

HCS Staff Members and Volunteers

This is a lengthy document but it is extremely important that you read it all.

KRS 160.145 (SB 181) is the law regarding traceable communication between students and teachers, school employees, and school volunteers. Our district is abiding by the law with this initiative. Concerns about the law should be shared with the lawmakers that represent you in Frankfort.

We have compiled a list of Frequently Asked Questions and “Green Light” and “Red Flag” items as a resource to help everyone as we comply with this new law.

Additional information is available by [CLICKING HERE](#). Please visit this link to see the Hardin County Board of Education policy regarding KRS 160.145, the law itself and the approved traceable communications platforms.

The HCS Consent for Outside Traceable Communications form will be available for staff on their desktop computers. It is available to volunteers upon completion of the SB 181 Exam. Volunteers are encouraged to save the link if they need to send it to multiple parents.

The HCS Consent for Outside Traceable Communications form is referred to as “the waiver.” It exists should parents/legal guardians wish to provide permission for other forms of communication between their student and teachers, school employees, and/or school volunteers.

Below is information you will need to be able to complete a required assessment pertaining to SB 181.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a “traceable communications platform?”

A: A "traceable communication platform" is a digital platform designated by the Hardin County Board of Education as the exclusive means for teachers, school employees and volunteers to communicate electronically with students. The platform must allow parents/legal guardians to access and review all communications.

Q: What are the approved traceable communications platforms in Hardin County Schools?

A: Rooms from Apptegy, Gmail/Google Classroom/Google Workspace Tools (using hardin.kyschools.us domain) & Infinite Campus.

Q: What is Rooms from Apptegy?

A: Rooms is available in the new HCS app (now available for download from the Apple App Store or from Google Play).

- Apple device users can find the HCS app here:
<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/hardin-county-schools-ky/id6745903019>
- Android/Google device users can find the HCS app here:
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.apptegy.hardincs>

Q: How do I instruct a parent or student to log into Rooms?

A: Parents/guardians will receive login credentials when you invite them to join a Rooms “class.”

Q: How do I create a “class” in Rooms from Apptegy?

A: Training will be available from Appetegy that you may attend virtually or a video is available when you [CLICK HERE](#) (even though the video is titled “Rooms Training for Coaches,” it is the training for all staff. The administrative side of Rooms is called “ThrillShare.” You can work in ThrillShare either on your computer or through a smart device on the ThrillShare app.

Q: What if there is a situation requiring me to communicate outside of the district approved platforms?

A: We encourage the use of the approved traceable communications platforms in our district; however, the waiver is available for teachers, school employees and school volunteers to utilize. These situations should be limited.

Q: Can I require parents/legal guardians to complete the waiver for students in my class, team, organization, etc.?

A; No, parents and legal guardians may not be required to complete the waiver.

Q: Does the waiver provide blanket permission?

A: No, **each employee or volunteer** who will be communicating with a student outside of the approved traceable communications platforms must have a waiver form from each student for whom he or she desires to electronically communicate.

- EXAMPLE: If a student has multiple chaperones on a school trip, the parent/legal guardian of that student will need to submit a waiver for each chaperone to communicate with their student outside of an approved traceable communication platform.
- EXAMPLE: If a student has multiple coaches on their athletic team, the parent/legal guardian of that student will need to submit a waiver for each coach

to communicate with their student outside of an approved traceable communications platform.

Q: Where is the waiver?

A: **The HCS Consent for Outside Traceable Communications form will be available for staff on their desktop computers. It is available to volunteers upon completion of the SB 181 Exam. Volunteers are encouraged to save the link if they need to send it to multiple parents.** It is an electronic form. All fields on the form must be completed. The form can be signed electronically and **MUST** have a signature.

Q: How does the waiver process work?

A: When the employee or volunteers sends the waiver to the parent of the student with whom electronic communication outside of the approved traceable forms of electronic communication is necessary/desired:

- The parent will sign the form electronically,
- the employee or volunteer will get an email notification that says the parent is granting permission for them to communicate electronically with their child
- the employee/volunteer will then sign the form electronically (if they so choose),
- the district will then receive a copy of the completed and signed form and will maintain it for its records.

Q: Can the waiver be revoked?

A: Yes, the parent or legal guardian may revoke this permission at any time through written notification to the school.

Q: What is the definition of “electronic communication?”

A: It is not defined by law. Other laws in Kentucky Revised Statutes define “electronic communication” to include “any transfer of information, including signs, signals, data, writing, images, sounds, text, voice and video...” This broad definition could include many unanticipated forms of communication up to and including voice and video communications, two-way communications or devices used by special-needs students.

Q: Will volunteers have the ability to use the district’s approved traceable electronic communications platforms (Rooms from Apptegy, the HCS Google Suite or Infinite Campus) as theirs tools of communication?

A: No. Volunteers will have to rely solely on the waiver. Once you have the waiver form the parent has completed, you can start communicating electronically - in any manner - with that particular student. You’ll find a link to the waiver on your SB 181 Exam that you will take as part of the volunteer application process.

Q: What response or disciplinary action is required by the district in the event of an alleged violation of the traceable communication system policy (SB 181).

A: If it is determined that there was a violation to this policy (unauthorized communication between an employee or volunteer and a student), the law outlines disciplinary steps. Classified employees who are found to have violated this policy will be subject to existing disciplinary action in accordance with [KRS 161.011](#). Certified employees who are found to have violated this policy must be reported to the Education Professional Standards Board, which is separately required to “promptly investigate” the allegations and take appropriate disciplinary action. Volunteers may be removed from the district’s approved volunteer list.

Q: I run a Facebook, Instagram and/or Twitter page for the extracurricular activity I coach or sponsor. Can I still have this page?

A: Yes, however, it can only be used for school-related content and can only include students who have photo permission. **Do not direct message students on this account.** If a student messages the account, do not open the message and engage in conversation. If the message is opened, it becomes communication in a non-traceable communications platform. Instead, you can send them a message on one of the approved traceable communication platforms and say, “Hello, I saw that you messaged me on Facebook, but I do not have permission to respond on that platform. How can I help you?”

Q: I have a teacher Facebook page, Instagram account, X account or other social media page that I use to post classroom updates, celebrations and more. Can I still have this page?

A: Yes, however, it can only be used for school-related content and can only include students who have photo permission. **Do not direct message students on this account.** If a student messages the account, do not open the message and engage in conversation. If the message is opened, it becomes communication in a non-traceable communications platform. Instead, you can send them a message on one of the approved traceable communication platforms and say, “Hello, I saw that you messaged me on Facebook, but I do not have permission to respond on that platform. How can I help you?”

Q: A student or group of students maintains a Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter page for the extracurricular activity I coach or sponsor. Do they need to delete it?

A: No, however, HCS staff members or volunteers may not direct-message these pages.

Q: I have a stepchild for whom I am **not** a legal guardian. Do I need a waiver to communicate with them outside of an approved traceable communications platform?

A: Yes, this law has a narrow definition of a family member who has permission to contact students outside of an approved traceable communications platform. Approved family members are as follows:

- Parent/legal guardian
- Brother
- Sister
- Son
- Daughter
- Aunt
- Uncle
- Grandparent

Staff members who meet this criteria for a particular student do not have to complete a waiver form for said particular student. If a teacher, school employee or school volunteer wishes to communicate with their stepchild (for whom they are **not** the legal guardian) outside of an approved traceable communication platform, the waiver must be completed by the student's parent/legal guardian.

Q: I have a step-sibling or cousin who is an HCS student. Do I need a waiver to communicate with them outside of an approved traceable communications platform?

A: Yes, this law has a narrow definition of a family member who has permission to contact students outside of an approved traceable communications platform. Approved family members are as follows:

- Parent/legal guardian
- Brother
- Sister
- Son
- Daughter
- Aunt
- Uncle
- Grandparent

Staff members who meet this criteria for a particular student do not have to complete a waiver form for said particular student.

Q: I work with HCS students away from school **and** we meet throughout the week regarding non-school related activities. Should I stop communicating with them electronically?

A: No. **However**, parents of those HCS students must complete a waiver allowing you to communicate electronically with their child. Please ensure they know which school or department you work for or if you are a volunteer. They will need that information for the waiver form. (District communication platforms cannot be used for non school related activities.)

Q: I work with students from other districts in the same group as HCS students. Do the parents of the students who attend school in another district need to complete a waiver form for me in my district? Do I need to complete one in their district?

A: No and No. Waiver forms need only be completed by the parents of HCS students if you are an HCS staff member or an HCS volunteer.

Green Lights (You should complete the following activities)

Delete any current students who may be your friend or follower on your personal social media.

- As a general rule, you should not maintain "friend" or "follower" relationships with students on personal social media accounts. This falls outside the scope of a traceable communication system and could lead to unauthorized communication.
- You may only be friends or followers of students on social media if they are an approved family member or if you have a waiver for that student.

Acquaint yourself with our HCS-approved traceable communications platforms: Rooms from Apptegy, Gmail/Google Classroom/Google Workspace Tools (using hardin.kyschools.us domain) and Infinite Campus.

Red Flags (You must refrain from the following activities)

Please do not send direct message to any student on any platform that is not Rooms from Apptegy, Gmail/Google Classroom/Google Workspace Tools (using hardin.kyschools.us domain) or Infinite Campus unless they are an approved family member under the law OR unless they have the appropriate parent/guardian permission/waiver form completed.

- If a communication is sent to you by a student on social media or another non-traceable communications platform, ignore the message. You may use an approved communications platform to respond.
- EXAMPLE: If a student messages you on Facebook Messenger or any other social media direct messaging system, DO NOT open the message. Instead, you

can send them a message on one of the approved traceable communication platforms and say, "Hello, I saw that you messaged me on Facebook, but I do not have permission to respond on that platform. How can I help you?"

Please do not pressure or require parents/guardians to fill out the waiver in order for their student to participate in your club, organization, or sport.

If you have any questions or doubts about contacting a student outside of the HCS-approved traceable communication platforms, please do not contact them. Please contact your school principal, department director or the HCS Superintendent's Office (270-769-8817) to ask any questions or raise any concerns.