

FAQ for Electronic Hardware Purchase

Q. What types of devices may I purchase with the electronic hardware portion of my stipend?

A. A wide variety of devices including smartphones, smart devices such as iPod Touches, Kindles, iPads, Samsung Tablets etc. There may be devices that we have not considered that you will find and if they meet the goals behind the stipend, they will be approved.

Q. Why do you need to know the proposed use of the hardware?

A. For multiple reasons and to help you. We can potentially spot incompatibilities and alert you to this. Additionally, since this money is being provided tax free, you need to be able to justify that the purchase will enhance your patient care and / or improve your educational experience. We need to be able to spot patterns and identify when the program may be at risk to everyone with respect to the IRS. More importantly, those patterns might tell us when we should negotiate bulk discounts on certain devices and then we can alert you to those discounts. Of note, we have reviewed the forms that other institutions require and have designed our form in a similar fashion.

Q. Does this mean that I should go out and purchase the latest and greatest phone?

A. No, that is not the intent of making funds available for electronic hardware purchase. If you already have an iPhone 5 and your apps are working fine, there should be no need for you to purchase the latest model. Of course, if you are due for an upgrade, then you could choose to use your available funds to subsidize the purchase of a smartphone. However, focusing solely on your phone for this portion of the stipend may be a mistake. You must consider how you practice, how you learn, how you see patients, and what electronic device will maximize each of these.

Q. What are valid reasons to purchase an electronic device?

A. There are numerous reasons as to why you may want to purchase an electronic device. You may want to install electronic versions of textbooks. You may want to download apps such as MKSAP, Dynamed or other clinically relevant apps. The key here is that for house staff, your device purchase will allow you to obtain an enhanced educational experience and improve your patient care. The key for attendings is that it will allow for you to obtain an enhanced work experience and improve your patient care.

Q. Isn't secure texting by itself justification to purchase a new smartphone?

A. Absolutely not. Secure texting has minimal hardware requirements. For example, Imprivata Cortext Secure Texting will run fine on the iPhone 4s. In fact, if you find yourself using your stipend simply to upgrade your phone for secure texting you are probably not using your stipend to its fullest potential or within the goals of the program.

Q. Why are you asking for so many details on the Electronic Hardware Purchase Form?

A. To help you! When you fill out the Make / Model / Details about your proposed electronic hardware purchase, we can potentially spot incompatibilities and alert you to this. Additionally, we may be able to identify a specific discount that you could leverage to help reduce the cost of your purchase. Finally, if we see common trends in purchases, we may be able to negotiate discounts with vendors or establish preferred vendors who offer reduced pricing.

Q. What if I am in the store and I want to make my purchase. Do I have to wait for approval to make my purchase?

A. It would be best for you to wait for approval to make your purchase. However, if you choose to make your purchase PRIOR to approval, then you run the risk of your purchase not being approved or you may run the risk of purchasing an incompatible product. If you decide to make the purchase prior to approval, it would be wise to make sure that there is an acceptable return policy. We understand that the need for pre-approval makes impulse buys more difficult. However, we believe the benefits (confirm compatibility, potentially known discounts, avoiding taxation/IRS issues) outweigh the inconvenience of the inability to make impulse buys. Also, many times those impulse buys may seem like great deals but they are cheaper because they are running older or unusual systems (i.e. you think you are buying a PC but it is a device utilizing ReactOS (windows-like) that can't run Epic in an optimal manner).

Q. What if I damage or lose my device (ie: smartphone, tablet). Can I use my funds to purchase a replacement device?

A. You do not get additional money to purchase a replacement device. We do encourage you to take advantage of the various warranties and insurance programs that come with various devices if you feel they work for you. It is important that you consider this program as a way of enhancing your education and/or work experience, not insuring your electronic device arsenal. This is important since the IRS does not tax stipends used for legitimate business or educational purposes. However, if the IRS feels that this is something that is used just to supplement income, they will tax this stipend.

Q. Should I pay full price for an upgraded device? For example, I have an iPhone 6s. I want an iPhone 7 but would have to pay full price for it.

A. Almost no one pays full price for an iPhone. They either wait for their discount to apply, enter into a program that allows for early purchase of a newer phone, or insure their phone for a monthly fee in case it breaks. If with the launch of this program, everyone starts paying full price for new model iPhones simply because they have the supplement and their new phone really has no new educational or business advantage, a strong case could be made that the only reason people are paying full price for upgrades that do not add value (there won't be any programs that only run on the new device) is because of the stipend and, therefore, it is simply income and should be taxed. This could jeopardize the program for everybody.

Please note that the process and the form will undergo optimization. It does ask for detailed information but it should not take more than 5 minutes to fill out. The goal of this process is to help you make your purchase in an efficient manner while abiding by the established policy.

Please make sure that you read the memos regarding Electronic Hardware Purchase and engage your Leadership for any questions or concerns that you may have.