

Carroll ISD Student Code of Conduct and Student Handbook Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is a Student Code of Conduct and why is it required?

The Texas Education Code governs public schools, including school safety and student behavior. This law requires each school district to adopt a Student Code of Conduct (SCOC) that includes student behavior requirements and suggested disciplinary assignments. The SCOC is also required to prohibit specific behavior such as bullying, discrimination, retaliation, and harassment.

The Student Handbook incorporates the Student Code of Conduct to ensure clear communication of behavioral expectations and safety for all students.

Why is Carroll ISD updating its Student Code of Conduct and Student Handbook?

The highest priority of CISD is keeping our Dragon students safe. During last school year's strategic planning process, the 55-member strategic planning committee recommended that we revise the SCOC to make it easier for parents and students to understand. Our previous SCOC was only used by CISD and was very different from the type of SCOC used by most school districts in Texas.

The CISD Board-appointed a Policy Review Committee that met over the course of 3 months to revise our SCOC to make it easier to understand and to reflect current state and federal laws. This updated SCOC will also be easier to make changes to following any changes to state and federal law if needed.

Following updates to the SCOC, the Student Handbook has also been updated to be most up to date with state and federal law and to protect all students from bullying, harassment, retaliation, and discrimination.

What are the major changes to the Student Code of Conduct?

Both versions provide the same protections for all students and allows CISD the same options to address any inappropriate student behavior. The new SCOC does provide a few key areas of improvement from the previous version.

- The former SCOC contained a non-discrimination statement with redundant language. We have updated that statement in order to streamline and simplify it, while still providing the same protections for all students.
- The new SCOC is much easier to use and information is easier to find. Information in the new SCOC is grouped by key subject areas related to prohibited student behavior and the disciplinary actions that can be taken to address violations. In addition, the new SCOC is only 42 pages long. The previous SCOC was well over 100 pages long and the information was poorly organized, which often made it difficult for parents and students to use.

- The new SCOC is much easier to understand. Information is described more succinctly and in clear language. For example, the description of prohibited student behaviors in our new SCOC is only 4 pages long and clearly describes the prohibited behavior. The description of prohibited behaviors in the previous SCOC was over 20 pages long and involved multiple complex charts which were often difficult to understand and in some instances inconsistent and didn't align to state law.
- Our policies require each campus principal to be responsible for student discipline on their campus. As a result, parents and students will have a clear understanding of the person that is responsible for student behavior and any related disciplinary matters.
- Our policies also provide that any appeal of a decision of the campus principal related to student behavior will be made to a trained Student Services staff member that is part of district administration. This will allow concerned parents to have a fresh review of the situation and any discipline applied through the appeal process. This will also help ensure that the new SCOC is consistently applied throughout CISD.

Why is the new non-discrimination statement different from the previous version?

The Policy Review Committee recommended we update our non-discrimination statement to reflect federal law. Through the process of updating the non-discrimination statement that appears in our SCOC and Student Handbook, we aligned the statement with the Federal Department of Education's Non-Discrimination Statement, which offers protections for all students. In fact, Dr. Smalskas developed award-winning training and procedures, which includes training to ensure compliance with Texas Education Code Chapter 37.

How can we be sure these protocols are applied consistently and effectively?

Training of teachers and administrators ensures that our new SCOC is enforced fairly and consistently. CISD has made a commitment to completely revise its training by investing in award-winning experienced leadership and new training processes for our staff.

In 2022, we hired Dr. Tamy Smalskas as our Assistant Superintendent for Administration. Dr. Smalskas is an expert in student behavior requirements and disciplinary procedures. She was recently awarded the Staff Development and Training Award by the Texas School Safety Center of Texas State University. Dr. Smalskas served as a key facilitator of the Policy Review Committee and was instrumental in the development of our new SCOC. She also oversees staff training related to implementation of the new SCOC.

Based on the experience of Dr. Smalskas, CISD began providing new training to teachers and staff in summer 2023 before the school year began. Additional training regarding the new SCOC is required by the state to train all teachers and campus administrators. Our new system requires documentation of inappropriate student behavior incidents and expediting all severe incidents to the Student Services staff. Dr. Smalskas and the Student Services staff will use a thorough review process to confirm that the new SCOC is applied consistently and with appropriate accountability.