

**USE OF PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE LYNCHBURG  
JUVENILE & DOMESTIC RELATIONS  
DISTRICT COURTHOUSE**

**ORDER**

THIS ORDER SHALL REPLACE ALL PRIOR ORDERS PERTAINING TO POSSESSION OF PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE LYNCHBURG JUVENILE & DOMESTIC RELATIONS DISTRICT COURT.

**1. Definition of "Portable Electronic Device"**

The term "Portable Electronic Device" is defined to include personal computers, tablet computers, mobile telephones (including cell phones and any form of telephone with cameras and audio and video recording and transmission capabilities), electronic calendars, e-book readers, "smart" watches, and any other electronic personal communication device.

**2. Definition of "Visitor to the Court"**

The term "Visitor to the Court" means a member of the public who is not an active or retired judge, magistrate, attorney with a valid bar identification card, a law enforcement officer or security officer, a probation officer who is at the courthouse to conduct his official duties, a state or local agency employee who is at the courthouse to conduct his official duties, a court reporter during the course of his/her official duties, or any other individual who has not otherwise been authorized to carry a Portable Electronic Device.

**3. Possession and Use of Portable Electronic Devices**

The following policies and procedures govern the possession and use of Portable Electronic Devices in the courthouse and in the courtroom:

**A. In the Courthouse:**

Portable Electronic Devices of any Visitor to the Court are only allowed in the lobby area of the courthouse located immediately before entry through the security screening area unless otherwise authorized herein. In addition, Portable Electronic Devices are subject to security screening, including courthouse screening devices, and further subject to the following rules:

- (1) All Portable Electronic Devices must be placed in a silent mode, or off, at all times within the courthouse.
- (2) Any Visitor to the Court may use Portable Electronic Devices only in the lobby prior to coming through the security screening area. Further restrictions, including

restricting mobile telephone conversations to designated areas, may be imposed as needed to maintain safety, security, proper behavior, order, and the administration of justice.

- (3) Using Portable Electronic Devices to take photographs, make audio or video recordings, or to transmit live audio or video streaming is strictly prohibited except with prior written authorization by a judge of the Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court.
- (4) Evidence Stored on Portable Electronic Devices: Visitors to the Court should make every effort to have all evidence stored on Portable Electronic Devices printed out before coming to the Court; however, in the event that a Visitor to the Court has evidence for his/her hearing stored on a Portable Electronic Device which has not been printed, the Visitor to the Court may so inform the security checkpoint bailiff. The bailiff will place the Portable Electronic Device in an envelope or other sealed container and send it to the courtroom bailiff so that the Visitor to the Court may access the stored evidence during the hearing. The Portable Electronic Device shall be returned to the Visitor to the Court when he/she leaves the courthouse.
- (5) Other Electronic Devices: Cameras, video cameras, video recording equipment and recording devices ("other electronic devices") not classified as Portable Electronic Devices are not allowed in the courthouse except for use at events such as investitures ceremonies and weddings or as otherwise allowed by a judge of the Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court.
- (6) Other electronic devices may be allowed in the courthouse only with prior authorization by a judge of the Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court.

#### **B. In the Courtroom:**

Except as provided in Paragraph (3)A)(4), above, (Portable Electronic Devices shall not be brought into or used in the courtroom by any Visitor to the Court without authorization from the presiding judge. A presiding judge may authorize the possession and use of Portable Electronic Devices in the courtroom and may impose restrictions on such possession and use. If the possession of Portable Electronic Devices in the courtroom is authorized, such limitations are set on the use of the Portable Electronic Device:

- (1) They must remain silent at all times.
- (2) They shall only be used for the purpose and in the manner authorized by the presiding judge.
- (3) Photography, video recording, audio recording, or video transmission or communication of any information using any media from inside the courtroom is prohibited without prior written authorization of the presiding judge.

#### **C. Confiscation of Equipment and Ejection of User:**

Any person using a Portable Electronic Device in violation of this or any other court order or policy may be removed from the courthouse, found in contempt of court, and subject to penalties as provided by law. Any Portable Electronic Device used in violation of this or any other court order or policy may be confiscated, and the Sheriff shall not be responsible or liable for any damage to or loss of a confiscated device.

**D. Further Limitations by Judges:**

A judge may further limit or ban the possession or use of any Portable Electronic Device:

- (1) Pursuant to Virginia Code § 19.2-266 (to regulate media coverage of judicial proceedings);
- (2) If possession or use of the Portable Electronic Device may or does interfere with the administration of justice or cause any threat to safety or security; or
- (3) For any other reason.

**4. Posting Notice of this Policy**

This Order shall be posted on the Virginia Judicial System Website, on the City of Lynchburg government website, at the courthouse entrance and at the clerks' office.

**5. Storage of Portable Electronic Devices**

The bailiffs are authorized to hold and store any Portable Electronic Device in an envelope at the security checkpoint barricade. Storage of devices may be limited to persons who inform security personnel that they have no other means of storage available to them, such as a vehicle parked on or near the courthouse premises, or those who have evidence related to a case or controversy contained on the Portable Electronic Device.

Entered this 1<sup>st</sup> day of July 2026.



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Jennifer E. Stille, Chief Judge