



Tennessee Department of Education

Intervention Protocols

Authorizer Toolkit | August 2026



© Tennessee Department of Education



Table of Contents

Intervention Protocols 3

 Approach to Intervention..... 4

 Potential Intervention Ladder 4

 Using the Intervention Ladder 4

Appendix 6

 Appendix A: Sample Intervention Ladder 6

Intervention Protocols

Interventions are an essential part of a high-quality oversight system, but they must be predictable, transparent, and proportionate. Pursuant to [T.C.A. § 49-13-122\(c\)\(1\)](#), Tennessee law requires that authorizers have a progressive intervention policy. Tennessee authorizers should use a clearly articulated *intervention ladder*—a graduated sequence of responses that correspond to the severity and persistence of performance or compliance concerns.

A well-designed intervention ladder ensures that:

- Schools understand what will trigger increased oversight;
- Authorizers respond consistently, not subjectively;
- Early concerns are addressed before they become crises;
- Autonomy is protected by identifying *problems*, not prescribing *solutions*; and
- Families and students are shielded from the instability caused by late-stage corrective actions.

Most importantly, an intervention ladder reinforces the foundation of relationship-driven oversight. Schools should never be surprised by intervention, and every step in the ladder should be accompanied by clear communication, opportunities for dialogue, and genuine partnership.

Purposes of an Intervention Ladder	
Respond proportionately to issues	The intervention should be aligned to the type of concern—minor or emerging concerns do not merit the same response as safety violations, financial insolvency, or chronic low performance.
Connect early warning signs (Indicators of Distress or “IODs”) to timely action	IODs are often the first signals of deeper systemic issues. Intervention ladders help authorizers act early—long before renewal decisions or emergency closures.
Provide clarity and fairness	Schools know what to expect, which supports predictable oversight, trust between authorizer and school, and reduced conflict at renewal.
Protect students and the public interest	Interventions address and prevent harmful conditions from persisting.

Approach to Intervention

Intervention is not punitive. It is a structured, transparent way of saying: “We are concerned about a pattern, and we want to work with you early before the issue grows.” Schools should experience interventions as collaborative, student-centered, and grounded in clear evidence. High-quality authorizers always:

- Explain the evidence supporting concerns;
- Allow schools to respond and provide context;
- Provide clear timelines and expectations;
- Distinguish between *support* conversations and *compliance* actions;
- Serve as a liaison between the school and district departments, especially when issues arise from systemic misunderstandings;
- Ensure timely and appropriate action is taken; and
- Address material noncompliance that impacts student and public interests.

Potential Intervention Ladder

Authorizers must consider a school’s context, additional quantitative and qualitative data, and other information when determining the intensity of the intervention. The authorizer will use professional judgment in determining whether, and at what level, to initiate intervention. The authorizer reserves the right to forgo intervention or skip levels of intervention, including moving straight to revocation, as may be appropriate. Examples of situations in which the authorizer may proceed directly to revocation may include, but are not limited to, if a school is financially insolvent or poses a significant risk to the health or safety of its students. The [Sample Intervention Ladder](#) may assist authorizers as they begin creating a process for intervention. It is not an exhaustive list of either consequences or conditions that may trigger intervention.

Using the Intervention Ladder

Intervention should feel like a predictable extension of supportive oversight, not a punitive surprise. To achieve this, authorizers should:

- Anchor all interventions in *objective evidence*;
- Communicate early and in person when possible;

Intervention Protocols

- Explain *why* the concern matters for student outcomes;
- Maintain open channels for schools to share context;
- Coordinate internally so district departments do not unintentionally escalate issues;
- Provide clear written timelines;
- Avoid prescribing operational solutions; and
- Document steps transparently.

Ultimately, the intervention ladder reinforces the principle that strong oversight is done ***with*** schools, not to schools.

Permission is granted to use and copy these materials for non-commercial educational purposes with attribution credit to the "Tennessee Department of Education". If you wish to use the materials for reasons other than non-commercial educational purposes, please contact the office of general counsel at (615) 741-2921.

Appendix

Appendix A: Sample Intervention Ladder

Level	Intervention Status	Why This Matters	Conditions That Might Trigger Status	Possible Consequences
Level 0	Early, Informal Support Purpose: Address emerging issues quickly and quietly before they escalate	Most issues are resolved at this level. Informal support protects autonomy and prevents unnecessary escalation.	• Early IODs (leadership instability, slipping interim academic data, operational mishaps) • Communication issues • Duplicated or missing submissions • Minor inconsistencies found during site visits	• Informal conversation (verbal or email) • Collaborative problem-solving • Clarification of expectations or timelines • Targeted check-ins or site observations • Facilitation between school and district departments if needed
Level 1	Notice of Concern Purpose: Address issues that persist despite informal support or that represent more significant deviations from	A non-punitive, formal signal that something must be addressed, but that the relationship remains collaborative.	• One or more “falls far below standard” or “does not meet standard” ratings on the performance framework • Emerging leadership instability • Unexpected enrollment decline • Early financial stress (cash flow issues, late payments) • Rising discipline incidents or attrition	• Written notice outlining concern(s), required evidence or actions, and follow-up timeline • Increased communication and monitoring • Additional data requests tied to the performance framework • Targeted support

Intervention Protocols

Level	Intervention Status	Why This Matters	Conditions That Might Trigger Status	Possible Consequences
	expectations		- Missed reporting deadlines or isolated compliance issues - Minor concerns surfaced during site visit or annual reporting - Patterns that do not yet constitute a material breach	
Level 2	Notice of Deficiency Purpose: Address material issues affecting academics, finances, or legal obligations	Tier 2 represents the point where issues are serious enough to affect <i>renewal trajectory</i> . At this stage, the authorizer must be fair, clear, consistent, and remain relationship centered.	- Persistent or worsening IODs, such as continued leadership turnover, declining interim academic data, ongoing operational dysfunction, and governance concerns - Failure to remedy Level 1 issues - Multiple or repeated “falls far below standard” or “does not meet standard” ratings on the performance framework - Evidence of material noncompliance with law or contract - Signs of significant financial weakness identified through an annual financial audit	- Written notice specifying breach, required corrective actions, and deadlines - Required Corrective Action Plan (CAP) developed by school and approved by authorizer - Specialized site visits, as needed - Required meeting(s) with school leadership and governing board - Increased reporting requirements for breach-related areas
Level 3	Probationary Status Purpose: Address	This tier is highly structured and requires alignment with Tennessee law	- Material violations of the charter or law - Significant and continued failures in academic, organizational, or	- Formal placement on probation, with an authorizer-approved CAP - Increased oversight,

Intervention Protocols

Level	Intervention Status	Why This Matters	Conditions That Might Trigger Status	Possible Consequences
	persistent or severe issues that pose a risk to students, finances, or the integrity of the charter	and SBE rules. This level should never come as a surprise. Intermediate steps should have made the trajectory clear.	financial performance as indicated by “falls far below standard” or “does not meet standard” ratings on the performance framework • Sustained IOD patterns, including multi-year weak performance, board dysfunction, resource mismanagement, unsafe or declining school climate • Failure to implement CAP from Level 2 • Designation as a priority school by the department, requiring intervention • Significant and continued failure to comply with the conditions of the charter agreement	including required site visits • Mandatory meetings with the governing board • Possible appointment of external monitor/consultant • Written communication linking probation to potential renewal impact
Level 4	Charter Review Purpose: Protect students and the public interest when a school is unable or unwilling to remedy	A strong intervention ladder ensures that schools only reach this step after years of predictable, well-documented oversight.	• Serious or escalating concerns indicating the school is <i>unable or unwilling</i> to correct issues such as chronic academic failure, severe financial distress or negative fund balance, failure to provide mandated services (e.g., special education or EL services),	• Written notice of charter review and reasons • Comprehensive or targeted site visit(s) • Interviews or meetings with school leadership and board • Continued monitoring of CAP progress (if applicable)

Intervention Protocols

Level	Intervention Status	Why This Matters	Conditions That Might Trigger Status	Possible Consequences
	significant deficiencies		documented student safety risks, or loss of facility or significant operations risk • Noncompliance with CAP associated with probation • Evidence of impending insolvency or existential threat • Flagrant disregard of the charter agreement • Fraud, misappropriation of funds, or failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management • Three consecutive years of a “falls far below standard” rating in the same performance category on the performance framework	• Preparation of materials for potential revocation hearing

Intervention Protocols

Level 5	Charter Revocation Purpose: Protect students and the public interest by closing schools that do not provide safe, high-quality educational environments for students	Charter revocation is a last resort, which comes only after the provision of multiple supports and opportunities to improve.	• Conditions warranting revocation under Tennessee law, including: ○ Persistent failure to meet academic expectations (i.e., on the department-designated priority list for two consecutive cycles) ○ Persistent violation of law or material breach of contract ○ Severe financial insolvency or fiscal mismanagement ○ Threats to students' health, safety, or welfare ○ Continued failure to satisfy a CAP or probation conditions • Evidence that the school is no longer viable	• Authorizer initiates formal revocation proceedings per T.C.A. § 49-13-122 • Written notice and revocation hearing • School has opportunity to respond • Authorizer takes final board action • Required transition plan for students and families
---------------------------	--	---	---	---