



**ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
RESOLUTION ADDRESSING SOCIAL MEDIA USE, SCREEN TIME, AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH**

WHEREAS, according to a recent survey one-third of all teens report being online and using social media platforms “almost constantly”;¹ and

WHEREAS, a 2023 U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory warned that while social media may offer benefits, there is growing evidence of risks to youth mental health including anxiety, depression, and reduced quality of sleep;² and

WHEREAS, studies have found correlations between time spent on social media and mental health including one study that found risk of anxiety and depression doubled in youth that spent more than three hours daily on social media;³ and

WHEREAS, adolescence represents a critical time in the brain development and studies have reported social media may result in addictive behavior, decreased attention span, and lower test scores;^{4,5,6} and

WHEREAS, growing reports suggest social media can expose youth to cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and heavily edited comparisons that can lead to eating disorders, body dissatisfaction, and suicidal ideation;⁶ and

WHEREAS, evidence-based strategies to reduce the risks of social media include implementing device-free school policies, setting screen-time limits at home, avoiding screens before bedtime, and educating families about the psychological effects of social media;^{6,7,8} and

WHEREAS, time spent on social media and screens decreases time for exercise, sleep, in-person time with friends, and other activities that are thought to improve mental health and healthy social development (for youth and adults).^{2,3,4,5,6}

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED on this 26th day of March 2025, that we the Orange County Board of Health:

1. Recognize social media use among youth as a significant public health concern and mental health risk.
2. Recommend parents and caregivers establish screen-time limits for their children/teens, particularly restricting device use on school nights and before bedtime, to promote healthy sleep habits.
3. Urge parents to consider delaying getting their children smartphones and exploring pledges with other parents like the "Wait Until 8th" initiative.⁹
4. Encourage parents and young people to explore the resources listed below to further understand the impact of digital technology on youth development.
5. Support "Away for the Day" policies in Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and Orange County Schools that restrict personal device use during school hours to support focus and well-being.
6. Suggest Orange County school districts or the county explore joining ongoing class action lawsuits against social media companies, with the goals of funding additional mental health services for youth and/or requiring social media companies to improve their age verification and parental controls.¹⁰
7. Support the countywide adoption of “Screen-Free Week” during May 5-11, 2025, as observed by Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and encourage parents and children of the county to participate.¹¹
8. Support statewide legislation, such as Senate Bill 55, that would join NC with other states in requiring school districts to have policies around use of cellphones during the day and nationwide legislation that would require social media companies to have more effective age/parental consent verification.^{12,13}
9. Support educational efforts that inform families, schools, and policymakers about the risks of social media use and the importance of digital wellness.

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