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GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL



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MAY 6, 2025 | Albany, NY

Distraction-Free Schools: Governor Hochul Announces New York to Become Largest State in the Nation With Statewide, Bell-to-Bell Restrictions on Smartphones in Schools

Governor Delivers on Promise To Restrict Smartphone Use in K-12 Schools Throughout Entire School Day; Requires Schools To Give Parents a Way To Contact Students During School Day When Necessary

Schools Will Have Flexibility To Create Their Own Implementation Plan; Budget Allocates \$13.5 Million for School Storage Solutions

[Traducción al español](#)

Governor Kathy Hochul today announced that New York is becoming the largest state in the nation to require statewide, bell-to-bell restrictions on smartphones in K-12 schools. The Governor secured this landmark victory as part of the agreement on the FY 2026 State Budget. Following this agreement and enactment of the FY 2026 State Budget, New York State's distraction-free schools policy will take effect this fall for the 2025-2026 school year. Today's announcement builds on Governor Hochul's nation-leading commitment to protecting youth mental health and promoting student success in the digital age, following her action last year to secure and sign a first-in-the-nation law to restrict addictive social media feeds for minors.

"New York was the first state to target addictive social media feeds — and now we're the largest state to restrict smartphones in schools throughout the entire school day," **Governor Hochul said**. "I know our young people succeed when they're learning and growing, not clicking and scrolling — and that's why New York continues to lead the nation on protecting our kids in the digital age."

https://www.youtube.com/embed/lx_R__Y6O0A

AUDIO

PHOTOS

This new requirement will take place in the 2025-26 School Year and applies to all schools in public school districts, as well as charter schools and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).

Governor Hochul's cellphone policy creates a statewide standard for distraction-free schools in New York including:

- No unsanctioned use of smartphones and other internet-enabled personal devices on school grounds in K-12 schools for the entire school day (from "bell to bell"), including classroom time and other settings like lunch and study hall periods.
- Allows schools to develop their own plans for storing smartphones during the day — giving administrators and teachers the flexibility to do what works best for their buildings and students.
- Secures \$13.5 million in funding to be made available for schools that need assistance in purchasing storage solutions to help them go distraction-free.
- Requires schools to give parents a way to contact their kids during the day when necessary.

- Requires teachers, parents and students to be consulted in developing the local policy.
- Prevents inequitable discipline.

Governor Hochul's policy clarifies that students would still be authorized to have access to simple cellphones without internet capability, as well as internet-enabled devices officially provided by their school for classroom instruction, such as laptops or tablets used as part of lesson plans.

Additionally, the Governor's policy includes several exemptions to smartphone restrictions, including for students who require access to an internet-enabled device to manage a medical condition, where required by a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), for academic purposes, or for other legitimate purposes, such as translation, family caregiving and emergencies.

Governor Hochul pursued this initiative after engaging in a statewide listening tour with teachers, parents, and students, and gathering findings to support the need for greater cellphone restriction in our schools. Her report "[More Learning, Less Scrolling: Creating Distraction-Free Schools](#)" includes:

- Smartphones distract students and inhibit learning and creativity.
- Phone-free environments do not compromise student safety.
- Phone-free environments support the mental health of students and teachers.
- Open communication and direct guidance for all stakeholders is key for successful implementation.
- Schools must address any parent concerns about staying in contact with their children during the day.
- An effective distraction-free policy must focus on the entire school day, rather than solely on time in the classroom.
- Schools can strengthen their distraction-free environment by connecting more students with in-person engagement like clubs, sports, arts and other programming.

"I know our young people succeed when they're learning and growing, not clicking and scrolling — and that's why New York continues to lead the nation on protecting our kids in the digital age."

Governor Kathy Hochul

The policy underscores the Governor's longstanding commitment to protecting youth mental health:

In June 2024, Governor Hochul signed the Safe for Kids Act after strongly advocating for and securing passage of the legislation. That law, the first of its kind to be signed in any state in the nation, requires social media companies to restrict addictive feeds on their platforms for users under 18. Unless parental consent is granted, users under 18 will not receive addictive feeds. Governor Hochul also signed the New York Child Data Protection act, which prohibits online sites and connected devices from collecting, using, sharing or selling personal data of anyone under the age of 18, unless they receive informed consent or unless doing so is strictly necessary for the purpose of the website.

As part of Governor Hochul's \$1 billion investment in mental health statewide, the Governor has also significantly expanded access to mental health care and resources for students. Last year, the state made available \$20 million in start-up funding for more school-based mental health clinics and launched a rolling application, which made it easier for interested schools to establish these satellites than through the previously used state procurement process. Since that announcement in February 2024, the state has funded 71 new clinic satellites — including 40 in high-needs districts — adding to the more than 1,100 that now exist statewide.

New York State United Teachers President Melinda Person said, “This isn't about being anti-phone or anti-technology — it's about being pro-childhood. We're giving students seven hours a day free from distractions so they can focus on learning, access their creativity, and make real human connections. Tackling social media and technology use as a public health issue will take continued partnership, education, and courage — and New York is ready to lead the way.”

New York State Congress of Parents and Teachers Executive Director Kyle Belokopitsky said, “We are thrilled that NYS, Governor Hochul, and the legislature is leading the way, and measuring our mission to support ALL children, and give them distracted free learning spaces in ALL of our schools this Fall. The classroom, lunchroom, and school hallways should be spaces to learn, to connect, to engage, and to communicate — and we are excited to bring meaningful change to our schools and children. We know this work might be hard, and might be challenging in the beginning, but we owe this support to our children, to their futures, and to their mental health and wellbeing. We WILL make every child's potential a reality, as there is no other more important work.”

Phones Free New York Founder Raj Goyle said, “I thank Governor Hochul and the legislature for their truly courageous stand in protecting our children from the harmful effects of smartphones at schools. As a New York Dad of two teenage girls, I am proud that New York will be the largest state in the country with a bell-to-bell band. We look forward to working with school districts in implementing this groundbreaking law. It's a new day for our kids and teachers alike.”

Mothers Against Media Addiction Founder and Executive Director Julie Scelfo said,

“Smartphones are designed to be addictive in a way that makes it harder for kids to focus and learn. As parents, we are grateful to Governor Hochul and the lawmakers who led this effort to support engaged, distraction-free learning in our schools, making New York a model for the rest of the nation. MAMA volunteers are energized by this victory — five states down, and only 45 more to go.”

Mothers Against Media Addiction’s Harlem Chapter Leader and Child Welfare Attorney Muna Heaven said,

“Parents and educators are frustrated by what these addictive technologies are doing to our children, and I am so proud to live in a state where our policymakers are actually listening and willing to fight for what they know is right. Thanks to our advocacy and to leaders like Governor Hochul, New York is now the largest state in the country to pass full bell-to-bell smartphone restrictions for all K-12 schools, a policy that will not only improve educational outcomes, but also the overall well-being of students statewide.”

Farnsworth Middle School 8th Grade Student Anika Bhupati said, “The ‘Bell-to-Bell’

Smartphone Ban has truly transformed our school environment by helping students focus, cultivate meaningful relationships, and renew their commitment to learning. Without the constant distractions of smartphones, our classrooms have become spaces where students are fully present, engaged, and empowered to succeed. This policy is a critical step in protecting the potential of future generations and ensuring that schools across New York remain places where education comes first.”

Contact the Governor’s Press Office

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Translations

Arabic Translation

الترجمة إلى العربية

(https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/05.06.25.rel_distraction_arabic.pdf)

Bengali Translation

বাংলা অনুবাদ

(https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/05.06.25.rel_distraction_bengali.pdf)

Chinese Translation

中文翻譯

(https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/05.06.25.rel_distraction_chinese.pdf)

French Translation

Traduction en français

(https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/05.06.25.rel_distraction_french.pdf)

Haitian-Creole Translation

Tradiksyon kreyòl ayisyen

(https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/05.06.25.rel_distraction_haitiancreole.pdf)

Italian Translation

Traduzione italiana

(https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/05.06.25.rel_distraction_italian.pdf)

Korean Translation

한국어 번역

(https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/05.06.25.rel_distraction_korean.pdf)

Polish Translation

Polskie tłumaczenie

https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/05.06.25.rel_distraction_polish.pdf

Russian Translation

Перевод на русский язык

https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/05.06.25.rel_distraction_russian.pdf

Spanish Translation

Traducción al español

https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/05.06.25.rel_distraction_spanish.pdf

Urdu Translation

پیلے رنگ سے نمایاں کردہ ٹیکسٹ

https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/05.06.25.rel_distraction_urdu.pdf

Yiddish Translation

אידישע איבערטייטשונג

https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/05.06.25.rel_distraction_yiddish.pdf