

Surgeon General's Warning on the Harms of Screen Use Toolkit



Table of Contents

Youth Actions	3
Family Actions	5
School Actions	7
Health Care Provider Actions	9
Researcher Actions	10
Policy Maker Actions	12
Technology Company Actions	13
School Policy Guidance	15

Glossary of Terms	27
References	29

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text 988 for immediate or other confidential help.

Youth can:

- **Protect yourself and others online.**
 - Be cautious about what you share about yourself online. Be selective about what you share on social media and in smaller, private groups. Others can take what you share and may distribute it more widely than your intended original audience.
 - If contacted by someone online with requests that feel wrong, they probably are. Talk with a trusted adult and/or report the user on the platform.
 - If someone threatens to share explicit content unless you meet their demands, it's a crime called sextortion. Don't respond. Save any evidence (like screenshots), tell a trusted adult, and report it to law enforcement and the platform.
 - Track your screen time. Learn how much time you are spending on screens beyond what is required for schoolwork, and track that against your goals.
 - Take breaks and create boundaries. Deactivate social media if needed, turn off notifications, and mute, unfollow or block accounts that do not make you feel good about yourself.
 - Reach out for help. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text 988 for immediate or other confidential help.
- **Disconnect from screens and live real life.**
 - Do a digital detox to help you understand how screens affect your life and re-evaluate what you want your screen time to look like in the long term.
 - Find ways to participate in extracurricular activities at school or volunteer in your community.
 - Go outside and explore parks, playgrounds, and libraries.

- Connect with friends in safe places.
- Make sure you get enough sleep, eat healthy, real foods, and move your body every day.
- **Use screens and social media to find joy.**
 - Connect with friends and family members through text, videochat, social media, or video games.
 - Explore interests and skills, such as researching one of your passions or learning about a new hobby.
 - Find online communities that align with your interests and values.

Be present in the moment and use screen-free time to connect with children without distraction.

Families can: ^{9,10,63}

- **Create a family media plan.**
 - Talk with your family about overall screen use. Ask about joys and concerns around digital media, both time and content, and discover healthy family priorities together.
 - A family media plan can cover who can use what screen, where, when, which content, and for how long.
 - Suggested screen time limits could be: none for children under 18 months old, less than 1 hour per day for children under 6, and 2 hours per day for 6–18-year-olds.¹⁰
 - Remove devices from children’s bedrooms overnight. Create additional screen-free zones and times of the day, such as screen-free meals.
 - Create a communication plan with your child to avoid school day interruptions and use tools and settings on your child's device to minimize distractions during activities that should not be interrupted.
 - Consider a digital detox for your family to help reset unhealthy screen habits and reduce compulsive use at any age.
- **Model healthy behavior.**
 - Be present in the moment and use screen-free time to connect with children without distraction.
 - Create experiences that can displace screentime, such as going for a walk outside, cooking a healthy meal together, or checking out books and programming at the local library.
 - Ask permission from family members before sharing images or information about them online.
 - Demonstrate priorities by fulfilling your own responsibilities before engaging with digital media.

- Model and create opportunities for good, sufficient sleep, access to healthy, real foods, and physical activity.
- Find families with similar values around digital media and exchange ideas and best practices.
- **Delay access to screens and use parental controls as necessary.**
 - Delay giving children access to tablets, smartphones and social media as long as possible.
 - Discuss why you are limiting or controlling access to certain devices, platforms, or media.
 - Review the content your child is watching. Some content can be beneficial to a child's well-being, but content that is violent, frightening, sexually explicit, age-inappropriate, misleading, or that models unsafe behavior can be harmful to children.
 - Report harmful or illegal interactions to the platform and law enforcement.

Limit screen use by assigning work in books or on paper whenever possible.

Schools can:

- **Implement bell-to-bell ban policies to limit or eliminate multitasking during school hours.**
 - Implement bell-to-bell school cell phone policy restrictions to minimize screen time during the school day.^{64,65}
 - Benefits of a full smartphone ban can include reduced distraction and improved focus for students, enhanced test scores and academic performance, improved peer relations and reduced cyberbullying, and mental health benefits by disconnecting.
 - Limit screen use to support teachers and enable distraction-free teaching.
 - Allow exceptions for students who need devices because of an individualized education program, a plan related to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, health monitoring, or emergency circumstances.
- **Teach digital citizenship and literacy skills.**
 - Consult resources and toolkits that support schools in integrating these skills into health education and other classes.^{66,67}
 - Create awareness around cyberbullying and its harms. Set expectations on how cyberbullying will be addressed.
 - Make individually-accessible devices available in a computer lab.
 - Invest in physical textbooks and prioritize pen-and-paper curricula, hands-on activities, and social activities for all grade levels.
 - Limit screen use by assigning work in books or on paper whenever possible.
- **Create opportunities to displace screen time.**
 - Build in more opportunities for physical activity during and after the school day to help students meet the nationally-recommended 60 minutes of physical activity daily.⁴⁸

- Offer access to games and activities that encourage physical activity and social interaction among students during lunch or recess periods.
- Offer a variety of extracurricular activities to help reduce harmful effects of screen use.
- Implement school policies and practices aimed at improving diet, physical activity, sleep, and mental health.

Health Care Providers can:¹⁰

- **Include questions about screen usage in annual well-child visits.**
 - Ask questions about a child's screen use and online life. For younger children, ask parents about their rules regarding time limits, content, and alternative play activities. For older children, ask them what their family's media rules are, what types of media they use, how media makes them feel, and whether it leads to any problems.
 - Learn to recognize harmful screen use and its relationships to important health outcomes such as nutrition and sleep. For children struggling with sleep, school, healthy weight, mental health, or behavioral issues, inquire about how the child's media use might play a role in the problem.
 - Use motivational interviewing⁶⁸ to identify changes in screen time rules that may help the child attain healthier sleep, physical activity, homework, or time with family, friends, or alternate activities.
 - Recommend creating a Family Media Plan and regular family discussions about media.
- **Model healthy behaviors.**
 - Avoid judgmental approaches and encourage a collaborative approach. Support families facing real constraints on time and resources.
 - Model face-to-face interactions with children and their caregivers, whenever possible.
- **Keep up to date about screens.**
 - Commit to lifelong learning about screen and digital media use. As the digital world evolves, keep up with changes in the devices and technology products children use, their risks and benefits, and available safety settings.

Evaluate bell-to-bell school cell phone policy bans.

Researchers can:

- **Prioritize research about long-term impacts from screens.**
 - Comprehensively assess the four domains of well-being impacted by excessive screen time and type of screen activity (e.g., cognitive, academic, psychological, and physical).
 - Gain a better understanding of how the impacts of screen time vary depending on the content viewed and the degree of interaction with it.
 - Follow children and adolescents to better assess the short- and long-term impacts of different types and durations of screen use and distinguish between correlation and causation.
 - Identify developmental windows of vulnerability.
 - Continue studying the best approaches to make digital technology and media use sufficiently safe for children and adolescents across developmental ages, stages, and backgrounds (e.g., socioeconomic status, disability, sex, rural vs urban settings, etc.).
 - Conduct longitudinal, interventional research to identify the most effective approaches for reducing harmful media use and promoting healthy media practices across development.
 - Continue to explore the effect of blue light on the brain and eyes.²⁷
- **Develop a robust research agenda around technology in schools and educational outcomes.**
 - Evaluate bell-to-bell school cell phone policy bans or restrictions to assess the components of an effective school cell phone or device policy.
 - Conduct longitudinal studies on the overall outcomes associated with technology use in classrooms.

- **Enhance research coordination, collaboration, and accessible communication.**
 - Investigate protective factors and best practices to support evidence-informed communication and recommendations to the public and youth-serving organizations.
 - Develop objective, standardized measures of screen use based on device-level data rather than youth or parental self-report.

Polymakers can:

- **Empower parents through laws that demand child safety and privacy protection.**
 - Pursue policies that provide parents with robust controls to manage their children’s screen time, privacy settings, content exposure, and account controls.
 - Establish privacy-protective age-assurance requirements for digital platforms and services likely to be accessed by minors.
 - Require digital platforms and services likely to be accessed by minors to have features that reduce the risk of sexual exploitation and self-harm.
- **Fund comprehensive, independent long-term research about mental and physical health outcomes.**
 - Continue measuring and studying children’s use of screens and health outcomes.
 - Investigate emerging concerns such as chatbots, sextortion, and online gambling.
 - Consider implementing and measuring the impacts of bell-to-bell policies to restrict phone use throughout the school day.
- **Build strong, resilient communities through legislation.**
 - Support the development, implementation, and evaluation of digital and media literacy curricula in schools.
 - Take steps to increase safe access to alternative activities such as parks, playgrounds, recreation centers, libraries, and after-school programs.
 - Share and amplify messages about harmful screen use and promote healthier activities to inform and motivate parents to seek out screen-free activities.

Technology Companies can:

- **Design for user well-being, not engagement.**
 - Display a warning about harmful screen use before each use.
 - Nudge children to engage in other activities that have health benefits, such as spending time with friends, going outside, or engaging in physical activity.
 - Eliminate features designed to maximize screen time, such as autoplay videos, infinite scroll, recommendation algorithms, and reward notifications.
- **Prioritize child safety and privacy.**
 - Ensure default settings for children are set to highest safety and privacy standards.
 - Adhere to and enforce age minimums for usage through robust, privacy-protecting assurance methods.
 - Support transparency and independent research about the effects of screen use on children.
 - Disable notifications for children's accounts and implement a bedtime and school mode.
 - Do not recommend minor accounts to adult users and prevent direct messages to minor accounts from strangers.
 - Do not allow deceptive patterns to trick children into unintended actions.
 - Ensure emergency communication is available regardless of mode.
 - Establish scientific advisory groups to inform approaches and policies.
 - Publish policies that outline how the company will respond to reported inappropriate conduct on the company's platform.

- **Create ways for children and caretakers to view, use, opt out of features, and control access.**
 - Provide effective parental controls that are accessible and understandable. The defaults for minors should be set for high privacy, low-data-collection, and age-appropriate content settings that don't require parental opt-in.
 - Allow users and parents of users to opt out of certain addictive design features, like infinite scroll, autoplay, recommendation algorithms, and post metrics (e.g., "likes").
 - Incorporate metrics and dashboards to provide easy-to-understand data about time spent on apps and the nature of content consumed, helping children and parents monitor screen use and make informed decisions.

Guidance

for crafting a school cell phone policy

Policies restricting student cell phone use in schools have increased exponentially over the past few years. In 2015, 66% of schools prohibited cell phone use.¹ By February 2026, 41 states had enacted laws or policies related to K-12 student cell phone use in schools,² with 97% of principals reporting that their school has a cell phone policy.³ However, the content of these policies varies widely. For example, five states (AK, CO, ME, MN, and NM) have a law requiring districts to adopt a cell phone policy but they do not specify district requirements.² 38% of schools with cell phone policies have restrictions for cell phone use outside of class, 12% have a cell phone policy that allows teachers to decide whether students can have their cell phones during class, and 5% have policies permitting students to use cell phones during all classes.⁴

State laws restricting student cell phone use in schools are relatively new, beginning with the passage of a Florida law in 2023 (CS/HB 379) that restricted students' cell phone use during class.⁵ The Florida bill required a pilot study in six school districts documenting the effects of restrictions on student achievement and behavior.⁵ Data from the six districts were recently released, and suggest positive impacts on student test scores and attendance following implementation of cell phone restrictions. Although there was an initial increase in suspensions in the first year of implementation, particularly among some student sub-groups, this effect disappeared by the second year.⁶

Evaluation of the impact of these policies, including which policy components are most likely to result in positive changes, is still emerging. Therefore, the purpose of this guide is to empower and assist local school districts in developing or modifying policies based on the best available information, state law, and their local context.

Often referred to as “cell phone bans,” these policies often apply to a broader range of personally owned digital devices, including:

- Cell phones
- Tablets
- Laptops
- Gaming devices
- Smartwatches

This guide helps school districts think critically about:

- Who should be involved in policy development
- What elements should be included in the policy

To maximize success, schools should work closely with parents so expectations about cell phone use are well understood and respected; recent data indicate that 25% of parents contact their child via their smartphone during the school day and 39% of those parents contact them multiple times.⁷

This guide is intended to inform on the development or modification of student use of cell phones during the school day. If districts wish to consider guidance for teacher or staff use of cell phones during the school day, a similar process with similar considerations could be implemented.

Getting started

1. Identify and Convene school community members

Policies developed in partnership with the school community, including school staff, parents, and students—can improve buy-in and increase the likelihood of successful implementation.

Before creating a new group, consider engaging existing groups such as:

- School health advisory councils
- Youth advisory councils
- Wellness councils
- Parent advisory committees

2. Locate Your State Law or District Policy

Locate your state law and/or district policy regarding cell phone or personal device use. If you are unsure where to find state legislation, consult the [Pre-K-12 Education Legislation Database](#).⁸ Search under “Technology in Education and Virtual Learning / Personal Devices.”

Check your district website and/or district or school handbook or call your district office to locate school district policies.

Once located, review the law or policy and determine:

2a. Does your state provide a model policy or template?

- ☐ **Yes. This guide may help you determine whether additional elements should be included.**
- ☐ **No. This guide can help you develop a policy based on commonly used components.**

2b. Does the state law require specific policy elements?

- ☐ **Yes. Ensure your district policy includes all required elements and consider if additional elements as outlined below, should be added.**

District policies may need to be more detailed than state laws to support implementation.

☐ **No. Walk through the steps below to develop your district policy.**

When determining which elements should be included, the team should keep in mind:

- District capacity for implementation
- Training needs
- Financial costs
- Staffing limitations
- School leadership and staff support for the policy elements
- Parent support for the policy elements
- Student support for the policy elements
- If schools and/or teachers will have some autonomy in some aspects of policy implementation; if so, be as clear as possible what these areas are.

Policy Design Considerations

3. What Type of Device Restriction Best Fits Your District?

3. What type of access will be prohibited? Select one.

- ☐ **Off and Away (Instructional Time Restrictions)**
Phones must be turned off and put away during classes but may be used during non-instructional time.
- ☐ **Away for the Day (Storage Ban)**
Phones are stored in a central location or locked pouch during the school day.
- ☐ **Bell-to-Bell Ban**
Phones are prohibited from the first bell to the last bell. A survey of more than 68,000 teachers found that between the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years, the proportion of schools with bell-to-bell bans increased from 60% to 74%.⁹ Twenty-six states now have “bell-to-bell” policies in place.¹⁰

☐ **Location-Based Ban**

Phones are banned in certain areas (e.g., classrooms, locker rooms). According to an Education Week survey, 72% of educators say students are currently allowed to use their phones during lunch, 53% outside on school grounds, 51% in classrooms if the teacher permits it, and 53% in hallways.¹¹

☐ **Total Ban**

Phones are not allowed on campus.

☐ **Other:** _____

4. Should Policies Differ by Grade Level?

Some districts use different restrictions by grade level. For example, a national teacher survey found:

- ~50% of high schools had bell-to-bell bans
- ~90% of elementary and middle schools had bell-to-bell bans.⁹

4. Would your district benefit from grade-specific restrictions?

☐ **Yes, specify:**

☐ Elementary school: _____

☐ Middle school: _____

☐ High school: _____

☐ **No**

5. What Devices Should Be Included?

5. Which types of devices will be covered by the policy?

☐ List specific devices, check all that apply:

☐ Smartphones

☐ Tablets

☐ Gaming devices

☐ Bluetooth-enabled headphones

☐ Smartwatches

☐ Other: _____

☐ Use broad language covering any device capable of communication or internet access.

Teachers estimate that one in three students use laptops for non-academic purposes during school. Interviews with school districts suggest that some of the same behaviors occurring on personal phones also occur on school-issued devices.⁹

However, some districts exclude laptops. For example, the Beaverton School District (Oregon) policy states, “Personal electronic devices do not include laptop computers or other devices required to support academic activities.”¹²

Districts should determine which approach best fits their needs.

6. How Will Devices Be Stored?

6. How will devices be stored? Consider cost, logistics, and staff training needs.

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Locking storage pouches
- ☐ Student Backpacks
- ☐ Cell Phone Lockers
- ☐ Locked classroom storage boxes
- ☐ Unlocked classroom storage boxes
- ☐ Over-the-door/hanging phone holders
- ☐ Other: _____

7. What Exceptions Will Be Allowed?

7. Will exceptions be included in the policy? Check state law; many state laws require exceptions. For example, **Indiana Senate Bill 78** allows device use for:

- Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Section 504 Plans
- Documented medical conditions
- Emergencies
- Language translation needs (Indiana General Assembly, 2024)

- ☐ **Yes, there will be exceptions. Proceed to 7a below to determine what type.**
- ☐ **No, there will be no exceptions. Skip to Q8.**

7a. Will there be exceptions for health and medical needs? (NOTE: This may overlap with Educational Accommodations below such as IEP or 504 plans).

☐ **Yes. Specify which types, check all that apply**

- ☐ **Diabetes Management:** Students with diabetes frequently use apps on their smartphones for continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) and to receive insulin pump data.
- ☐ **Audio/Hearing Devices:** Students with auditory issues may use smartphone apps to manage cochlear implants, bone conduction devices, or hearing aids.
- ☐ **Cardiac Monitoring:** Students using looping event monitors to monitor heart conditions may be allowed to have their phone nearby to transmit data.
- ☐ **Mental Health/Chronic Conditions:** Documented mental health conditions (e.g., severe anxiety) or metabolic conditions that require specialized monitoring apps.

☐ **No**

7b. Will there be exceptions for educational accommodations? (NOTE: Check state and local law, some of these are likely required):

☐ **Yes, check all that apply:**

- ☐ IEP plans: _____
- ☐ 504 plans: _____
- ☐ English learner supports: _____
- ☐ Teacher-authorized classroom activities
- ☐ Online courses or dual enrollment
- ☐ Other: _____

7c. Emergencies. Some have noted that access to cell phones during emergencies may increase risk. The Executive Director of the National Association of School Resource Officers outlines several reasons student cell phone use during emergencies may increase risk:¹³

- Students should be, “completely focused on life-saving instructions and information provided by teachers, administrators and other officials. Phones can easily distract students from hearing, understanding and reacting appropriately to such information, even when students use the phones to communicate with parents”

- Light or sounds from cell phones could increase risk during a school shooting.
- Hundreds of students using cell phones simultaneously may impede school administrators from using cell phones to active emergency assistance.
- Students reaching out to parents may cause a rush of parents to the school, which increase parental risk and cause traffic problems that may impede emergency responders.

7c. Will device access be allowed during emergencies? NOTE: Regardless of response, schools should have a plan for communicating with parents during emergencies in their school emergency operations plan.

- ☐ **Yes**
☐ **No**

7d. Will exceptions be made for students who are parents or who have caregiving responsibilities?

- ☐ **Yes**
☐ **No**

8. Will the policy include a plan for communicating with parents/guardians before, during, and after the emergency:

- ☐ **Yes**
☐ **No**

9. How Will the Policy Be Enforced?

9a. Will there be a tiered response for violations? Regardless of which option is selected, consistent implementation and enforcement by all school staff is essential.

- ☐ **Yes. Specify consequences for each type of violation.** Consider different types of consequences. For example, Dallas Independent School District uses escalating administrative fees, while the Houston Independent School District uses escalating confiscation periods.

First violation: _____

Second violation: _____

Third violation: _____

Fourth violation: _____

Additional violations: _____

☐ **No. Uniform consequence, regardless of prior violations or severity. Skip to Q10.**

9b. Are disciplinary actions that remove students from class allowed?

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

8c. Will some violations that occur during the school day, such as cyberbullying, warrant more serious disciplinary action? NOTE: Review district disciplinary policies to ensure consistency. All illegal activities should be noted as requiring referral to law enforcement.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

9. How Will the Policy Be Communicated?

Policies should be clearly shared with:

- Staff
- Students
- Parents
- Community members

9a. How will the policy be communicated? Check all that apply.

- ☐ District website
- ☐ School website
- ☐ Student or parent handbook
- ☐ Written notice to families
- ☐ Parent acknowledgment forms
- ☐ Other: _____

10. Will Staff Receive Training?

10a. Will staff receive training on the policy?

Successful implementation often requires training for teachers and school staff. For example, Virginia developed a “School Leader Implementation Toolkit for Cell Phone-Free Education.” The Toolkit includes evidence-based resources, decision trees, and strategies to assist school staff in consistently implementing Virginia’s “bell-to-bell” learning free of cell phones.”

☐ **Yes. How often will this occur?**

- ☐ One time
- ☐ Annually
- ☐ Other

☐ **No**

Helpful resources include:

- [Massachusetts Attorney General Cell Phone Policy Toolkit](#)
- [Maryland State Department of Education Implementation Guidance](#)

11. Will the Policy Include Digital Literacy Education?

11a. Will the policy include any requirements to promote media and digital literacy among students?

☐ **Yes.**

What content will be required in which grade levels? _____

During what classes will it be implemented (i.e., health education) _____

☐ **No**

Media literacy includes teaching students skills such as news literacy, information literacy, digital literacy, digital wellness, social media literacy, digital citizenship, and AI literacy so students can analyze information online and assess the accuracy and validity of the information. At least half of US states have enacted laws requiring media literacy education, with 11 states passing these laws since January 2024.¹⁴

For example, Texas recently passed House bill 825, requiring the Department of Education to develop social media and internet safety curricula. The law also requires that the curricula include topics such as healthy and unhealthy use of social media, how social media can be used to manipulate behavior, and the importance of evaluating information generated by artificial intelligence.

North Carolina also passed the Protecting Students in Digital Age a law in 2025, requiring social media literacy instruction for students, and specifying many of the same topics as Texas, and how to identify cyberbullying, predatory behavior and human trafficking on the internet. The instruction is required once during elementary school, once during middle school, and twice during high school.¹⁴

Digital Literacy Resources include:

[Youville](#), a free digital citizenship education program for children ages 8-12 developed by the Federal Trade Commission.

Common Sense Media's [Digital Citizenship Curriculum](#) for grades K-12. This includes 73 lessons across K-12. In addition to the lesson plans, the curriculum also includes quick activities for informal learning and time-limited settings.

Meta: [https://www.meta.com/safety/topics/digital-literacy/?](https://www.meta.com/safety/topics/digital-literacy/?srsltid=AfmBOoo9CWmxjliFCVwZQXXqVh7aGij-Vltg2DdDtPnPEOcrOy-crV6R)

[srsltid=AfmBOoo9CWmxjliFCVwZQXXqVh7aGij-Vltg2DdDtPnPEOcrOy-crV6R](https://www.meta.com/safety/topics/digital-literacy/?srsltid=AfmBOoo9CWmxjliFCVwZQXXqVh7aGij-Vltg2DdDtPnPEOcrOy-crV6R)

ISTE: <https://iste.org/digital-citizenship-lessons>

Google: https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/en_us

12. How Will the Policy Be Evaluated?

12. Will your district conduct an evaluation of the policy?

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No. End document.**

12 b. How often will the policy be evaluated?

- ☐ **Quarterly**
- ☐ **Annually**
- ☐ **Every other year**
- ☐ **Other** _____

12c. What indicators will you use to measure impact? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Student attendance
- ☐ Academic performance or test scores
- ☐ Student disciplinary incidents
- ☐ Classroom observation data
- ☐ School climate surveys
- ☐ Staff, student, or parent interviews
- ☐ Other _____

12d. Who will conduct the evaluation?

- ☐ **School district**
- ☐ **State Department of Education**
- ☐ **Independent Evaluator**
- ☐ **Other** _____

Districts may want to monitor policy implementation and outcomes on a regular basis and make adjustments if needed.

Note that disciplinary incidents may initially increase after policy implementation, as observed in Florida.⁶ A good resource for evaluating your district's policy is Panorama Education's free survey: [Is Your District's Cell Phone Policy Working? Ask These Questions to Find Out](#)

Glossary

Active Screen Time

The interaction with any screen-based media that requires physical or cognitive engagement.

ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)

A neurodevelopmental disorder where a person experiences higher levels of hyperactivity and impulsive behaviors.

AI (Artificial Intelligence)

The capability of computer systems to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making.

Algorithm

Embedded calculations and instructions which determine how social media and search engines rank, filter, and suggest content to users.

Bell-to-Bell Policy

A rule requiring that students refrain from using personal mobile phones for the entire school day, from the first bell to the final bell.

Caregivers

Anyone who takes care of children, including parents, grandparents, foster parents, legal guardians, and childcare providers.

Chatbot

A software application that uses programmed rules or artificial intelligence to simulate conversation with users through text or voice interactions.

Cyberbullying

The use of digital communication tools, such as social media or messaging platforms, to embarrass, harass, threaten, or harm another person.

Deepfakes

AI-generated, hyper-realistic photo, video, or audio forgeries that depict people saying or doing things they never did.

Digital Ecosystem

Any digital environment, including the internet, social media, apps, AI and AI agents, video games, tablets, and mobile devices.

Digital Citizenship

The responsible, ethical, and informed participation in digital environments.

Digital Media

Information and experiences created, shared, and stored in digital form, including text, images, audio, video, and interactive materials accessed through electronic devices.

Engagement-based design

Profit-driven or manipulative digital designs which compete for users' attention and interaction and compels frequent interaction, prolonged use, and repeated use. Typical features include data harvesting.

Exergaming

A type of video gaming that combines physical exercise with gameplay, requiring players to move their bodies to participate.

Gamblification

The integration of gambling-like mechanics, such as chance-based rewards, betting, and variable ratio reinforcement, into non-gambling products like video games, social media, and finance apps.

Harmful internet and media use

Social media or digital media use that is excessive or compulsive in nature, leading to physical, mental, social, and/or emotional impairment, as well as impaired functioning in school, work or social settings.

IRL (In Real Life)

A term used to distinguish offline, face-to-face interactions or experiences from those occurring online or in digital environments.

Myopia

Nearsightedness, a vision condition in which distant objects appear blurry, that has been associated with prolonged near work and extended screen use.

Netiquette

The accepted rules and guidelines, some explicit and some implied, for polite and respectful communication on the internet.

Passive Screentime

Screen use that involves consuming digital media, such as watching videos or scrolling, without active participation or interaction.

Parental Controls

Tools or settings that allow caregivers to monitor, restrict, or manage a child's access to digital devices, content, or online services.

Sextortion

A form of blackmail in which sexual information or images are used to extort money or sexual favors from victims,

Technoference

The interruption of in-person interactions or relationships due to attention given to digital devices or technology. Includes phubbing (the act of ignoring someone in a social setting by focusing on a digital device instead of engaging with them)

Touch Grass

An informal internet expression suggesting that someone should take a break from being online and spend time in the real world.

Virtual Reality (VR)

A computer-generated, immersive digital environment that users can interact with. Typically experienced through wearable display devices that simulate a three-dimensional space.

Youth-centered design

Digital designs that support well-being, taking into factors including privacy, safety, and support for learning.

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