

State Statutory Rights of Parents and Students

The department of education is required by T.C.A. 49-1-227 to annually compile a list of state laws related to the rights of students and their parents or legal guardians. This document includes a summary of the state laws that provide explicit rights to parents, legal guardians, or students. This list does not include all the legal protections and privileges afforded to students and their parents or legal guardians.

T.C.A. § 49-1-704.

Parents and guardians have the right to inspect and review their children's education records maintained by the school. Parents and guardians have the right to request student data specific to their children's educational records. LEAs shall provide parents or guardians with a copy of their children's educational records upon request.

T.C.A. § 49-1-705.

Students shall not have to provide data to their school or LEA on their political affiliation; religion; voting history; and firearms ownership.

T.C.A. § 49-1-706.

Parents must provide written consent prior to a state agency or educational institution collecting any individual student biometric data, student data relative to analysis of facial expressions, EEG brain wave patterns, skin conductance, galvanic skin response, heart-rate variability, pulse, blood volume, posture, and eye-tracking.

T.C.A. § 49-1-1106.

Parents or other caretakers of children in the care of a child care program certified by the department of education shall be permitted to visit and inspect the facilities and observe the methods for the care of their children at any time during which the children are in the care of the program and, except those records of other children and their parents or caretakers, shall further be permitted to inspect any records of the program that are not privileged, or are not otherwise confidential, as provided by law or regulation, and the parents' or caretakers' access for these purposes shall not be purposely denied by the program.

T.C.A. § 49-2-124.

Parents may refuse to consent to the administration of a psychotropic medication to a student or to a mental health screening, evaluation, testing or examination of a child or student. An LEA or school shall notify parents or legal guardians of the purpose for the mental health screening, the provider or contractor providing the mental health screening, the date and time at which the mental health screening is scheduled, and the length of time the mental health screening may last.

T.C.A. § 49-2-129.

No school administrator, teacher, or other employee of an LEA shall require a student or the student's parent to provide information on firearm ownership by the student's family. No school administrator or other employee of an LEA shall require a teacher or other school employee to provide information on firearm ownership by the teacher or school employee. Any information on firearm ownership that is voluntarily provided by a student, parent, teacher, or LEA employee shall not be the basis for adverse disciplinary action against a student or adverse employment action against a teacher or LEA employee.

T.C.A. § 49-2-133.

Each local board of education shall develop a policy to implement a program to reduce the potential sources of lead contamination in drinking water in public schools that incorporates, at a minimum, periodic, not to exceed biennial, testing of lead levels in drinking water sources at school facilities that were constructed prior to January 1, 1998, utilizing samples consisting of the first two hundred fifty milliliters (250 mL) drawn of water that has been standing in plumbing overnight to identify lead levels.

If the result of a lead level test conducted is equal to or exceeds twenty parts per billion (20 ppb), the school shall immediately remove the drinking water source from service until subsequent retesting confirms the lead level of water from the source does not exceed twenty parts per billion (20 ppb); notify the commissioner of environment and conservation, the commissioner of health, the local department of health, the local governing body, and the department of education within twenty-four (24) hours of the test result; notify parents and guardians of students enrolled at the school, in accordance with a notification policy developed by the local board of education, within five (5) business days of the test result; and retest the lead level of the drinking water source within ninety (90) days of any corrective action. Effective January 1, 2019.

T.C.A. § 49-2-211.

Every LEA shall have a policy that allows a parent or legal guardian access to review all surveys, analyses or evaluations, prior to being administered to the parent or legal guardian's child. The policy shall enable a parent or legal guardian to opt their student out of participating in a survey, analysis, or evaluation. The policy shall require a parent, legal guardian or student, in the case of students eighteen (18) years of age or older, to provide written consent before the collection of individual student biometric data. The LEA shall also disclose to the parent or legal guardian of the student the purpose for the survey, analysis, or evaluation materials as well as who will have access to the results.

T.C.A. § 49-3-310.

No board of education of any public school system shall require any pupil or parent to purchase any textbook or instructional materials except in cases where the pupil or parent damages, loses or defaces the textbook or instructional materials either through willful intent or neglect. Parents or pupils may voluntarily purchase textbooks and instructional materials.

T.C.A. § 49-5-1003.

Educators shall not disclose information about students obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.

T.C.A. § 49-6-306.

Each student in grades K-8 shall be given a Scholars Summer Guide prior to the last day of the school year providing each student with information regarding curriculum covered during the previous year; curriculum for the upcoming school year of which students should be aware, and areas that might be a challenge for students, with suggestions on how students can prepare for the upcoming year; and summer reading and assignments. The Scholars Summer Guide may be personalized for students by teachers who are familiar with the student's current academic standing and potential future academic challenges.

T.C.A. § 49-6-901.

A copy of a student's report card shall be furnished by the LEA to the parent or parents of the student.

T.C.A. § 49-6-902.

Any parent who does not have custody of a child, or in the case of parents having joint custody of a child, the parent not residing with the child, or in the case of a child in the custody of a legal guardian, both parents, may request in writing that a copy of the child's report card, notice of school attendance, names of teachers, class schedules, standardized test scores and any other records customarily available to parents be furnished directly to the noncustodial or nonresident parent.

T.C.A. § 49-6-1002.

The parent or legal guardian of a student participating in a school athletic event may provide written notice that the student will not be in attendance at a school athletic event, or event related to participation on a school athletic team, if the event is on an official school holiday, observed day of worship, or religious holiday. Notice must be provided to the coach or administrator of the athletic event at least three (3) full school days prior to the event. Prior written notice to the coach or administrator of the school athletic event may not be required if the absence is due to an unforeseen emergency.

T.C.A. § 49-6-1004.

A period of silence of approximately one (1) minute shall be maintained at the beginning of each school day. A teacher shall not indicate or suggest to the students any action to be taken by them during this time. Students may voluntarily participate in prayer and no teacher or other school authority may prescribe the form or content of any prayer. Nonsectarian and nonproselytizing voluntary benedictions, invocations or prayers that are initiated and given by a student may be permitted during school-related noncompulsory student assemblies, school-related student sporting events and school-related commencement ceremonies.

T.C.A. § 49-6-1031.

No school shall permit a student to become a member or participate in any activities of a club or organization if the parent or legal guardian of such student has tendered a written communication prohibiting such student from such membership or participation. In order to be valid, the written communication shall be signed and dated by the parent or legal guardian.

T.C.A. § 49-6-1305.

LEAs shall notify parents or legal guardians of students whom the LEA anticipates will be present for family life instruction in sex education that: The LEA is using a family life curriculum that meets the requirements of state law; and The parent or legal guardian shall have the right to examine the grade level instructional materials and confer with the student's instructor, school counselor or principal, as designated by the LEA, regarding any or all portions of family life. A parent or guardian who wishes to excuse a student from any or all portions of family life shall submit a request, in writing, to the student's instructor, school counselor, or principal. A student who is excused from any or all portions of family life shall not be penalized for grading purposes if the student satisfactorily performs alternative health lessons.

T.C.A. § 49-6-1306.

A parent or legal guardian of a student enrolled in family life may file a complaint with the director of schools if the parent or legal guardian believes that a teacher, instructor, or representative of an organization has not complied with the requirements of that law.

If a student receives instruction by an instructor or organization that promotes gateway sexual activity or demonstrates sexual activity then the parent or legal guardian shall have a cause of action against that instructor or organization for actual damages plus reasonable attorney's fees and court costs (this does not apply to instruction from teachers employed by the LEA).

T.C.A. § 49-6-1504.

Upon the expulsion of a student charged with a violent felony or violent felony delinquency, or a student convicted, adjudicated, or that admits guilt in court with respect to a violent felony or felony delinquency, the director of schools shall immediately give written or actual notice to the parent or guardian and the student of the right to appeal the decision to expel or remand the student to an alternative school. All appeals shall be filed, orally or in writing, within five (5) days after receipt of the notice and may be filed by the parent or guardian, the student, or any person holding a teaching license who is employed by the school system if requested by the student.

T.C.A. § 49-6-1506.

A student or student's parent may request in writing within five (5) days after receipt of written notice of a disciplinary hearing by the disciplinary hearing authority that the hearing be conducted as an open meeting.

T.C.A. § 49-6-1601.

Principals or other designated persons shall provide to parents or legal guardians all school information and records relevant to any reports of alleged abuse or sexual abuse, if requested by the parent or legal guardian; provided, that the information is edited to protect the confidentiality of the identity of the person who made the report, any other person whose life or safety may be endangered by the disclosure and any information made confidential pursuant to federal law or § 10-7-504(a)(4).

T.C.A. § 49-6-1802.

An LEA shall treat a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint, if any, on an otherwise permissible subject in the same manner in which the LEA treats a student's voluntary expression of a secular or other viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject and may not discriminate against the student based on a religious viewpoint, if any, expressed by the student on an otherwise permissible subject.

T.C.A. § 49-6-1804.

Students may express their written beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination based on the religious content of the student's submissions. Homework and classroom assignments shall be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance and against other legitimate academic concerns identified by the LEA. Students may not be penalized or rewarded based on the religious content of the student's work.

T.C.A. § 49-6-1805.

Students may organize religious student groups, religious clubs, "see you at the pole" gatherings, or other religious gatherings before, during, and after school to the same extent that students are permitted to organize other non-curricular student activities and groups. Religious groups shall be given the same access to school facilities for assembling as is given to other non-curricular groups without discrimination based on the religious content of the students' expression. If student groups that meet for nonreligious activities are permitted to advertise or announce meetings of their groups, then the LEA may not discriminate against groups that meet for prayer or other religious speech. An LEA may disclaim school sponsorship of noncurricular groups and events in a manner that neither favors nor disfavors groups that meet to engage in expressions of faith or religious speech.

T.C.A. § 49-6-2116.

Every local board of education and charter school governing body shall adopt a transportation policy relative to the safe transport of students. This policy shall include a procedure for students, parents, teachers and staff, and the community to report school bus safety complaints.

T.C.A. § 49-6-2211.

Every student shall be permitted to take any textbook or instructional materials specifically issued to the student home for the purpose of studying the textbook or instructional materials.

T.C.A. § 49-6-2904.

Students have the right to voluntarily pray in a public school, express religious viewpoints in a public school, speak to and attempt to share religious viewpoints with other students in a public school, possess or distribute religious literature in a public school, and to be absent to observe religious holidays and participate in other religious practices. The participation in these activities must be in accordance with LEA policies.

T.C.A. § 49-6-3001.

A parent or guardian may withdraw a child from a public school for a good substantial reason; provided, that within thirty (30) days the parent or person having legal custody of the child places the child in a public school designated by the local board of education or in a non-public school.

A parent or guardian who believes that a child is not ready to attend school at the designated age of mandatory attendance may make application to the principal of the public school that the child would attend for a one (1) semester or one (1) year deferral in required attendance.

A person designated as a caregiver with the power of attorney for care of a minor child pursuant to title 34, chapter 6, part 3 shall have the right to enroll the minor child in the LEA serving the area where the caregiver resides. The LEA shall allow a caregiver with a properly executed power of attorney for care of a minor child, pursuant to title 34, chapter 6, part 3, to enroll the minor child, but may require documentation of the minor child's residence with a caregiver or documentation or other verification of the validity of the stated hardship prior to enrollment. Except where limited by federal law, the caregiver shall be assigned the rights, duties and responsibilities that would otherwise be assigned to the parent, legal guardian or legal custodian pursuant to this title. If at any time the parent or legal guardian disagrees with the decision of the caregiver or chooses to make any educational decisions for the minor child, then the parent must revoke the power of attorney and provide the LEA written documentation of the revocation.

T.C.A. § 49-6-3007.

By the beginning of each school year, the principal or head of school of a public, nonpublic, or church-related school shall give written notice to the parent, guardian, or person having control of a student subject to compulsory attendance that the parent, guardian, or other person having control of the student must monitor the student's school attendance and require the student to attend school. The written notice must inform the parent, guardian, or other person having control of a student that a student who accumulates five (5) days of unexcused absences during the school year is subject to the LEA's progressive truancy interventions and that continued unexcused absences may result in a referral to juvenile court. The five (5) days of unexcused absences need not be five (5) consecutive days of unexcused absences.

The principal of a public school must report promptly to the director of schools, or to the attendance supervisor, the names of all students who have withdrawn from school or who have accumulated three (3) days of unexcused absences. Upon a student's accumulation of three (3) days of unexcused absences, the director of schools or the attendance supervisor may serve, or cause to be served, upon the parent, guardian, or other person having control of a child subject to compulsory attendance who is unlawfully absent from school, written notice that the child's attendance at school is required by law.

T.C.A. § 49-6-3109.

No person shall be refused admission into or be excluded from any public school in this state on account of race, creed, color, sex or national origin. No student shall be assigned or compelled to attend any school on account of race, creed, color or national origin, or for the purpose of achieving equality in attendance or increased attendance or reduced attendance, at any school, of persons of one (1) or more particular races, creeds, colors or national origins. LEAs may assign a pupil in the manner requested or authorized by the pupil's parents or guardian.

T.C.A. § 49-6-3201.

Parents or legal guardians who are dissatisfied with the school assignment of the student may, within ten (10) days, make a written application to the board for a hearing before the board as to the reasonableness of the assignment and ask for a transfer to another school.

T.C.A. § 49-6-4103.

Teachers, school principals, or other school personnel are prohibited from using corporal punishment against any student who has a disability unless an LEA's discipline policy permits the use of corporal punishment and parent of a child who has a disability permits, in writing, the use of corporal punishment against the parent's child. The written permission must state the type of corporal punishment that may be used and the circumstances in which the use of corporal punishment is permitted. The school's principal must keep the written permission on file at the school. The school's principal must notify the parent any time corporal punishment is used. The school's principal must inform the parent, when the written permission for the use of corporal punishment is submitted, that the parent may revoke the permission to use corporal punishment at any time by giving written notice to the school's principal that corporal punishment may no longer be used against the parent's child who has a disability.

T.C.A. § 49-6-4213.

Students shall be advised in writing at the time of their enrollment in a school that they are subject to the testing for the presence of drugs in the student's body. Notice to each student shall include grounds for testing, the procedures that will be followed and possible penalties. Students shall be advised of their right to refuse to undergo drug testing and the consequences of refusal. A parent of the student or a person legally responsible for the student shall be notified before any drug test is administered to the student. If an LEA adopts a policy permitting random drug testing of students in voluntary extracurricular activities, then, prior to a student participating in an extracurricular activity, the LEA shall notify the parents and guardians of any such student that the student may be subjected to random drug testing. A parent or guardian of a student participating in a volunteer extracurricular activity shall provide written consent for random drug testing prior to the student participating in the voluntary extracurricular activity. The principal or school counselor of the school in which a student who tests positive in a drug testing program is enrolled shall provide referral information to the student and to the student's parents or guardian. The information shall include information on inpatient, outpatient and community-based drug and alcohol treatment programs.

T.C.A. § 49-6-4404.

Within forty-eight (48) hours of the imposition of corporal punishment of a pupil within the special school district, the pupil shall have the right to be examined by a physician to determine if the punishment was excessive. In any case in which the punishment is excessive, the pupil shall have the same civil and criminal remedies as any other pupil in the public schools.

T.C.A. § 49-6-5001.

Children must be immunized against diseases identified by the Commissioner of Health prior to attendance at any school, nursery school, kindergarten, pre-school or child care facility. Parents or guardian of children are responsible for having their children immunized. Parents or guardians may file with school authorities a statement that the immunization and other preventive measures conflict with the parents' or guardians' religious tenets and practices, affirmed under the penalties of perjury. Parents may not provide a statement of waiver from immunizations during an epidemic or immediate threat of an epidemic. No child shall be denied admission to any school or school facility if the child has not been immunized due to medical reasons if the child has a written statement from the child's doctor excusing the child from the immunization. No child or youth determined to be homeless shall be denied admission to any school or school facility if the child or youth has not yet been immunized or is unable to produce immunization records due to being homeless.

T.C.A. § 49-6-5005.

LEAs shall ensure that schools provide parents and guardians with information about meningococcal disease and the effectiveness of vaccination against meningococcal disease at the beginning of every school year. This information shall include the causes, symptoms and means by which meningococcal disease is spread and the places where parents and guardians may obtain additional information and vaccinations for their children. Nothing in this subsection (a) shall be construed to require an LEA or school to provide or purchase vaccine against meningococcal disease.

LEAs shall ensure that schools provide parents and guardians with information about influenza disease and the effectiveness of vaccination against influenza at the beginning of every school year. This information must include the causes, symptoms, and means by which influenza is spread and the places where parents and guardians may obtain additional information and vaccinations for their children. Nothing in this subsection (b) requires an LEA or school to provide or purchase vaccine against influenza.

T.C.A. § 49-6-6007.

Students and parents must be able to access information about state mandated tests and tests mandated by the LEA that shall be administered in the upcoming school year on the LEA website.

T.C.A. § 49-6-7002.

Parents or guardians may meet at least two (2) times per year with appropriate faculty members to discuss any pertinent problems or other matters of concern regarding the development and education of the student of the parent or guardian.

T.C.A. § 49-6-7003.

A parent or legal guardian is entitled to review all teaching materials, instructional materials, and other teaching aids used in the classroom of the parent or legal guardian's child; and to review tests that are developed by and graded by a teacher of the parent or legal guardian's child. LEAs shall make all teaching materials, including handouts readily available for review upon request by the parents or legal guardians.

T.C.A. § 49-10-103.

Children with disabilities shall receive the benefits of a free public education appropriate to their needs.

T.C.A. § 49-10-306.

Any child receiving special education or special education related services outside the school district in which the child would normally attend public school and any parent or guardian of the child, shall continue to have all civil and other rights that the child would have if receiving like education or related services within the subdivision or school district where the child would normally attend public school.

T.C.A. § 49-10-1304.

If school personnel impose isolation restraints or isolation on a student in an emergency situation, the student's parent or guardian shall be notified, orally or by written or printed communication, the same day the isolation or restraint was used. School personnel shall be held harmless for failure to notify if reasonable effort has been made to notify the student's parent or guardian.

T.C.A. § 49-10-1305.

A child may be administered a chemical restraint for therapeutic purposes under the direction of a physician and with the child's parent or guardian's consent to administer such chemical restraint.

T.C.A. § 49-13-113.

Participation in a public charter school shall be based on parental choice or the choice of the legal guardian or custodian.

T.C.A. § 49-13-130.

Within one (1) calendar week of a decision to deny renewal or revoke a charter agreement, a charter school must notify in writing the parents or legal guardians of all students enrolled in the school of the closure decision.

T.C.A. § 49-13-132.

Charter schools or chartering authorities that receive student directory information from an LEA shall not release that information to a third party without prior written consent from the parent or eligible student. Each charter school or chartering authority that receives student directory information shall adopt and implement a policy allowing parents or eligible students to decline to receive further information from the charter school.

T.C.A. § 49-13-140.

All records of a public charter school shall be open for personal inspection and duplication by any citizen of this state to the same extent that records of public schools operated by an LEA are open.

T.C.A. § 49-16-206.

Families with students enrolled in virtual school shall be provided instructional materials by the virtual school. The virtual school shall also ensure student materials and access to necessary technology used for school work through a physical computer lab that is available to the student through regularly scheduled times.

T.C.A. § 49-50-1603.

The state board of education shall adopt rules for the administration of medication that treats adrenal insufficiency by trained school personnel to any student on school premises whose parent or guardian has provided for the personnel the medication and who the personnel believe in good faith is experiencing an adrenal crisis.