

# Support for Phone-Free Schools

A Presentation to the  
House Education Committee

Presented on May 30, 2024



# About Well Wired

## A Healthy Tech Advocacy Group & Family Community in Central Oregon

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Well Wired Offers:

- Parent & Child Education & Community
  - Healthy Tech Use
  - Outdoor, Creative, & Unsupervised Play
- School Advocacy

[wellwired.org](http://wellwired.org)

# Schools are Trusted Partners

Parents expect schools to:

1. Protect it students & educate them about the harms of addictive technology.
2. Establish and enforce rules & policies that reduce distraction and preserve the learning environment.
3. Teach students healthy tech habits.

# Youth Mental Health Data (U.S.)

**1 in 5** teens experience symptoms of anxiety or depression

**16%** of youth (age 12-17) report suffering from at least one major depressive episode in the past year

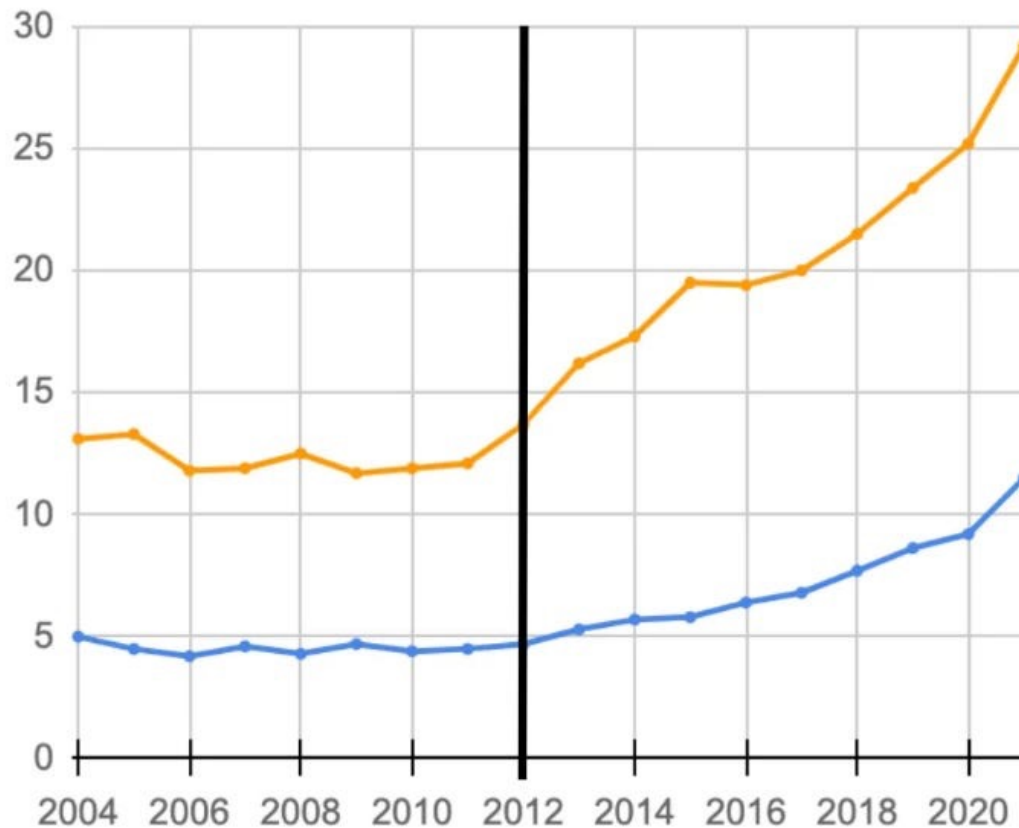
**57%** increase in the suicide rate among young people

**#50 out of 50** Oregon Youth Mental Health Ranking

**Gen Z** most anxious & risk averse generation on record

# Youth Mental Health Data by Year (U.S.)

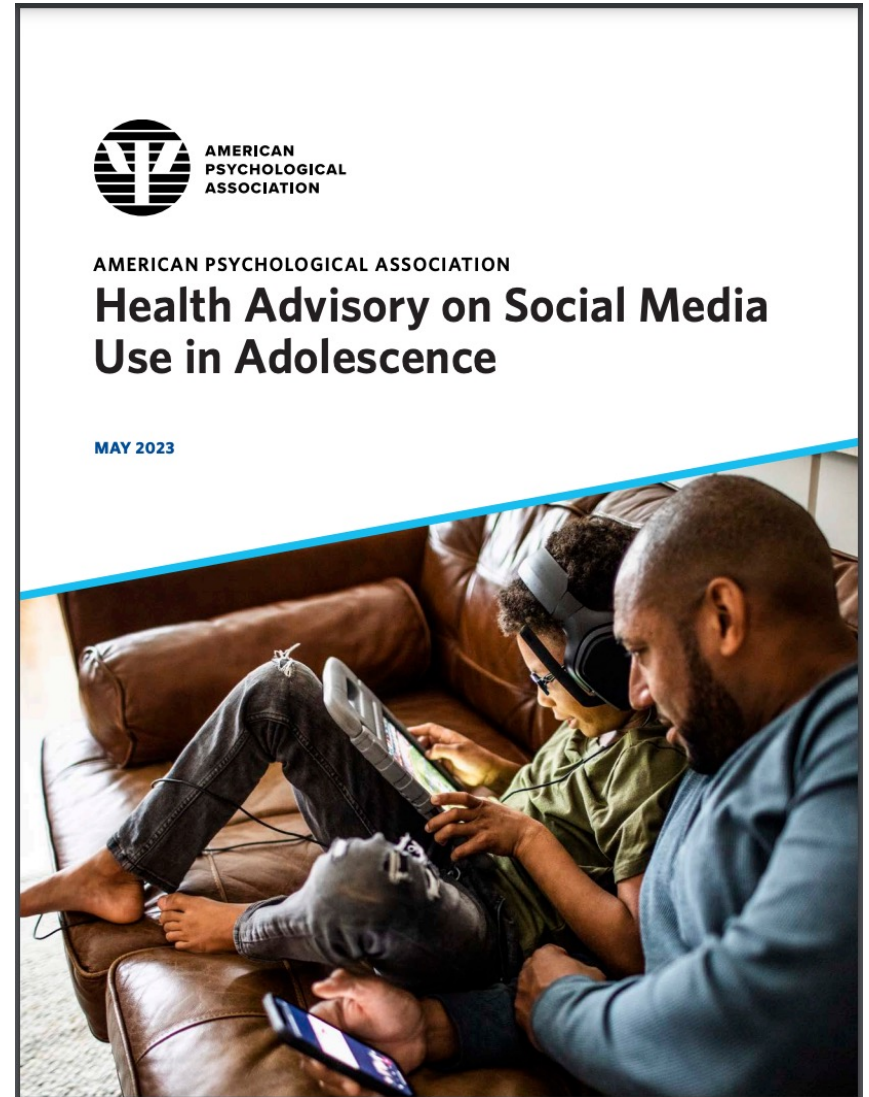
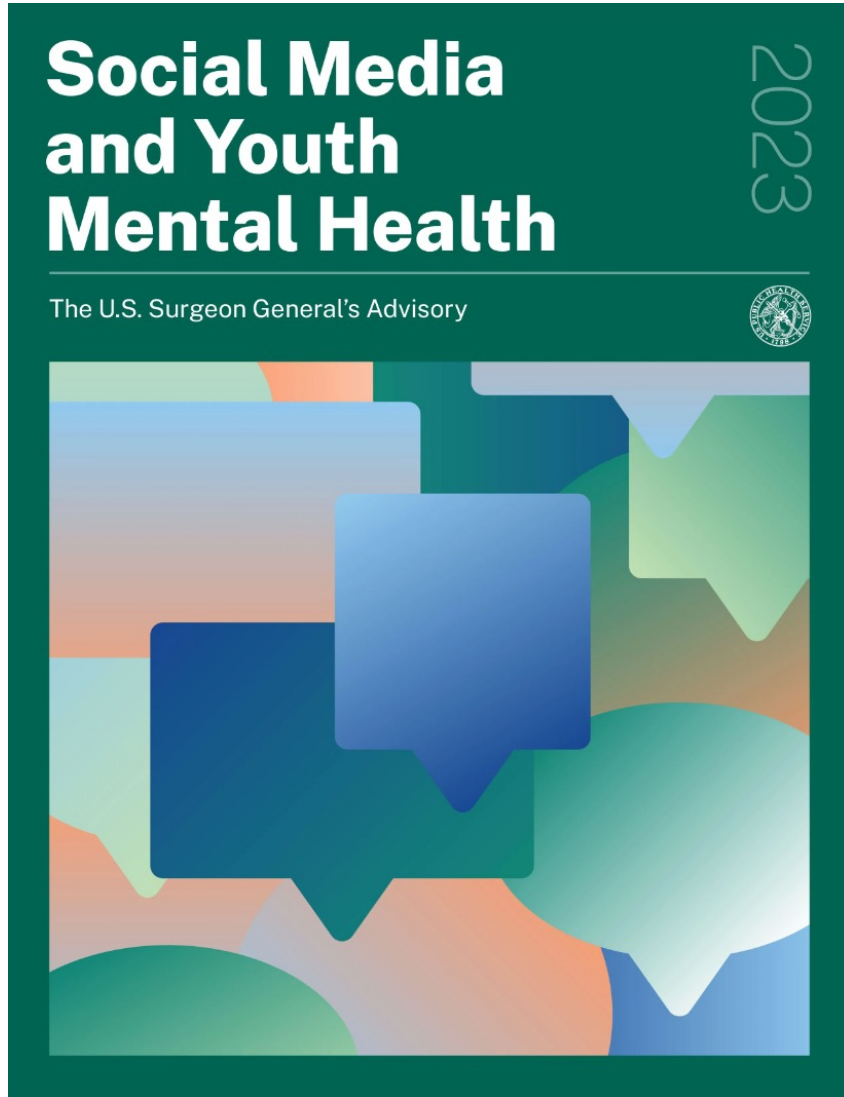
## % US Teens with Major Depression



**Girls**  
145% Increase  
Since 2010

**Boys**  
161% Increase  
Since 2010

# Public Health Advisories



# Teen Smartphone & Social Media Use (U.S.)

## Smartphones & Social Media Data

95%

Have Smartphones

67%

Use Social Media Daily

30%

Use it "Constantly"

4-5 HOURS

Per Day on Social Media  
(on Smartphone)

45 MINUTES

Per Day at School on  
Social Media  
(on Smartphone)

# What Kids are Saying

"I just feel like I need it, you know? Like it helps me get through the day. My phone is my escape."

"I feel like I am a lot more insecure than I was at the start of the year." (After getting a smartphone.)

"I couldn't agree more with the statement that 'phones increase anxiety, depression, and sleep deprivation among teenagers.' I've seen it happen in myself and my peers."



# Phones in School

## SUMMARY OF CONCERNS

1. Phones cause distracted learning & impact academic performance.
2. Majority of student conflict caused by phone and social media use.
3. Schools are allowing & enabling the use of harmful & addictive technology during class and on school grounds.
4. Lack of policy makes it impossible for teachers to effectively teach & keep students off their phones during instruction.
5. More parents switching their kids to private school or homeschool due to lack of tech policy.

# Research Re: Phones in School

“The cumulative evidence of the risks and detrimental impact of phones on student learning, well-being, and safety suggests that educators must address these devices’ presence and roles in schools more seriously and systematically than has been the case to date.”

Authors / Researchers: Smale, Hutcheson, & Russo  
Cell Phones, Student Rights, and School Safety: Finding the Right Balance  
*Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 195, 49-64Au

# Research Re: Phones in School

## ACADEMIC CONCERNS

- A meta-analysis of 39 studies across 14 different countries found that student phones have a negative impact on educational outcomes, including test scores, grade point average, and self-rated academic performance.
- Allowing phones in the classroom negatively impacts long-term learning retention.
- Brain Drain – studies show that just the presence of one's own smartphone nearby reduced cognitive capacity.
  - If a student doesn't have a phone themselves, the presence of others' phones in the classroom causes distraction.

# Research Re: Phones in School

## PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCERNS

- Students openly acknowledge they are addicted to their phones.
- Higher levels of problematic phone use have been associated with depression, anxiety, and cyberbullying.
- Multitasking negatively effects learning and task completion.
- Phones distract and negatively impact reaction times, performance, enjoyment of tasks, and cognitive capacity.

# Research Re: Phone-Free Schools

## ACADEMIC BENEFITS

A recent 14-country study by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) recommends a ban on phones at school for students of all ages, and says the data are unequivocal, showing that countries that enforce restrictions see improved academic performance and less bullying.

### Average Standardized Test Score Improvement when Phones Banned from Classrooms

6%

Average for All  
Students

14%

Average for Low-  
Achieving Students

# Research Re: Phone-Free Schools

## PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS

- Students had higher levels of course comprehension and lower levels of anxiety.
- Students are less stressed out – they no longer worry about who is liking their social media posts or about someone making fun of what they're wearing and posting it on social media.
- Students recognize that phone-free policy forces them to be more social with their peers, which allows them to have more meaningful relationships and connections with others.

# Feedback from Bend, Oregon

“Most of the major social conflict (coordinated threats to safety, sexual misconduct, repeated vandalism, intense bullying, etc.) that our administration has to address is from students' online social media use on their phones.”

– Middle School Teacher, Bend, OR

76%

Parents Support Policy that  
Requires Smartwatches to be  
Kept Silent & Away in Lockers

93%

Parents Support Policy that  
Requires Phones to be Kept  
Silent & Away in Lockers

“Phones are the root cause of SO many of the problems that occur during the school day. Focus, attention, and behaviors have never been worse over the course of my 20+ year career.”

– High School Teacher, Bend, OR

# Phone-Free Schools (A Sample U.S. List)

Peninsula School District - Gig Harbor, WA

San Mateo High School - San Mateo, CA

Grant High School - Portland, OR

Clackamas School District - Clackamas, OR

Marin Middle School – Larkspur, CA

Leadership High School - San Francisco, CA

Francisco Middle School - San Francisco, CA

James Denman Middle School - San Francisco, CA

Everett Middle School - San Francisco, CA

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Academic Middle School -

San Francisco, CA

Lumen Christi High School - Anchorage, AK

Chicopee Public Schools - Massachusetts

James Lick Middle School - San Francisco, CA

Korematsu Middle School – El Cerrito, CA

Pine Valley Middle School – San Ramon, CA

Twelve Corners MS – Rochester, NY

Pennsville MS – Pennsville, NJ

Meridian MS – Kent, WA

Montgomery County Public Schools – Rockville, MD

San Luis Coastal Unified School District - San Luis

Obispo, CA

Blaine County School District – Hailey, ID

Illing Middle School – Manchester, CT

Salem High School – Salem, MA



Well Wired supports Oregon legislation that helps  
school districts enforce phone-free school policy!

[wellwired.org](http://wellwired.org)

