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**The Delaware Judiciary adopts permanent rules to allow cellphones and other personal electronic devices in all court facilities**

New court policy will mirror rules tested during a two-year-long pilot program

Following a successful two-year pilot program, the Delaware Supreme Court has adopted a permanent policy that allows cell phones and other personal electronic devices (or PEDs) to be used with restrictions in state courthouses. The permanent policy shall go into effect on August 7, 2024.

“At the urging of Family Court Chief Judge Michael Newell, we launched a pilot program to allow the use of cell phones and personal electronic devices in Delaware judicial facilities,” said Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr. “The goal was to enhance access to justice for litigants and other visitors to our courthouses.”

“Cell phones and PEDs are essential to everyday life and where the public often keeps important personal information,” Chief Justice Seitz said. “And by running a pilot effort, we tested whether the program would raise safety issues or disrupt the administration of justice.” The Chief Justice concluded that after more than two years of review by a study group, “we can say that we have not seen a significant disruption or safety concerns. Instead, we have seen great benefits to the public, particularly those involved in Family Court and Justice of the Peace Court cases. I am pleased that we are now making this cell phone policy permanent.”

The policy follows the guidelines established in a pilot program, designed with input from the court’s justice system partners. The Delaware Judiciary first tested the policy at a handful of courthouses in July 2022 and then expanded it to all courthouses in July 2023. The shift in court policy follows a recognition that allowing personal electronic devices into court would help increase scheduling efficiency and improve access to justice, all while allowing individuals to keep in touch with family members, children, and work.

Just as with the rules in the pilot program, under the newly adopted policy, the public will be allowed to use their devices to make phone calls or access the internet and other information on their phones in the halls, lobbies, and other public areas of the courthouses so long as such use does not disrupt or disturb court business or proceedings. With limited exceptions, visitors will not be allowed to take photos or record audio or video anywhere in the courthouses. One exception is that visitors will be allowed to use their devices to photograph or scan public court documents in clerks’ offices, so long as the device does not damage or mark the document in any way or interrupt the operations of the clerks’ office.

All visitors will be required to turn off or silence their devices when in a courtroom. Further, if a judicial officer feels the presence of the devices is a threat to safety or security or otherwise interferes with the administration of justice, he or she may require all individuals in the courtroom to place their devices in a secure, locking pouch until they leave the courtroom. Court security will oversee the use of the secure pouches and will have the ability to lock and unlock them as needed.

The [order](#) and the new [policy on cell phones and PEDs](#) can be found on the court website.