School Security Officers - Unarmed and Armed
Information and Resources

Defining School Security Officers

Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-4202(a) defines a School Security Officer (SSO) as "an individual who is employed exclusively by the local school board or the local education agency (LEA) for the purpose of:

- maintaining order and discipline,
- preventing crime,
- investigating violations of school board policies,
- returning students who may be in violation of the law, school board, or LEA policies to school property or at a school-sponsored event until the officer can place the student into the custody of the school administrator or the administrator's designee, the school resource officer, or the appropriate law enforcement officer, and
- ensuring the safety, security, and welfare of all students, faculty, staff, and visitors in an assigned school."

Also, according to Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-4202(b), "Each LEA may develop and adopt, in consultation with the appropriate local law enforcement agency, a policy that authorizes a school security officer employed by the LEA to patrol within a one-mile radius of the security officer's assigned school, but not to exceed the boundaries of the assigned school's LEA." Furthermore, if the LEA adopts a policy, then the LEA shall file a copy of the policy with the appropriate local law enforcement. In patrolling the one-mile radius of the school, the school security officer shall:

- only patrol for violations of the law that involve minors, including truancy, and
- Immediately notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency of any violation of the law if the school security officer reasonably believes the individual committing the act to be a minor.

Security Officers According to Tennessee Private Protective Services:

The Department of Commerce and Insurance Tennessee Private Protective Services regulates Armed and Unarmed Security Guards, Certified Trainers, Contract Security Companies and Proprietary Security Organizations.

Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-102 defines the following:

- **"Armed security guard/officer"** means a security guard/officer who at any time wears, carries, possesses, or has access to a firearm or any firearm that may leave the impression that the person is armed and who works in plainclothes or wears dress of a distinctive design or fashion or dress having any symbol, badge, emblem, insignia, or device that identifies or tends to identify the wearer as a security guard/officer.

- **"Unarmed security guard/officer"** means a security guard/officer who never wears, carries, or has access to a firearm or any firearm that may leave the impression that the person is armed with a firearm, but who may carry other nonlethal devices as prescribed with the proper certification and who works in plainclothes or wears dress of a distinctive design or fashion or dress having any symbol, badge, emblem, insignia, or device that identifies or tends to identify the wearer as a security guard/officer.

Qualifications of Security Officers according to Tennessee Private Protective Services:

Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-117 requires that security guard/officers apply for a registration card and in order to register they must:

- be at least 21 years of age or at least 18 years of age if applying for unarmed registration;
- be a citizen of the United States or a resident alien;
- not have been declared by any court or competent jurisdiction incompetent by reason of mental defect or disease unless a court of competent jurisdiction has since declared the applicant competent;
- if convicted of any of the following crimes, have completed serving sentence or court-ordered probation at least five years prior to the application:
    - any felony; or
    - any misdemeanor involving:
        - shooting a firearm or other weapon;
        - shoplifting;
        - assault and battery or other act of violence against persons or property;
        - crimes involving the sale, manufacture or distribution of controlled substances, controlled substance analogues, drugs or narcotics;
        - theft of property; or
        - theft of services;
- not be suffering from habitual drunkenness or narcotics addiction or dependence;
- not have any disability that, in the opinion of the commissioner, prevents the applicant from performing the duties of a security guard/officer; and
- be of good moral character.

Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-118 indicates that an individual shall not be posted as an armed or unarmed security guard at or in a public school, public charter school, private school, or church-related school, or act as an armed security guard at or in a public school, public charter school, private school, or church-related school unless the individual has completed the training requirements found in Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-118.

Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-115(a) indicates that "it is unlawful for any individual to act as an armed or unarmed security guard/officer without having first obtained the appropriate registration card from the commissioner."

Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-116 requires that an application for a registration card shall be filed with the commissioner on the prescribed form and the application shall be accompanied by nonrefundable and non-proratable fees for both armed and unarmed registrations. The applicant shall furnish the following information:

- Name and current residence address;
- Date and place of birth;
- Social Security number;
- Telephone number, if any;
- One set of classifiable electronic fingerprints
- One head-and-shoulders photograph taken within the last six months;
- A general physical description;
- A list of all convictions and pending charges of commission of a felony or misdemeanor in any jurisdiction;
- A list of all names used by the applicant other than the name by which the applicant is currently known, with a statement explaining where, when, and why the names were used;
- A list of the states where the applicant has ever been issued or denied a registration card in any jurisdiction and whether the card, if issued, has ever been revoked or suspended;
- Type of military discharge; and
- Type of security guard/officer registration card, armed or unarmed, applied for.

Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-122(a) states, "All registration cards or renewals of registration cards shall expire two years from the date of issuance."

Training Requirements of Security Officers according to Tennessee Private Protective Services:

Unarmed Security Officer

Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-118 indicates that "an unarmed security guard or security officer applicant must complete general training and pass an examination" within 15 days of employment. Also, it states that "An unarmed security/guard officer applicant shall complete at least four hours of general training administered by a certified trainer and pass an examination covering, at a minimum, the following subjects:

- Orientation: one hour;
- Legal powers and limitations of a security guard/officer: one hour;
- Emergency procedures: one hour; and
- General duties: one hour."

Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-118 also states, "For applicants for private security guard/officer registration who will carry a club, stun gun, chemical spray, night stick, or other less than lethal device, the commissioner shall require appropriate training specific to the device by a certified trainer who is certified to instruct for the specific device."

It is the employers' responsibility to keep training records of their employees for each device. The security guard/officer shall also have in the person's possession a certification card issued by an instructor/trainer who is certified to instruct/train in the legal use of the specific device and shall exhibit the card upon demand by the commissioner or any full-time law enforcement officer.

Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-122 states, "All registration cards or renewals of registration cards shall expire two years from the date of issuance." The unarmed security guard/officer shall, as a prerequisite for renewal of the registration card, complete two hours of refresher training administered by a certified trainer.

Armed Security Officer

Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-118 indicates that an armed security guard or security officer applicant must complete general training, pass an examination, and complete the required training within 60 days of employment. Also, Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-118(a)(2)(A) states that an unarmed security guard/officer applicant shall complete at least 4 hours of general training administered by a certified trainer and pass an examination covering, at a minimum, the following subjects:

- Orientation: one hour;
- Legal powers and limitations of a security guard/officer: one hour;
- Emergency procedures: one hour; and
- General duties: one hour.

Additionally, Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-118(b) requires an armed security guard or security officer applicant to complete eight additional hours of firearms training administered by a certified trainer and pass an examination covering at least the following subjects:

- Legal limitations of the use of a firearm;
- Handling of a firearm; and
- Safety and maintenance.

The applicant must also complete at least four hours of marksmanship training administered by a certified trainer, and achieve a minimum of seventy percent on any silhouette target course approved by the commissioner.

Before providing security or patrol services at or in a public school, public charter school, private school, or church-related school, an armed security guard or security officer must complete active-shooter training. The training must be no less than eight hours in duration (Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-118(e)).

The armed security guard requirements found in subsections (a) and (b) of Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-118 do not apply to applicants who are sworn peace officers and certified by the police officer standards and training commission.

Tenn. Code Ann. § 62-35-122 states, "All registration cards or renewals of registration cards shall expire two years from the date of issuance." The armed security guard/officer shall, as a prerequisite for the renewal of the registration card, complete four hours of refresher training administered by a certified trainer and requalify in the use of a firearm by achieving a minimum of seventy percent on any silhouette target course approved by the commissioner.

Recommended Job Duties of School Security Officers

The following list of job duties is not exhaustive but is meant to provide basic guiding principles for LEAs. Each LEA and/or school should consider their specific needs when compiling the list of job duties for their school security officers.

- The School Security Officer shall not act as a school disciplinarian, nor make decisions regarding school discipline.
- The School Security Officer shall make an examination of all exterior doors to ensure they are locked and secure.
- The School Security Officer shall monitor the school visitors, ensuring they submit to visitor management systems and metal detection as applicable and are trained to implement.
- The School Security Officer shall contact local law enforcement as needed for violations of the law.
- The School Security Officer shall ensure the registration card is renewed every two years.

Additional Resources:

The Department of Commerce and Insurance

Tennessee Private Protective Services

Department of Commerce and Insurance Certified Trainers

Tennessee Private Protective Services Application for Registration Card

Contact: Private.Protective@tn.gov