



Mandatory Reporting, Texas Educators' Code of Ethics, and SB 12: Important Information for GPISD Educators

(Updated 8/13/2026)

Part One: Mandatory Reporting and Notices - Liability of Public Schools and Professional School Employees

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Misconduct Reporting

Ch 22A of the Texas Education Code (SB 571) and Ch 118 of the Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code (HB 4623)

CHILD ABUSE and/or NEGLECT

Educators have a professional and ethical obligation to protect students from harmful or inappropriate behavior, whether it comes from colleagues or others within the school environment. This responsibility is more important than any personal doubts or discomfort about reporting a colleague's misconduct or taking part in an investigation. The safety and well-being of students must always come first. Reporting suspected abuse is not only a moral duty - it is also required by law.

Educators and other professionals, including substitutes, are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect. These educators and professionals are protected when they make a report in good faith. That means if you honestly believe a child may be in danger and you report it you cannot be sued or charged with a crime for making the report. Texas law also assumes that all reports are made in good faith, unless there is clear evidence that the report was false or made to cause harm. This rule helps protect people, especially educators, from being afraid to report something suspicious.

However, not reporting suspected abuse is a serious matter. If a professional fails to report, they can face criminal charges, lose their license/certification, or even be sued. You can find more details below.

SB 571 was passed in 2025 during the 89th Legislative Session. It became effective September 1, 2025. Starting with that effective date, professionals, including substitutes, must report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) within 24 hours. Additionally, professionals must report to local law enforcement (Grand Prairie Police Department) within 24 hours.

Grand Prairie ISD utilizes the online report for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect to the DFPS. (txabusehotline.com). To report to the GPPD, GPISD utilizes School Resource Officers. Work with campus administration to contact the SRO to file the report. If you are reporting an employee, you must inform the campus principal/your supervisor as well as Dr. Michelle Brinkman, Executive Director of Human Capital. If the campus principal/your supervisor is the employee you are reporting, you will need to contact Dr. Michelle Brinkman (michelle.brinkman@gpisd.org).

If you believe the abuse is severe and immediate attention is required, you may call 911 and then phone in a report to the DFPS (1-800-252-5400).

If you suspect the abuse involves human trafficking, you must report that to the DFPS and GPPD, as well as the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888).



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It is very important that you do not investigate the situation yourself. You must not try to confirm or rule out abuse before reporting. Even well-meaning actions can interfere with official investigations and may unintentionally harm the child. Leave investigations to trained professionals. Only law enforcement and child protection experts have the authority and training to determine what happened.

When in doubt, report. If you have reasonable cause to believe abuse may have occurred, even if you are unsure, you are still required to report it. The legal duty to report suspected abuse cannot be passed on to someone else. Each individual is responsible for making their own report.

MISCONDUCT

Everyone in the school community, staff, student, parents, and administrators, should be aware of behaviors that may indicate inappropriate or reportable conduct by school employees. Recognizing the warning signs outlined in the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics (see Part Two below) helps protect students and ensure a safe learning environment.

Physical Contact: Unnecessary or inappropriate touching, hugging, or being physically close to a student.

Manipulation or Grooming: Gradually building a relationship that blurs professional boundaries.

Boundary Violations: Showing favoritism, such as giving gifts, special privileges, or excessive praise to one student.

Inappropriate Communication:

- Having overly personal conversations, especially about romantic, affectionate, or sexual topics.
- Using private messaging apps or social media to communicate with students outside of school hours or about non-school topics.
- Counseling students when it is not part of the educators' job.
- Ignoring school rules and/or GPISD Board Policies that limit contact with students.

Unexplained Gifts or Money: Receiving unexplained gifts or money from a teacher.

Secretive Behavior: Asking students to keep secrets or not tell others about certain conversations or interactions; trying to hide communication with students.

Isolation: Discouraging a student from spending time with peers or trusted adults.

Emotional Dependency: Making a student feel emotionally dependent on the educator.

Changes in Student Behavior: Sudden anxiety, fear, or reluctance to attend school or be around a specific teacher.

Drop in Academic Performance: Drop in grades or participation, especially if linked to increased time with one educator



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Institutional Red Flags:

- School leadership not promptly responding to concerns or complaints
- Multiple reports or rumors about the same educator, even if not officially submitted
- Ignoring school policies on student-teacher interactions, or failing to enforce boundaries

Texas law requires all public-school systems to adopt policies and procedures for reporting and preventing child abuse, sexual abuse, human trafficking, and other forms of maltreatment. These policies help ensure that students are protected, and that school staff are trained to recognize and respond to signs of abuse.

The Texas Education Agency is committed to protecting student by investigating both individual misconduct and broader failures within school systems. This includes cases where educators harm students directly or fail to report abuse or other misconduct as required, as well as when schools do not follow proper procedures to prevent or respond to abuse.

SB 571 expands mandatory reporting laws and strengthens the Do Not Hire (DNH) Registry to include a wider range of misconduct, such as:

- Inappropriate communications with students
- Violations of professional boundaries

The bill also makes it a criminal offense to intentionally fail to report abuse in order to cover it up.

Additionally, SB 4623, also passed in 2025, removes governmental immunity for school districts and professional employees. This means:

- Schools and individuals can be held civilly liable for failing to prevent or respond to abuse.
- Victims and families may pursue legal action when misconduct occurs and is not properly addressed.

These laws reinforce the importance of timely reporting and professional accountability in all Texas Schools.



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Part Two: The Texas Educators' Code of Ethics

Policy DH(EXHIBIT)

The *Educators' Code of Ethics*, adopted by the State Board for Educator Certification, which all district employees must adhere to, is reprinted below:

Purpose and Scope

The Texas educator shall comply with standard practices and ethical conduct toward students, professional colleagues, school officials, parents, and members of the community and shall safeguard academic freedom. The Texas educator, in maintaining the dignity of the profession, shall respect and obey the law, demonstrate personal integrity, and exemplify honesty and good moral character. The Texas educator, in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, shall extend just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession. The Texas educator, in accepting a position of public trust, shall measure success by the progress of each student toward realization of his or her potential as an effective citizen. The Texas educator, in fulfilling responsibilities in the community, shall cooperate with parents and others to improve the public schools of the community. This chapter shall apply to educators and candidates for certification. (19 TAC 247.1(b))

Enforceable Standards

1. Professional Ethical Conduct, Practices, and Performance

Standard 1.1 The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in deceptive practices regarding official policies of the school district, educational institution, educator preparation program, the Texas Education Agency, or the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and its certification process.

Standard 1.2 The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly misappropriate, divert, or use monies, personnel, property, or equipment committed to his or her charge for personal gain or advantage.

Standard 1.3 The educator shall not submit fraudulent requests for reimbursement, expenses, or pay.

Standard 1.4 The educator shall not use institutional or professional privileges for personal or partisan advantage.

Standard 1.5 The educator shall neither accept nor offer gratuities, gifts, or favors that impair professional judgment or that are used to obtain special advantage. This standard shall not restrict the acceptance of gifts or tokens offered and accepted openly from students, parents of students, or other persons or organizations in recognition or appreciation of service.

Standard 1.6 The educator shall not falsify records, or direct or coerce others to do so.



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Standard 1.7 The educator shall comply with state regulations, written local school board policies, and other state and federal laws.

Standard 1.8 The educator shall apply for, accept, offer, or assign a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications.

Standard 1.9 The educator shall not make threats of violence against school district employees, school board members, students, or parents of students.

Standard 1.10 The educator shall be of good moral character and be worthy to instruct or supervise the youth of this state.

Standard 1.11 The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly misrepresent his or her employment history, criminal history, and/or disciplinary record when applying for subsequent employment.

Standard 1.12 The educator shall refrain from the illegal use, abuse, or distribution of controlled substances, prescription drugs and toxic inhalants.

Standard 1.13 The educator shall not be under the influence of alcohol or consume alcoholic beverages on school property or during school activities when students are present.

2. Ethical Conduct toward Professional Colleagues

Standard 2.1 The educator shall not reveal confidential health or personnel information concerning colleagues unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.

Standard 2.2 The educator shall not harm others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system.

Standard 2.3 The educator shall adhere to written local school board policies and state and federal laws regarding the hiring, evaluation, and dismissal of personnel.

Standard 2.4 The educator shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political, professional, or citizenship rights and responsibilities.

Standard 2.5 The educator shall not discriminate against or coerce a colleague on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, disability, family status, or sexual orientation.

Standard 2.6 The educator shall not use coercive means or promise of special treatment in order to influence professional decisions or colleagues.

Standard 2.7 The educator shall not retaliate against any individual who has filed a complaint with the SBEC or who provides information for a disciplinary investigation or proceeding under this chapter.

Standard 2.8 The educator shall not intentionally or knowingly subject a colleague to sexual harassment.

3. Ethical Conduct toward Students

Standard 3.1 The educator shall not reveal confidential information concerning students unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.

Standard 3.2 The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly treat a student or minor in a manner that adversely affects or endangers the learning, physical health, mental health, or safety of the student or minor.



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Standard 3.3 The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly misrepresent facts regarding a student.

Standard 3.4 The educator shall not exclude a student from participation in a program, deny benefits to a student, or grant an advantage to a student on the basis of race, color, gender, disability, national origin, religion, family status, or sexual orientation.

Standard 3.5 The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in physical mistreatment, neglect, or abuse of a student or minor.

Standard 3.6 The educator shall not solicit or engage in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student or minor.

Standard 3.7 The educator shall not furnish alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any person under 21 years of age unless the educator is a parent or guardian of that child or knowingly allow any person under 21 years of age unless the educator is a parent or guardian of that child to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs in the presence of the educator.

Standard 3.8 The educator shall maintain appropriate professional educator-student relationships and boundaries based on a reasonably prudent educator standard.

Standard 3.9 The educator shall refrain from inappropriate communication with a student or minor, including, but not limited to, electronic communication such as cell phone, text messaging, email, instant messaging, blogging, or other social network communication. Factors that may be considered in assessing whether the communication is inappropriate include, but are not limited to:

1. the nature, purpose, timing, and amount of the communication;
2. the subject matter of the communication;
3. whether the communication was made openly or the educator attempted to conceal the communication;
4. whether the communication could be reasonably interpreted as soliciting sexual contact or a romantic relationship;
5. whether the communication was sexually explicit; and
6. whether the communication involved discussion(s) of the physical or sexual attractiveness or the sexual history, activities, preferences, or fantasies of either the educator or the student.



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Part Three: Senate Bill 12 (2025)

For Texas educators, Senate Bill 12 (SB 12) represents a significant shift toward increased parental rights, greater transparency, and new restrictions regarding certain instructional practices, DEI-related activities, student organizations, and issues related to gender identity in public schools. The law took effect on September 1, 2025.

What SB 12 Means in Practice

1. Parents Must Be More Informed and Involved

The law reinforces parents' rights to direct their child's education and to receive information about matters affecting their child at school. Schools and educators are expected to maintain transparency and comply with requirements related to parental access to information.

For educators, this means:

- communicate proactively with parents.
- follow district and campus procedures regarding parent communications and parental notifications.
- maintain documentation of parent communications.
- understand when parent consent or notification may be required. (When in doubt, ask the campus principal/your supervisor.)

2. Follow the Approved Curriculum Closely

SB 12 includes provisions related to instruction concerning sexual orientation and gender identity. Public schools must ensure that instructional practices comply with state law and district guidance.

For educators, this means:

- stay within TEKS-aligned curriculum.
- use district-approved instructional materials.
- consult administrators before introducing supplemental materials, especially materials involving sensitive topics.
- keep lesson plans focused on approved academic standards.

What is considered a “sensitive topic”?

Sensitive topics could include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- sexual orientation and gender identity



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- student identity concerns
- mental health and counseling matters
- human sexuality
- social, religious, political beliefs/topics

3. Increased Oversight of DEI-Related Activities

The law restricts certain diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) duties and programs within K–12 public schools.

For educators, this means:

- review district guidance regarding DEI-related initiatives and activities.
- continue treating all students fairly, respectfully, and professionally.
- focus on equitable access to learning while remaining compliant with district policies and state law.

4. Questions Regarding Student Identity Require Administrative Support

SB 12 contains provisions related to social transitioning and educator responsibilities in this area.

For educators, this means:

- do not make independent decisions regarding complex student identity matters.
- seek guidance from administrators when questions arise involving names, pronouns, records, or parent communication.
- follow district procedures and legal guidance carefully.

5. Student Clubs May Be Affected

The law includes provisions regarding student clubs and organizations related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

For educators who sponsor clubs:

- confirm compliance with district policies.
- consult campus administration before organizing or sponsoring clubs affected by the law.
- maintain documentation of approvals and procedures.



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The Biggest Takeaways for Educators

A. The practical impact of SB 12 can be summarized in four words:

1. **Communicate.** Keep parents informed; maintain professional communication.
2. **Document.** Document meetings, parent contacts, interventions, and concerns.
3. **Consult.** Ask campus administrator/supervisor when you are uncertain.
4. **Comply.** Stay current on guidance issued by the district and TEA.

B. If a topic, question, or conversation could reasonably lead to questions about

- parental rights or consent;
- sexual orientation or gender identity;
- counseling, mental health, or health services; or
- district legal compliance,

then educators are expected to pause and consult with their administrator/supervisor before proceeding.