington:** In August 2024, Superintendent Chris Reykal issued guidelines on limiting cell phone use. And in January 2025, Reps. Stephanie McClintock, Mari Leavitt and Liz Berry introduced a bill requiring school districts to adopt a policy restricting student cellphone use during instructional time by the start of the 2026-27 school year

Will cell phone bans meaningfully reduce use in classrooms – let's look at a comparable?

Rates of texting while driving *increased* after bans implemented (NY Inst. Traffic Safety, 2012)

45% of 18-24 year-olds reported texting while driving in states that banned it, while 48% reported texting in states with no ban

California, Louisiana, Minnesota, found in modest increase in collision rates *after* texting ban implemented**

**A. McCartt, *Driver Cellphone and Texting Bans in the US: Evidence of Effectiveness*, Annals of Advances of Automotive Medicine, March 31, 2014.





**NO CELL PHONE USE
IN THIS CLASSROOM**

Enactment and Enforcement of School Cell Phone Bans



Enacting Bans

**PHONES
DOWN**



**IT'S THE
LAW.**

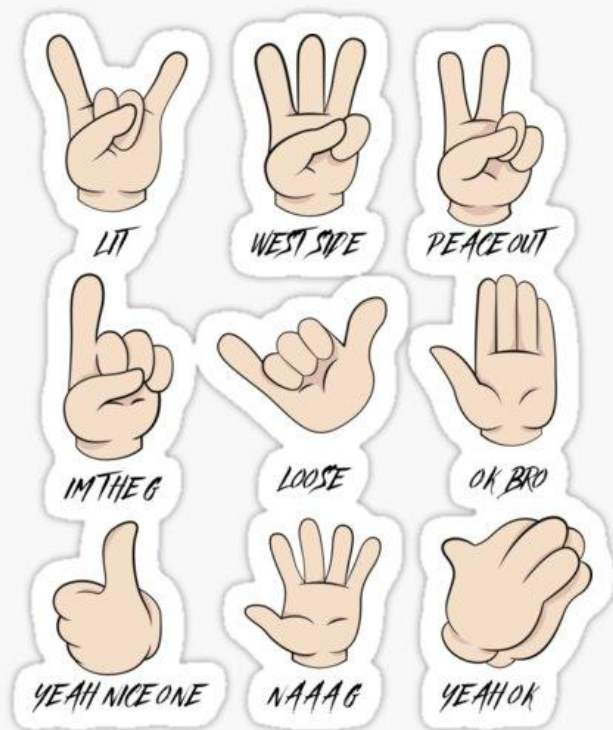
Enforcing Cell Phone Bans



N.J. v. T.L.O., 469
U.S. 325 (1985)



*Klump v. Nazareth
Area Sch. Dist., 425
F.Supp.2d 622 (E.D.
Pa. 2006)*



*J.W. v. Desoto County Sch.
Dist.*, 2010 U.S. Dist.
LEXIS 116328 (N.D. Miss.
Nov. 1, 2010)



G.C. v. Owensboro Pub. Sch., 711 F.3d 623 (6th Cir. 2013)

Family Law and Cell Phone Bans

Its hard to find good statistics on how many children are being raised in divorced or separated families. Last major study by Pew was 2008.

Some unverified resources say 50% of children in the USA will experience their parents divorce or separate by the time they reach age 18.

Many families who do separate establish parenting plans that include provisions around cell phone usage.





Family Law and Cell Phone Bans

Legal custody refers to whether the parents make joint decisions (they must agree) or whether one parent is the sole decision-maker regarding major healthcare and academic issues for the child.

The decision regarding cell phone use is generally seen as a "day-to-day decision," allowing each parent to make choices during their designated parenting time.

Legal custody primarily dictates which parent makes significant decisions related to healthcare or education, such as the type of medical treatment a child receives and the school they attend.

Family Law and Cell Phone Bans

1.2. Day-to-Day Decisions

- Each parent shall make decisions regarding the day-to-day care and control of the children while they are in that parent's care. Both parents are authorized to make emergency decisions impacting the health and safety of the children during their parenting time. However, in the event of an emergency, both parents shall immediately inform the other parent of the emergent circumstances as soon as practical by telephone or text message. In order to work toward consistency, the parents agree to consult each other on disciplinary strategies, the use of electronic devices, and other aspects of the children's schedule and routine.



Family Law and Cell Phone Bans

3.2.1 Parent-Child Communication

- The children shall always have a phone available in each parent's home in the event of an emergency. Each parent has discretion to manage the cell or telephone in their own home, but in the event of a parent being injured or otherwise unable to contact emergency services, the children shall always have access to a telephone.



THANK YOU