

# Cell Phone-Free Education

## Promoting the Health and Safety of Virginia Students



Virginia is committed to protecting the mental health of its children and teenagers. This includes making Virginia classrooms a healthier, more focused environment where every child is free to learn.

By creating cell phone-free education in Virginia schools, Governor Glenn Youngkin's Executive Order 33 works to curb the cell phone and social media addictions that jeopardize our children's mental health and undermine students' learning.

### Responding to an Urgent Need

Anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions are on the rise. Cell phone and social media use are a driving factor affecting our children. Research shows that spending more than three hours a day on social media doubles the risk of poor mental health for adolescents. Yet recent studies show that children spend, on average, 4.8 hours a day on social media.

Rates of suicide and depression have increased since 2010. Between 2019 and 2021:

- The rate of suicide has **increased 167% for girls** and **91% for boys**.
- Boys and girls experienced a **spike in depression of 161% and 145%**, respectively.

Establishing cell phone-free learning environments is critical to supporting parents and addressing our children's growing mental health crisis.

### Working Together to Protect Students

The Virginia Department of Education will provide guidance for school divisions to develop their own cell phone-free policy. The Department's guidance will reflect input from parents, educators, school administrators, and communities across the Commonwealth.

Commonsense policies can establish clear expectations for students and parents without placing an added burden on educators, allowing for:



Students to learn with fewer distractions.



Parents to contact their children in an emergency and schools to support students with medical needs.



Virginia schools to help address the alarming mental health crisis.

### Next Steps

The Virginia Department of Education welcomes input and ideas. Parents have an important voice in this conversation. Share your thoughts or register for an upcoming Commonwealth Conversation at the Virginia Department of Education [website](#). Draft guidance will be issued on August 15, 2024. Cell phone-free policies take effect in January 2025.