



LEGAL UPDATE

For Ohio Community School Boards



LIMITING CELL PHONE USE IN SCHOOLS

In May Governor DeWine signed legislation requiring school boards to adopt policies limiting cell phone use during school hours. These limitations have been a priority for the Governor for a while reasoning that phones distract students from learning and socializing, and negatively impact their mental health. DeWine called for legislation during his State of the State address on April 10th. Both chambers of the Ohio General Assembly responded, unanimously passing House Bill 250.

Notably, the law provides exceptions if a phone is being used as a learning tool, to monitor a student's health condition, or needed for a student's individualized education program.

The bill does not set a mandatory statewide policy for schools nor does it require completing banning phones in schools. Rather, it requires each school board to create a policy emphasizing that students' phone use be "as limited as possible" during school and reducing phone-related distractions in school settings. The Department of Education and Workforce will create a model policy that schools may utilize or schools can create their own. The deadline for boards to adopt a policy is July 1, 2025.

WELLNESS POLICY COMPLIANCE


Any school that participates in the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs must have a Wellness Policy. Our office suggests that the board review the wellness policy on an annual basis along with the annual review of the health and safety policies. Any updates or changes to the policy should be made as needed. School personnel should ensure that all notifications required under the policy are being provided to school stakeholders including allowing for community involvement. Sponsors will be looking for evidence of compliance.

Additionally, the school wellness committee with assistance from school personnel must conduct a review every three years. This triennial assessment is in addition to the policy review and must evaluate compliance with the policy, how the policy compares to model wellness policies, and progress in meeting the goals of the policy. This assessment and Wellness Policy must be provided to the public. Posting to the school's website will meet this requirement.

Q & A: **Q: What is an Online Day Plan/Calamity Day Plan?**

A: Non e-school charter school boards are required each year by August 1st to adopt a plan to provide instruction online to make up any hours missed when school is closed for epidemics, hazardous weather, law enforcement emergencies, bus inoperability, damage to a school building, or other reason rendering the school building unfit for in-person use.



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