



Department of Education

Staffing and Human Resources

Charter Operator Toolkit | June 2026



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Educator Licensure

Tennessee educator licenses are issued by the department under rules and policies developed by the SBE. These licenses verify that an educator has met the state's preparation and assessment requirements to teach in public schools.

[T.C.A. § 49-13-111\(i-j\)](#) establishes that each charter school must comply with SBE regulations, and all educators must hold a valid Tennessee educator license. [SBE Rule 0520-02-03](#) details of these requirements and outlines the different licensure types.

Licensure requirements can be complex and nuanced. Charter school leaders should have someone on staff that is well-versed in Tennessee licensure. The department provides detailed information and resources for licensure on the [Educator Licensure](#) webpage, which includes the following and many more:

- Guide on Tennessee educator licensure pathways (practitioner, professional, transitional)
- Application forms and requirements via TNCompass
- Professional Development Points (PDP) guidance and rules
- Resources for reciprocity/out-of-state license holders
- Licensing FAQs, updates, and policy notices
- Endorsement/specialization rules (ESL, Special Education, etc.)
- Renewal and reactivation procedures

Charter school leaders should first contact their authorizer's licensure liaison with any questions, as each authorizer has a route to technical assistance through an assigned Regional Licensure Consultant. If an authorizer representative cannot answer certain questions, charter school licensure liaisons may contact educator.licensure@tn.gov. Please note: Educators in a charter school will be routed back to their school/authorizer for technical assistance.

All teachers in Tennessee, including teachers in public charter schools, must either hold an active Tennessee license or qualify for a temporary teaching permit.

Limited flexibility exists under [T.C.A. § 49-13-111](#) and [SBE Rule 0520-14-02](#), but waivers are not automatic or guaranteed. Schools may request approval during the charter school application or renewal process, and the authorizer must include any approved waiver in the charter agreement. More information on the waiver process can be found in the [Local Education Agency and Public Charter School Waiver Guidance](#).

Charter and Authorizer Licensure Collaboration

The charter authorizer serves as the local education agency (LEA) of record for licensure and is ultimately responsible for ensuring compliance with educator licensure requirements under Tennessee law and SBE rules. Authorizers review staff credentials during pre-opening, annual monitoring, and renewal to verify that each educator holds a valid license, permit, endorsement, or approved waiver.

During pre-opening planning, charter school leaders should review key information licensure and work with the authorizer to ensure licensure compliance. Charter school leadership should coordinate early and consistently with the authorizer to maintain clear communication, timely verification, and full compliance before opening.

Best Practices for Authorizer Collaboration	
Understand Their Approach	Start by learning how they interpret and monitor the same base state requirements during planning so you can align early.
Designate a Lead	Identify a human resource or compliance lead to communicate directly with the authorizer
Use TNCompass	Keep staff licenses up to date, upload PDP documentation, and verify endorsements match teaching assignments.
Document	Maintain digital copies of licenses, mentor assignments, and evidence for review.
Stay Current on Changes	Licensure and PDP rules evolve regularly. Subscribe to the department's communications and attend training for updates.
Consider It a Partnership	Treat licensure checks as joint readiness work, not compliance policing. Sharing updates early builds trust.

Background Checks

To protect student safety, [T.C.A. § 49-5-413](#) establishes that LEAs, public charter schools, and childcare programs defined in [T.C.A. § 49-1-1102](#) must require a criminal background check and fingerprinting of any potential employee who will have proximity to children prior to their employment and at least every five years after employment. This includes contract workers and volunteers that have direct contact with students or access to school grounds when children are present. Additional employment requirements are set forth in [T.C.A. § 49-5-406](#).

Key Points

- Background checks are required by law.
- The governing body of a charter school must adopt a policy governing background check

procedures.

- Background checks must be completed before an employee is hired, and every five years thereafter.
- Background checks must include a fingerprint-based state and national criminal history check through submission to both the federal bureau of investigations (FBI) and the Tennessee bureau of investigations (TBI) that includes both criminal checks and non-conviction data.

The [Background Check Pre-Opening Checklist](#) provides detailed information on requirements and timelines for completion.

Required In-service Training

In-service education is defined as a program of planned activities designed to increase the competencies needed by all licensed personnel in the performance of their professional responsibilities as part of their required work calendar. In this context, "competencies" are defined as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes which enable personnel to carry out their tasks with maximum effectiveness. [T.C.A. § 49-6-3004](#) and [SBE Policy 5.200](#) set the guidelines for in-service training, and the department has established [in-service guidelines](#) to assist educational leaders in planning professional development opportunities.

Key Points

- Every charter school must provide at least five in-service days each school year (each day = minimum six hours).
- These days are part of the teacher contract year; They are not additional days off but instead workdays dedicated to professional development.
- The in-service plan must be approved by the authorizer and charter governing board.
- The plan must be filed with the commissioner of education on or before June 1 of the preceding year and approved by the commissioner.

Activities Approved for In-service

- Training to build skills of new or probationary teachers (with assigned mentors)
- Instructional assessment and improvement studies.
- Workshops based on school or system needs
- Curriculum development and coordination
- Staff development aligned to identified priorities

Activities Approved for In-service

- Studies on teaching methods, classroom management, and child development
- Approved workshops, seminars, or college activities tied to school goals (document attendance)
- Assignment-specific training

Activities Not Suitable for In-service

- Parent-teacher conferences
- Teachers working in their rooms
- Putting grades on permanent record forms
- Business meetings for a professional association
- Coaching clinics/cheerleading clinics
- College courses for credit

Pre-Opening In-Service Planning

The in-service plan should reflect the assessed needs of all professional staff. School leaders should ask themselves the following questions as they start planning the five required in-service opportunities for teachers:

Recommended Sequence for Developing In-service Opportunities

Assess Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the professional learning needs of all licensed personnel using data such as student achievement results, classroom observations, teacher evaluations, and school improvement goals. • Conduct surveys or discussions with staff to determine specific areas for growth (e.g., instructional strategies, data use, safety procedures, or curriculum implementation).
Establish Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze identified needs to determine which are most urgent or have the greatest potential to impact student outcomes and overall school performance. • Align these priorities with the school’s mission, state-mandated training requirements, and authorizer expectations.
Develop Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define measurable learning outcomes for each in-service topic.

Recommended Sequence for Developing In-service Opportunities	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure objectives specify what participants will know or be able to do as a result of the training and how those skills support the school's academic, operational, and cultural goals.
Design In-service Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan specific sessions, delivery methods, and materials that will achieve the established objectives. This may include workshops, collaborative planning sessions, instructional coaching, or data analysis meetings. • Assign facilitators, determine duration, and integrate both mandated topics (e.g., suicide prevention, safety) and school-specific initiatives (e.g., curriculum rollout, student engagement strategies). • Obtain necessary governing board or authorizer approvals and schedule sessions in the school calendar.
Evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the effectiveness of each in-service activity using participant feedback, follow-up surveys, classroom observations, and student performance data. • Document attendance, hours, and outcomes. • Use evaluation results to refine future in-service plans and ensure continuous professional growth across the school system.

State Mandated Trainings

Tennessee state law and SBE rule and policy establish training that school-based personnel must complete. Annually, the department's Office of General Counsel provides a list of state mandated trainings and links to training resources in the department's [Legal Resources Toolkit](#).

The table in [State Mandated Training](#) in the appendix lists only the training that state law or policy specifically requires for LEA and public charter school personnel. The "Staff Included" column uses the exact language from the relevant law, rule, or policy. Contact your governing board attorney for clarification about which staff must complete each training.

Educator Evaluations

LEAs and public charter schools are required to implement annual educator evaluations using an approved model outlined in [SBE Educator Evaluation Policy 5.201](#). The department provides comprehensive evaluation resources on the [TEAM website](#), which includes a [resource page](#) specifically for public charter schools. Many TEAM materials apply even if a charter school uses a different approved evaluation model.

Key Points

- **Evaluations are Required:** Every TN Charter school must evaluate teachers and school leaders annually using an approved model.
- **Different Models Available:** The most common model is the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM), but public charter schools may use an alternative model as defined in [SBE Policy 5.201](#).
- **Level of Effectiveness (LOE) & PDP:** Each educator earns an overall level of effectiveness (LOE) on a scale of 1 to 5 based on evaluation results, and educators earn PDP points based on the LOE. Educators can use these PDP to renew their educator license. Observations, achievement measures, and growth measures must be entered into TNCompass for educators to generate a LOE.

TNCompass

TNCompass is Tennessee’s educator talent management system that securely collects, stores, and displays evaluation, licensure, preparation, discipline, experience, compensation data, and professional development points (PDPs) for all licensed educators in Tennessee. It serves two functions: a data system for housing evaluation information and a mechanism for ensuring compliance and providing a tracking system for important information.

TNCompass as the Data System

- Only certified evaluators can evaluate educators and enter evaluation data into TN Compass.
- TNCompass links each educator’s Level of Overall Effectiveness (LOE) score to their license record and calculates eligible PDPs automatically.
- The department and the authorizer use TNCompass data to confirm that educators hold valid licenses, are evaluated, and meet renewal requirements.
- TNCompass data feeds into statewide educator effectiveness reporting which includes public charter schools.

TNCompass for Compliance and Tracking

- The department and authorizer use TNCompass as the official source to verify licensure, evaluation completion, and PDP progress.
- Authorizers monitor TN Compass records to prevent compliance issues during reviews or renewals.
- Public charter schools can generate and export reports to track:
 - License expiration dates
 - Evaluation completion status
 - PDP progress toward license renewal

Although LEAs and public charter schools may select and use an alternative evaluation model permitted under [SBE Educator Evaluation Policy 5.201](#), all evaluation and observation data must be entered into TNCompass.

Understanding and setting up TNCompass correctly during the planning year is critical for compliance and smooth operations at opening, and the [TNCompass Pre-Opening Checklist](#) can assist in identifying the steps to take.

The [TEAM TN website](#) provides comprehensive documentation and resources outlining the steps for each component needed to manage personnel data in TN Compass. The website includes the most up-to-date resources on:

- Observations
- Achievement
- Growth Measures
- Student Growth Portfolios
- Roster Verification
- Office Hours

Licensure and Evaluation Support

Resources for Licensure and Evaluation Support

TN Compass Technical Support		https://team-tn.org/tncompass/
Evaluations, Observations, Certification Training	TEAM.Questions@tn.gov	https://team-tn.org/evaluation/
Portfolio Content Support	Portfolio.Questions@tn.gov	https://team-tn.org/portfolio-resources/
Alternative Growth Measures (AGMs)	TEAM.Questions@tn.gov	https://team-tn.org/alternative-measures-of-growth-to-portfolios/

TNCompass Technical Support	Support@tncompass.org	https://tncompass.org/
TVAAS Technical Support	evaas_support@sas.com	https://tvaas.sas.com/contact.html
Roster Verification	RV.Questions@tn.gov	https://team-tn.org/roster_verification/
Assessments	tned.assessment@tn.gov	https://www.tn.gov/education/districts/lea-operations/assessment.html
Licensure	Educator.Licensure@tn.gov	https://www.tn.gov/education/educators/licensing/educator-licensure.html
Professional Development Points (PDPs) and Educator Experience	Educator.Licensure@tn.gov	https://www.tn.gov/education/educators/licensing/licensure-resources.html
Tennessee Academy for School Leaders (TASL) Academies and Credits	TASL.Information@tn.gov	https://www.tn.gov/education/educators/teaching-in-tennessee/tasl.html

Appendices

A. Background Check Pre-Opening Checklist

Background Check Pre-Opening Checklist		
<p>Confirm Process with Authorizer</p>	<p>Timeline to complete: 6 months before opening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with the authorizer to determine whether the charter school or the authorizer will manage fingerprinting and background checks for employees and contractors. • Confirm the service code or Originating Agency Identifier (ORI) number that staff will use when completing fingerprinting through the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI). • Clarify whether the charter school or the authorizer will receive and store background check results. • Confirm whether contractors must complete fingerprinting using the charter school's ORI number or their own employer's number. • Refer to guidance on Obtaining an ORI: Obtaining an ORI Number 8.1.23.pdf
<p>Develop or Adopt a Written Policy</p>	<p>Timeline to complete: 4-5 months before opening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The charter school's governing board must adopt a written policy that defines background check requirements for employees, contractors, and volunteers. • The policy must specify when background checks occur, who manages each step of the process, and how documentation is maintained. • Review the sample policy: LEA Personnel Hiring Procedures Current.pdf
<p>Develop Record Keeping Processes</p>	<p>Timeline to complete: 3-4 months before opening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish procedures to record, store, and verify all background check documentation. • Maintain clear, organized records to demonstrate compliance and ensure student safety. • Each record should include:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The date fingerprints were submitted and cleared. • Confirmation that required registry checks were completed. • The name of the agency or vendor that conducted the background check. • The recheck or five-year renewal date. • A signed assurance from the employee or contractor verifying accuracy.
Create Support Resources	Timeline to complete: 3 months before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a reference guide that outlines steps for completing fingerprinting and background checks. • Include the ORI number, contact information for the authorizer or vendor, and a list of required documentation. • Provide this guide during onboarding and maintain it in HR files.
Create a System to Track Renewals	Timeline to complete: 2 months before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a tracking system to monitor expiration dates and renewal timelines for all background checks. • Schedule reminders for rechecks every five years or as required by policy. • Integrate this tracking process into the school's HR or compliance calendar.
Standardize contractor and volunteer process	Timeline to complete: 1-2 months before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear instructions on fingerprinting, timelines, and requirements. • Maintain proof of completion and authorization to work on site.

B. State Mandated Training

Topic	Legal Authority	Staff Included	Frequency
Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)	SBE Policy 5.300	All employees, including newly hired staff	Annually
Adrenal Insufficiency	T.C.A. §49-50-1603(b)(2)(A); SBE Rule 0520-01-13-.04	Personnel responsible for administering medication for the treatment of adrenal crisis	Prior to being authorized to administer medication
Alternative Education (Two-Way Communication System)	T.C.A. §49-6-3402; SBE Rule 0520-01-02-.09(10)(o)	Teachers and staff at alternative schools	LEA Discretion
Asbestos Management	40 C.F.R. §763.92	Maintenance and custodial staff who may work in buildings containing asbestos	Experienced staff: LEA Discretion; Newly hired: Within 60 days
Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Use	T.C.A. §§49-2-122, 49-6-3601, 68-6-103, 68-140-404	Cardiac emergency team, identified school employees, and coaches	Annually
Bloodborne Pathogens	29 C.F.R. §1910.1030; SBE Rule 0520-01-13-.03(4); SBE Policy 5.300	All employees	Annually
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	T.C.A. §§49-6-3601, 68-6-103	Coaches and athletic directors (employed or volunteer)	Annually
Child Abuse and Human Trafficking	T.C.A. §§37-1-408, 49-6-1601	School officials and employees working directly with students	Annually

Topic	Legal Authority	Staff Included	Frequency
Child Abuse Coordinator	T.C.A. §49-6-1601	Child abuse coordinator and alternate	LEA Discretion
Concealed Handguns	T.C.A. §49-6-815	Authorized school personnel	40 hrs. basic; 40 hrs. annually
Concussions	T.C.A. §68-55-502	Coaches and athletic directors	Annually
Coordinated School Health (CSH)	SBE Policy 4.204	Administrators implementing CSH programs	Annually
Credit Recovery	SBE Policy 2.103	Credit recovery facilitators	LEA Discretion
De-escalation	T.C.A. §49-6-819	Teachers, administrators, and other school personnel	Annually
Diabetes	T.C.A. §49-50-1602	Volunteer school personnel	Annually
English as a Second Language (ESL)	SBE Rule 0520-01-19-.03	Teachers providing direct or indirect ESL services	Annually
Evaluators	SBE Rule 0520-02-01-.16	Staff conducting evaluations and/or observations	Annually
Fire Alarm Activation Safety	T.C.A. §49-6-807(e)	All school staff including substitutes, part-time staff, and volunteers	Annually
Glucagon Administration	T.C.A. §49-50-1602; SBE Policy 4.205	Volunteer school personnel	Annually
Harassment, Intimidation, Discrimination, Bullying, Cyber-bullying	T.C.A. §49-6-4503	Teachers and school counselors	Annually

Topic	Legal Authority	Staff Included	Frequency
Heat Illness Prevention	T.C.A. §49-6-3601	Coaches overseeing outdoor activity	Initial within 90 days; annually thereafter
Human Trafficking	T.C.A. §49-6-3004(c)(1)	All school personnel working directly with students	Every three years
Isolation & Restraint (SPED)	T.C.A. §49-10-1304; SBE Rule 0520-01-09-.23	Determined by LEA	LEA Discretion
Public Charter School Governing Board Training	T.C.A. §49-13-111	Charter governing board	Annually (SBE-approved)
School Board Members	T.C.A. §§49-2-2001, 49-2-202; SBE Rule 0520-01-02-.11	School board members	7 hrs. annually; +14 hrs. for new members
School Resource Officers (SROs)	T.C.A. §49-6-4217	School resource officers	40 hrs. basic; 16 hrs. annually thereafter
School Safety for Substitutes	T.C.A. §49-2-203(a)(14)	Substitute teachers	Annually
School Security Act	T.C.A. §49-6-4212	Principals	LEA Discretion
School Transportation Management	T.C.A. §49-6-2116	Transportation supervisors	Upon appointment + 4 hrs. annually
School Safety (SAVE Act)	T.C.A. §49-6-805	Students, teachers, and staff	Annually
Search of Lockers, Vehicles, and Property	Ch. 244, Public Acts 2025	School administrators	Prior to conducting searches

Topic	Legal Authority	Staff Included	Frequency
Seizure Medication Administration	T.C.A. §49-50-1602(g); SBE Rule 0520-01-13-.03	Staff administering anti-seizure meds	Annually
Seizure Safety & First Aid	Ch. 165, Public Acts 2025	At least one full-time employee per school (other than nurse)	Annually
School Nutrition Standards	42 U.S.C. §1776(g)	Nutrition program employees	Annually
Sudden Cardiac Arrest	T.C.A. §§49-6-3601, 68-6-103	Coaches and athletic directors	Annually
Suicide Prevention	T.C.A. §§49-6-1901, 49-6-3004	All employees, teachers, and principals	Minimum 2 hrs. annually
Teacher Code of Ethics	T.C.A. §49-5-1007	Teachers	Annually
Threat Assessment Team	T.C.A. §49-6-2701	LEA team members	LEA Discretion
Title IX and Sexual Harassment	34 C.F.R. §106.45	Title IX coordinators, investigators, decision makers	LEA Discretion
Transportation of SPED Students	45 C.F.R. §1303.72(d); SBE Rule 0520-01-09-.05(2)(e)(4)	Drivers transporting SPED students	Prior to service; annual refresh

C. TNCompass Pre-Opening Checklist

Public charter schools and their authorizers should collaborate to set up and configure TNCompass during the charter school’s planning year. Charter school leaders can use the following checklist to confirm that the charter school is ready to manage educator evaluation, licensure, and PDP tracking in TNCompass before your first year of operation.

TNCompass Pre-Opening Checklist		
Confirm TNCompass access	Timeline to Complete: 2-3 months before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the authorizer to establish TNCompass access. (May vary depending on the authorizer.)
Designate an evaluation lead	Timeline to Complete: 2-3 months before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign a licensed evaluator or HR contact to manage TNCompass records. • Ensure the designated evaluator completes approved evaluator training before school opening.
Review evaluation model requirements	Timeline to Complete: 2 months before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm the authorizer’s approved evaluation model (TEAM or alternative). • Identify which components must be entered in TNCompass.
Verify staff	Timeline to Complete: 1-2 months before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm that each teacher’s license and endorsement align with their teaching assignment and grade band.
Plan for evaluator calibration	Timeline to Complete: 1 month before opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule practice observations or calibration sessions, so evaluators align before the first evaluation cycle.
Set internal evaluation timelines	Timeline to Complete: Before staff report date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish internal deadlines for observations, midyear reviews, and final evaluations to align with authorizer and the Department’s windows. • Review the Charter Schools TEAM Timeline

<p>Integrate evaluation and PDP tracking</p>	<p>Timeline to Complete: During planning year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add TNCompass checks to HR routines for license verification, PDP progress, and evaluation completion.
<p>Communicate expectations to staff</p>	<p>Timeline to Complete: During onboarding period</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include TNCompass basics, evaluation timelines, and PDP renewal links in onboarding materials and the staff handbook.

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