

In keeping with Cherokee County Board of Education's Major System Priority of providing a safe and secure environment for teaching and learning, and except as permitted by the Official Code of Georgia, *O.C.G.A. §16-11-127.1*, it is unlawful for any person to possess, carry or have within their control while within a school safety zone, at a school function, or on a school bus or other transportation furnished by a school any weapon or explosive compound.

Although, the Official Code of Georgia, *O.C.G.A. §16-11-135* provides that employees of the School District who possess a valid Georgia weapons carry permit or are otherwise authorized by Georgia law to possess a firearm may park privately owned motor vehicles on the employer's premises with a firearm, ammunition, or both contained therein so long as the firearm is locked out of sight within the trunk, glove box, or other enclosed compartment or area within the privately owned motor vehicle. The School District strongly discourages such practice.

I. Definitions

Firearm: Any handgun, rifle, shotgun, or other weapon which will, or can be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or electrical charge.

School function: A school function or related activity that occurs outside of a school safety zone. (e.g. school prom, field trip, organized sporting activity, school board meeting).

School Safety Zone: Any real property or building owned by or leased to any public or private elementary school, secondary school, or local board of education and used for elementary or secondary education.

Weapon as defined by *O.C.G.A. §16-11-127.1 (4)* means and includes: "... any pistol, revolver, or any weapon designed or intended to propel a missile of any kind, or any dirk, bowie knife, switchblade knife, ballistic knife, any other knife having a blade of two or more inches, straight-edge razor, razor blade, spring stick, metal knucks, blackjack, any bat, club, or other bludgeon-type weapon, or any flailing instrument consisting of two or more rigid parts connected in such a manner as to allow them to swing freely, which may be known as a nun chahka, nun chuck, nunchaku, shuriken, or fighting chain, or any disc, of whatever configuration, having at least two points or pointed blades which is designed to be thrown or propelled and which may be known as a throwing star or oriental dart, or any weapon of like kind, and any stun gun or taser as defined in subsection (a) of Code Section §16-11-106." [Dangerous Weapon is defined in *O.C.G.A. §16-11-121*.]

Since all Cherokee County School Board buildings are utilized for elementary and secondary education or host School Functions this definition, along with a notice prohibiting weapons will be posted by appropriate signage near the main entry way of each school and school district facility.

II. Authorization & Restrictions

Notwithstanding the exemptions prescribed within *O.C.G.A. §16-11-127.1(c) and §16-11-130(c)(2)*, the Board enacts the following for purposes of this policy:

A. School District Employees

School District Police Department employees who are trained and certified by the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council (GPOSTC) are exempt from the restrictions hereof while acting in their official capacity in the performance of their official duties.

School District employees who because of business necessity are, or may be, required to carry or use knives, box cutters, razor blades, or other similar tools or implements, are exempt from the restrictions hereof so long as these implements are used in accordance with daily business practices.

The Cherokee County School District Chief of Police has been designated by the Superintendent of Schools to authorize an employee, parent, legal guardian or any other person to possess and utilize a firearm, weapon or other similar device within a school safety zone for classroom display or other similar purposes. No other District employee may authorize such use. This does not apply to a student enrolled within the School District.

School District employees are required to inform the principal/workplace supervisor or designee and obtain written permission from the School District Chief of Police for the intended educational possession of any weapon, firearm or other similar device for classroom work thirty days prior to such use and must specify the weapon, or weapons to be authorized and the time period during which the authorization is valid. Teachers are not permitted to authorize, allow or permit a student or any other person to possess or use any firearm or weapon as defined in Section I of this policy for classroom or other similar purpose.

The School District has previously authorized “sworn” Cherokee County School District Police Officers to possess and carry weapons within the School Safety Zone. No other School District employees are permitted to carry weapons within the School Safety Zone other than provided herein above without the express written permission of the Cherokee County School District Chief of Police.

Except for weapons maintained within Cherokee County School Police vehicles, firearms are not permitted in any vehicle leased or owned by the School District.

B. Parents, Legal Guardians, Visitors

As a result of the eminent danger posed by the unintentional discharge of weapons and/or the potential theft of unsupervised weapons, visitors to any Cherokee County

School District facility are encouraged not to bring weapons onto school district property even if permitted by law.

Firearms may **not** be carried by any parent, legal guardian or visitor outside of the vehicle even though such individuals may hold a valid weapons carry license or other permit to carry a firearm issued by the State of Georgia, any other appropriate licensing body, or are otherwise authorized by Georgia law to possess a firearm. This prohibition does not apply to law enforcement officers or other public safety officials of any federal, state or local agency or other individuals permitted to carry weapons by O.C.G.A. §16-11-127.1 so long as they are in the performance of their official duties or individuals possessing proper documentation or credentials as described in O.C.G.A. § 16-11-130(c)(2).

Those persons who believe they meet the requirements set forth in O.C.G.A. § 16-11-130(c)(2) may provide adequate documentation upon the request of a school official showing they meet and are qualified to possess a firearm pursuant to the code section.

Pursuant to state law, firearms and weapons are to be stored in a locked compartment, a locked container, or a locked firearms rack in any privately owned vehicle of any parent, legal guardian, or visitor while parked (unattended) at any school district facility so long as they have a valid weapons carry license or are otherwise authorized by Georgia law to possess a firearm. As a result of the associated danger, as well as the potential for theft, individuals permitted to carry weapons are strongly encouraged to secure weapons in a locked compartment out of sight or to not bring firearms or weapons into the school safety zone.

Except as otherwise permitted, firearms, weapons or explosive compounds ARE NOT permitted inside any building or facility owned or leased to/by the School District.

C. Contract Services

Contract Service providers (including, but not limited to, construction companies, paving companies, telecommunication providers, and others who are performing and/or working on any School District property) are exempt under the following conditions:

- (1) Tools and/or other implements are used by the contract service provider or their employees because of business necessity to complete the scope of work and when not in use, said tools and/or implements will be properly secured or removed from the work site location.
- (2) The Office of Support Services must be notified a minimum of five (5) days prior to the use of any explosive compound used by the contract service provider or their employees on, or at any existing School District property or facility where students and staff may be present.

III. Searches

Searches are subject to Fourth Amendment protections in the United States Constitution; however, nothing in this policy shall preclude the right of school officials and/or law enforcement officers to search a privately owned or school district vehicle, when necessary, to prevent an immediate threat to human health, life, or safety, or when there is sufficient cause to believe the vehicle contains contraband.

Persons found in violation of this policy may be subject to applicable criminal penalties; School District employees may also be subject to further disciplinary action.

ADOPTED: August 21, 2008
REVISED: July 21, 2022

Cherokee County Board of Education