



# HISD

2024-2025  
EMPLOYEE  
HANDBOOK

If you have difficulty accessing the information in this document because of a disability, please email: [ADA@HoustonISD.org](mailto:ADA@HoustonISD.org).

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information that will provide guidance regarding district policies and clarify employment procedures and processes. This handbook is neither a contract nor a substitute for the official district policy manual, nor is it intended to alter the at-will status of noncontract employees in any way. Rather, it is a guide to, and a brief explanation of selected district policies and procedures related to employment. These policies and procedures can change at any time; any changes shall supersede any handbook provisions that are not compatible with the change. For more information, employees may refer to the policy codes that are associated with handbook topics, confer with their supervisor, or call the appropriate district office. District policies can be accessed online at: [www.HoustonISD.org/Policy](http://www.HoustonISD.org/Policy).



### MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Team HISD,

As we begin a new school year, I want to extend a warm welcome to all team members, new and returning. Each of you are vital to the success of our District.

Our mission remains clear and ambitious: to prepare every student for the world and workplace of 2035 through the highest quality instruction.

We ask every employee at the Houston Independent School District to make the commitment to put the needs of students first, and as a District we commit to provide you the information and resources you need to do your job effectively. Our mission demands a great deal of our team, but HISD employees rise to the challenge every single day.

The 2024-2025 Employee Handbook provides you with information pertaining to all HISD policies and procedures that impact your work. You will find answers to questions regarding pay and benefits, your rights as an employee according to employment law, your responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act, and more.

The Employee Handbook is also available to view at:  
[www.HoustonISD.org/EmployeeHandbook](http://www.HoustonISD.org/EmployeeHandbook).

Thank you for your commitment to improving outcomes for all HISD students. We are engaged in the most important work of our time, and we're excited to build on the accomplishments of the past year. HISD students and staff made remarkable growth, and I am excited for what's to come.

Honored to serve alongside,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "F. Mike Miles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

F. Mike Miles  
HISD Superintendent of Schools



## HISD EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION

Dear HISD Team member:

HISD is undergoing the largest and most comprehensive public education transformation effort in the country. It has already begun the work to become the first large urban district to significantly narrow achievement gaps *and* prepare students for a Year 2035 workplace and world.

If you are an effective leader, committed and dedicated education professional, or willing to grow, and if you want to be part of a high-performance culture engaged in the most important work of our time, then we want you on the team.

At the start of the 2024-2025 school year, nearly half of our 273 schools are in the process of whole-scale, systemic reform, using HISD's New Education System ("NES") principles. The District's remaining schools, while enjoying autonomy based on their historical performance, continue to adopt new practices that significantly improve the quality of instruction and help prepare students for a workplace that sets a premium on critical thinking and technological skills.

Students in our schools receive excellent instruction every day. Teachers are the most critical component of the District's transformation. Principals lead teams of trained professionals tasked with making sure every student is proficient in core skills, experiences the arts, science and technology, and engages in the global marketplace of ideas in our classrooms. They are an elite team of educators.

**The district needs many different people to ensure this elite team can singularly focus on improving student outcomes.** It needs

counselors, nurses, custodians, analysts, nutritionists and cafeteria staff, bus drivers, HR and IT

experts, police, attorneys, communication professionals, community connectors, and accountants, and more. We are a complex organization of nearly 25,000 people and our 273 schools will excel when we work on their behalf.

Being on an elite team begins with choices – you must choose to be on the team, and we must choose you. As a District, we can offer you an employee value proposition that is unlike any other. We want you to understand the benefits and expectations of

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*If you are an effective leader, committed and dedicated contributor, or one who is willing to grow as an educational professional, and if you want to be part of a high-performance culture engaged in the most important work of our time, then we want you on the team.*

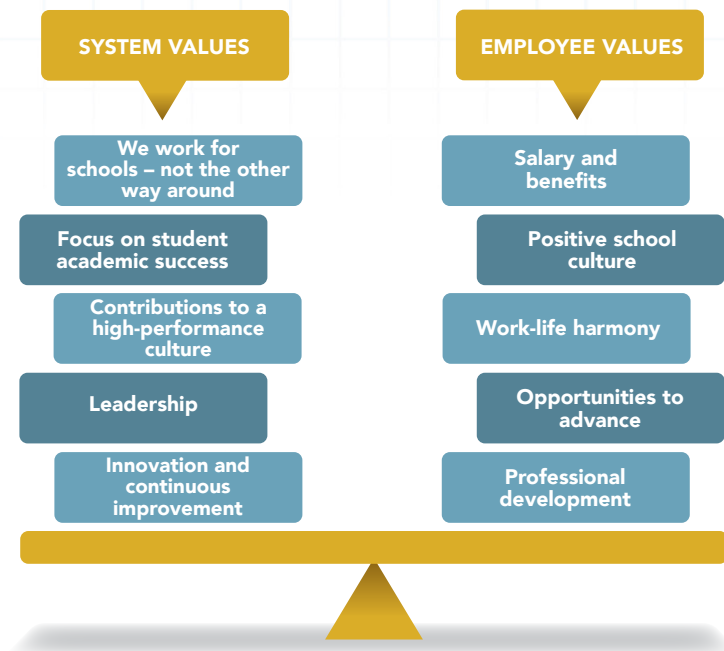
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# HISD EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION (CONTINUED)

working at HISD, and we want you to make a choice that is aligned with your values and our shared district values. To ensure you can make an informed decision, we want you to understand our expectations and the core principles that govern how HISD operates.

HISD's Compensation Plan outlines benefits and salaries, which are competitive to those of surrounding districts. We have reorganized central office operations to address every task possible so that principals can be the instructional leaders we need them to be. We have high expectations for everyone and we focus on creating a high performing culture.



In our employee value proposition, creating a high-performance culture is a value for both sides of the balance. Here is how a high-performance culture manifests itself in HISD for leaders:

- We expect all employees to continuously improve.
- We expect leaders (even those who may be not immediately connected to a school) to reinforce the District's vision for high quality instruction – in every class, every day.
- All district-based staff will understand that we work in service of schools – not the other way around.
- District-based staff will receive feedback regularly and consistently, most often from a direct supervisor. Leaders in HISD have used the analogy of a coach on a football field. The feedback in such a scenario is usually immediate, and if players in practice are not executing plays correctly,

they are coached during practice so they can improve and the entire team benefits.

- We expect people to be on time and leaders to manage time well.
- We expect staff district wide to abide by the attendance policy and regulations, and we equitably enforce the policy. The district will reinforce the importance of showing up for our colleagues and students and will consistently enforce the attendance policies and regulations.
- We expect leaders and all staff to act and speak professionally and to try to solve problems and address concerns in a productive manner.
- We expect everyone to hold themselves accountable for meeting expectations. We expect leaders to provide the necessary support to remove barriers to success. Accountability without support leads to a climate of fear but accountability with great support will lead to a high-performance culture. In a high-performance culture, people are held accountable, but also have the support they need to meet high expectations.

We hope this overview of our employee value proposition explains what we mean by a high-performance culture and provides clarity around both our commitments and our expectations. We recognize too that an environment of high expectations and a high-performance culture can be stressful for some people and that many will choose to work elsewhere. But it is a choice – and if you choose to work for HISD, you must own your choice and rise to the challenge. For our part, we will provide strong supports and leadership, and we will meet our commitments to you as a professional.

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This document provides an overview, but the specific conditions of your employment will be governed by the entirety of your employment contract, district policies and regulations, and the Employee Handbook. These items also govern avenues for healthy professional debate and specific ways for employee voices to be heard, including taking advantage of HISD's staff grievance policy.

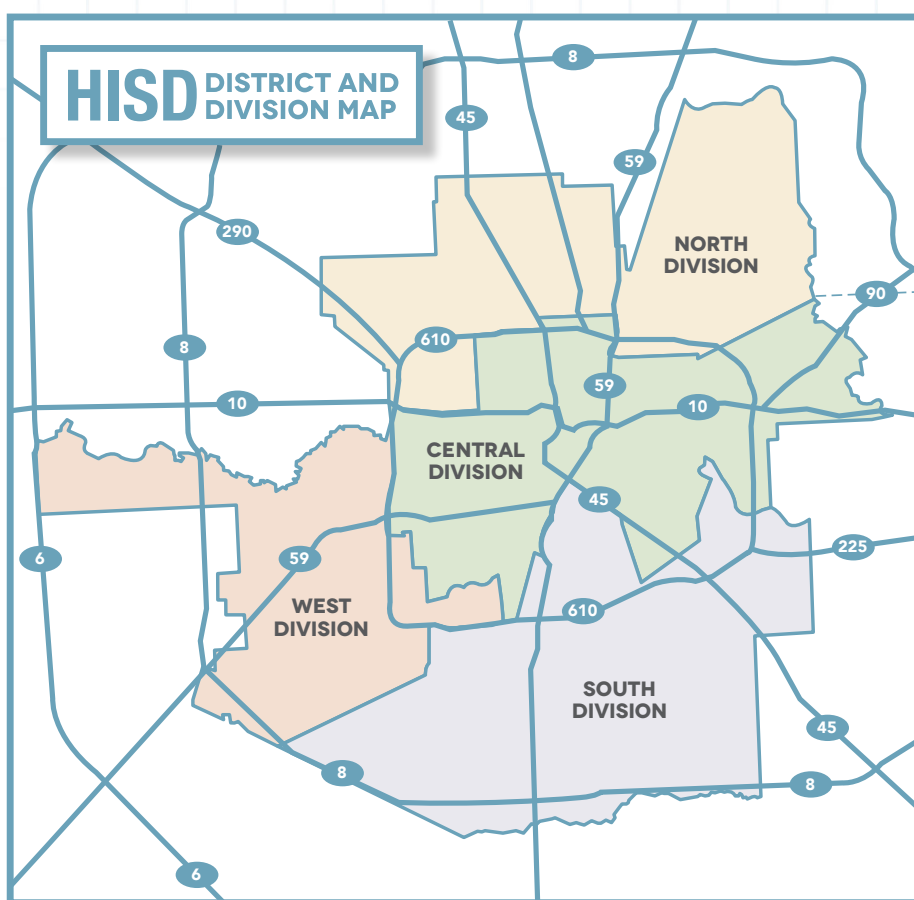


## DISTRICT INFORMATION

### Description of the District

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) is the largest school district in Texas and the eighth-largest in the United States. It serves over 189,000 students at 274 campuses and is one of the largest employers in Houston, with about 27,000 team members.

### District Map



### Vision Policy [AE](#)

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) empowers students to become critical thinkers, visionary leaders, and active contributors in their community, fostering a pathway to success for limitless opportunities in a competitive global landscape.

## DISTRICT INFORMATION (CONTINUED)



### Board of Managers

Policies [BAA](#), [BBA](#), [BBB](#), [BBBA](#), [BEC](#)

Current Board of Managers include:

- Audrey Momanaee, President
- Ric Campo, Vice President
- Angela Lemond Flowers, Secretary
- Cassandra Auzenne Bandy, Board Member
- Michelle Cruz Arnold, Board Member
- Janette Garza Lindner, Board Member
- Rolando Martinez, Board Member
- Paula Mendoza, Board Member
- Adam Rivon, Board Member

The board usually meets second Thursday of each month at 5:00 p.m. Special meetings may be called when necessary. A written notice of regular and special meetings will be posted on the District website and a hard copy of the notices are also posted on the bulletin board in the front lobby at least 72 hours before the scheduled meeting time. The written notice will show the date, time, place, and subjects of each meeting. In emergencies, a meeting may be held with a one-hour notice.

All meetings are open to the public. In certain circumstances, Texas law permits the board to go into a closed session from which the public and others are excluded. Closed session may occur for such things as discussing prospective gifts or donations, real-property acquisition, certain personnel matters including employee complaints, security matters, student discipline, or consulting with attorneys regarding pending litigation.

### Board Meeting Schedule

The board will hold regular monthly public meetings at 5:00 p.m. on the second Thursday of every month in the HISD Board Auditorium, 4400 West 18th Street. Agendas and meeting notices are available [online](#).



### Administration

Information about Houston ISD's current senior staff may be found [here](#), and you may go [here](#) for the District's department directories and their contact information.

### School Calendar

The District's latest academic calendars are published at:  
[www.HoustonISD.org/Calendars](http://www.HoustonISD.org/Calendars).

### Work Calendar

The District's latest work calendars are published at:  
[www.HoustonISD.org/WorkCalendars](http://www.HoustonISD.org/WorkCalendars).

### Helpful Contact Information

From time to time, employees have questions or concerns. If those questions or concerns cannot be answered by supervisors or at the campus or department level, the employee is encouraged to contact Employee Services at:  
[EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org](mailto:EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org) or 713-556-7400.





## EMPLOYMENT

### Equal Employment Opportunity

*Policies [DAA](#), [DIA](#), [DAB](#)*

In its efforts to promote nondiscrimination and as required by law, Houston ISD does not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, gender (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, or gender identity), national origin, age, disability, military status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or on any other basis prohibited by law. Additionally, the District does not discriminate against an employee or applicant who acts to oppose such discrimination or participates in the investigation of a complaint related to a discriminatory employment practice. Employment decisions will be made on the basis of each applicant's job qualifications, experience, and abilities.

In accordance with Title IX, the District does not discriminate on the basis of sex and is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of sex in its educational programs or activities. The prohibition against discrimination extends to employment. Inquiries about the application of Title IX may be referred to the District's Title IX Coordinator, to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights of the Department of Education, or both.

The District designates and authorizes the following employees as the Title IX Coordinators for employees to address concerns or inquiries regarding discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment in the District's educational programs or activities:

■ **Danielle Delone, Senior Investigator Analyst or  
Breanna Turner, Employee Relations Coordinator 2**  
Employee Relations | 4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092  
[TitleIXComplaints@HoustonISD.org](mailto:TitleIXComplaints@HoustonISD.org) and 713-556-7313

## EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

Reports can be made at any time and by any person, including during non-business hours, by mail, email, or phone to the District Title IX Coordinator and/or Title IX Administrator during district business hours, reports may also be made in person. Additional information on Title IX may be found at [here](#).

The District designates and authorizes the following employee as the Title VII Equal Opportunity (EO) Compliance representative for concerns regarding discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, age, disability, military status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or on any other basis prohibited by law:

■ **Danielle Delone, Senior Investigator Analyst**

Employee Relations | 4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092

[EmployeeRelations@HoustonISD.org](mailto:EmployeeRelations@HoustonISD.org)

713-556-5141

**Exceptions.** As an exception to the policy stated above, the Board may employ an individual on the basis of the individual's religion, sex, national origin, or age in these certain instances where religion, sex, national origin, or age is a bona fide occupational qualification reasonably necessary to the normal operation of the educational program.

The District designates and authorizes the following employee as the ADA/Section 504 Coordinator for employees for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of a disability:

■ **Sabrina Ikhimokpa, Director of Leave Administration**

4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092

[ADA@HoustonISD.org](mailto:ADA@HoustonISD.org)

713-556-6590

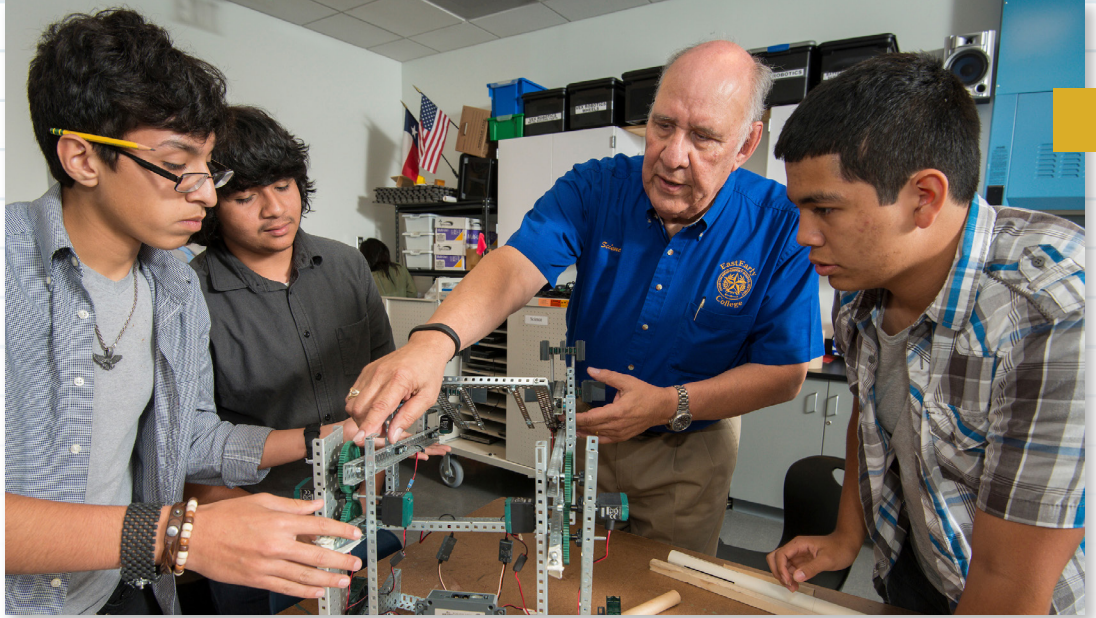
Questions or concerns relating to discrimination for any other reason should be directed to the Superintendent.

### **Job Vacancy Announcements** **Policy [DC](#)**

Announcements of job vacancies by position and location are posted on a regular basis to the District's website, Houston ISD Careers. All certified openings, as defined by Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code, will require a minimum posting period of 5 school days. Once the vacancy is filled, the vacancy is closed.

### **Employment after Retirement** **Policy [DC](#)**

Individuals receiving retirement benefits from the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) may be employed under certain limited circumstances on a full- or part-time basis without affecting their benefits, according to TRS rules and state law.



Detailed information about employment after retirement is available in the TRS publication [Employment after Retirement](#). Employees can contact TRS for additional information by calling 800-223-8778 or 512-542-6400. Information is also available on the TRS Website [www.trs.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov).

### **Contract and Noncontract Employment**

**Policies** [DC](#), [DCA](#), [DCB](#), [DCD](#), [DCE](#)

State law requires the District to employ all full-time professional employees in positions requiring a certificate from the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and nurses under probationary, term, or continuing contracts.

Employees in all other positions are employed at-will or by a contract that is not subject to the procedures for nonrenewal or termination under Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code. The paragraphs that follow provide a general description of the employment arrangements used by the District.

**Probationary Contracts.** Probationary contracts are one-year contracts that must be issued to employees who meet the following criteria:

- Nurses and full-time professional employees new to the District and employed in positions requiring SBEC certification must receive a probationary contract during their first year of employment.
- Former employees who are hired after a two-year lapse in District employment or
- Employees who move to a position requiring a new class of certification may also be employed by probationary contract. Probationary contracts are one-year contracts.



## EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

The probationary period for those who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the District may not exceed one school year.

For those who have not been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the District, the probationary period will be three scholastic years or school years (i.e., first day of instruction to the last day of instruction)<sup>1</sup> with an optional fourth school year if the Board determines it is doubtful whether a term or contract should be given. Board determinations are made based on the employee's performance during the initial contracts.

**Term Contracts.** Full-time professionals employed in positions requiring SBEC certification and nurses will be employed by term contracts after they have successfully completed the probationary period. The terms and conditions of employment are detailed in the contract and employment policies. All employees will receive an electronic copy of their contract. Employment policies can be accessed online or copies will be provided upon request.

**Noncertified Professional and Administrative Employees.** Some senior leaders in professional and administrative positions that do not require SBEC certification (such as noninstructional administrators) are employed by a one-year contract that is not subject to the provisions for nonrenewal or termination under the Texas Education Code.

**Paraprofessional and Auxiliary Hourly Employees.** All paraprofessional and auxiliary employees, regardless of certification, are employed at will and not by contract. Employment is not for any specified term and may be terminated at any time by either the employee or the District.

### Substitute Employees

#### **Policy [DPB](#)**

Persons employed to work "on call" for a standard workday or a short period of time as replacement for persons absent or on approved short-term leave will be classified as substitute employees. Persons in this category will include teachers, school clerks, and custodial personnel. Substitute employees may also include principals, assistant principals, counselors, teacher assistants, office managers, and nurses.

To assure the proper category and pay rate, a substitute is required to provide any supporting documentation associated with the position: i.e., college transcripts, teaching certificates, etc.

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<sup>1</sup>If a nurse and/or full-time professional employee is hired at any time after the first day of instruction for the current school year, the employee will not have served a probationary period of one entire school year, and will not be advanced to the next probationary year. Therefore, probationary period year one will be the employee's first full scholastic year or school year employed by HISD.

## EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)



At a principal's request, a substitute may be excluded from a campus. An exclusion may occur for the following reasons: tardiness, failure to complete assignment, inappropriate dress, unprofessional behavior, a mismatch in campus culture, or failure to comply with district policy, etc.

Substitute employees are required to work a minimum of five days per month, within a school year to remain active in the substitute pool. A warning "separation notice" will be sent to all substitute employees not meeting the required number of days to remain active in the substitute pool.

If a substitute works a minimum of five days per month within a school year, the substitute is eligible to reenroll as a substitute for the upcoming school year. Reenrollment occurs every year during the months of June and July.

Substitute employees must comply with the and all District policies located at [HISD Board and Policy Manual](#).

### **Certification and Licenses**

**Policies [DBA](#), [DF](#)**

Professional employees whose positions require SBEC certification, or a professional license are responsible for taking actions to ensure their credentials do not lapse. It is imperative that teachers and administrators hold a valid teaching certificate at all times as a condition of employment and that instructional aides have a current educational aide certificate.

It is solely the employee's responsibility to maintain a valid certification. Questions about certificate renewal should be directed to [www.tea.texas.gov](http://www.tea.texas.gov) or 512-936-8400.

Employees must submit documentation that they have passed the required certification exam and/or obtained or renewed their credentials to Employee Services Department at [EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org](mailto:EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org) in a timely manner. Employees licensed by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations (TDLR) must notify

## EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

their supervisor and Employee Services Department when there is action against, or revocation of, their license.

A certified employee's contract may be voided without Chapter 21 due process and employment terminated if the individual does not hold a valid certificate or fails to fulfill the requirements necessary to renew or extend a temporary certificate, emergency certificate, probationary certificate, or permit. A contract may also be voided if SBEC suspends or revokes the certification because of an individual's failure to comply with criminal history background checks. Contact Employee Services Department at [EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org](mailto:EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org) if you have any questions regarding certification or licensure requirements.

**Certification Examination Results for Certified Employees.** Texas Education Code 21.048(c-1) states that the results of certification examinations are confidential and prohibited from disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act. Certified District employees must consent to District officials accessing their certification information for compliance purposes.

### Transcripts

#### **Policy [DBA](#)**

Employees have thirty calendar days from the date of hire to furnish Human Resources with official college transcript(s) for professional positions or a copy of the high school diploma for other positions where required.

### Recertification of Employment Authorization

#### **Policy [DC](#)**

At the time of hire all employees must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form (Form I-9) and present documents to verify identity and employment authorization.

Employees whose immigration status, employment authorization, or employment authorization documents have expired must present new documents that show current employment authorization. Employees should file the necessary application or petition sufficiently in advance to ensure that they maintain continuous employment authorization or valid employment authorization documents. Contact Employee Services Department at [EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org](mailto:EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org) if you have any questions regarding reverification of employment authorization. Failure to verify employment authorization may result in termination.

### Pre-Employment Drug and Alcohol Testing

#### **Policy [DHE](#)**

As part of a conditional offer of employment, persons required to operate a District vehicle that transports students or hold a commercial driver's license shall be required to submit to a drug and alcohol test.

## EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

Persons who are required to operate other types of District vehicles may also be required to submit to a drug and alcohol test as part of a conditional offer of employment.

A person who refuses a required pre-employment drug and alcohol test will not be eligible for hire and any offer of employment already made will be rescinded.

### **Searches and Alcohol and Drug Testing**

**Policies** [CQ](#), [DHE](#)

Non-investigatory searches in the workplace including accessing an employee's desk, file cabinets, district owned and issued equipment and technology, including but not limited laptop computers, HISD/district emails, or work area to obtain information needed for usual business purposes may occur when an employee is unavailable. Therefore, employees are hereby notified that they have no legitimate expectation of privacy in those places. In addition, pursuant to relevant law and HISD Board policy the District is authorized to direct an employee to take a reasonable suspicion drug and alcohol test to believe a search will uncover evidence of work-related misconduct. The District may search work areas including district-owned technology resources, lockers, and district owned vehicles parked on or off district premises or work sites. Disciplinary action, up to and including termination, may result if an employee refuses to submit to testing or is found to violate district policy.

**Employees Required to Have a Commercial Driver's License.** Any employee whose duties require a commercial driver's license (CDL) is subject to alcohol and drug testing. This includes all drivers who operate a motor vehicle designed to transport 16 or more people counting the driver, drivers of large vehicles, or drivers of vehicles used in the transportation of hazardous materials. Teachers, coaches, or other employees who primarily perform duties other than driving are subject to testing requirements if their duties include driving a commercial or District motor vehicle.

Alcohol and Drug testing will be conducted before an individual assumes driving responsibilities. Alcohol and drug tests will be conducted when reasonable suspicion exists, at random, and following an accident in a District motor vehicle when an employee returns to duty after engaging in prohibited conduct, and as a follow-up measure.

All employees required to have a CDL or who otherwise are subject to alcohol and drug testing will receive a copy of the District's policy, the testing requirements, and detailed information on alcohol and drug abuse, as well as the availability of assistance programs.

Employees with questions or concerns relating to alcohol and drug testing policies and related educational material should contact Employee Services at [EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org](mailto:EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org).



### Health Safety Training

#### *Policies* [DBA](#), [DMA](#)

Certain employees who are involved in physical activities with students must maintain and submit to the District proof of current certification or training in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), concussion, and extracurricular athletic activity safety. Certification or documentation of training must be issued by the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, or another organization that provides equivalent training and certification. Employees subject to this requirement must submit their certification or documentation to Department Head, Program Director, Principal, or designee during the onset of activities for the students at the beginning of each school year.

School nurses and employees with regular contact with students must complete a Texas Education Agency approved training, which may include an online course focused on seizure disorder awareness, recognition, and related first aid.

### Reassignments and Transfers

#### *Policy* [DK](#)

All personnel are subject to assignment and reassignment by the Superintendent of Schools or designee when the Superintendent of Schools or designee determines that the assignment or reassignment is in the best interest of the District. Assignments for transfer need to match the candidate's certification. For contract employees, a reassignment is a transfer to another position in, department or facility that does not negatively impact or in any way necessitates a change in the employee's employment contract. Reassignment is a transfer to another position, department, or facility that does not necessitate a change in the employment contract. Campus reassignments must be approved by the current principal and principal at the receiving campus except when reassignments are due to enrollment shifts, or program changes, or when necessitated to ensure compliance with state or federal law. Extracurricular, dual-assignment, or supplemental duty assignments may be reassigned at any time and/or in accordance with a dual-assignment contract, if applicable. Employees who object to a reassignment may follow the District process for employee complaints as outlined in this handbook and district policy [DGBA \(Local\)](#).

An employee with the required qualifications for a position may request a transfer to another campus or department. Teachers have an annual window to transfer in accordance with District policy and Human Resources procedure. Requests for transfer during the school year will be considered only when the change will not adversely affect students and after a replacement has been found. All transfer requests will be coordinated by the Human Resources office and must be approved by both the current and the receiving supervisor.

## EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)



### Workload and Work Schedules

*Policies [DEAB](#), [DK](#), [DL](#)*

**Work Schedules.** Full-time employees are generally expected to work eight-hour duty days for their respective work week. However, the work week and daily time schedules will be determined by the Superintendent or designee, department director, or principal.

**Non-Campus Employees.** Professional employees (known as “exempt” personnel in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act) such as central office administrators, directors, coordinators, and supervisors are expected to report for work daily and be on duty for at least eight hours or the established workday as determined by the administration/department supervisor, excluding a non-paid lunch break.

**Professional Employees.** Professional employees and academic administrators are exempt from overtime pay and are employed on a 10-, 11-, or 12-month basis, according to the work schedules set by the District. A school calendar is adopted each year designating the work schedule for teachers and all school holidays. Notice of work schedules including start and end dates and scheduled holidays will be distributed each school year. The District has an expectation that exempt employees will be available to attend school- or job-related activities that may occur outside the established workday. Such exempt employees are not eligible for overtime pay or compensatory time for working beyond 40 hours per week.

Classroom teachers will have planning periods for instructional preparation including conferences. The schedule of planning periods is set at the campus level but must provide at least 450 minutes within each two-week period in blocks not less than 45 minutes within the instructional day. Teachers and librarians are entitled to a duty-free lunch period of at least 30 minutes. The District may require teachers to supervise students during lunch one day a week when no other personnel are available.

## EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

**Paraprofessional and Auxiliary Employees.** Paraprofessional employees (known as “non-exempt” personnel in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act) are expected to report for duty for eight hours each day, excluding a non-paid lunch break. Support employees are employed at will and receive notification of the required duty days, holidays, and hours of work for their position on an annual basis. Paraprofessional and auxiliary employees must be compensated for overtime and are not authorized to work in excess of their assigned schedule without prior approval from their supervisor. See [Compensatory Time and Overtime Pay section on page 36](#) for important related information.

**Campus Employees.** Professional campus employees (exempt personnel in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act) include roles such as:

- Campus Principals
- Assistant Principals
- Associate Principals
- Directors of Instruction
- Special Ed Staff
- Counselors
- Social Workers
- Diagnosticians
- Teachers
- Nurses
- Media Specialists
- LSSPs



Campus employees are expected to report for duty for at least eight hours each day, excluding a 30-minute lunch break. Campus schedules may vary because of staggered starting times and job responsibilities. All employees listed above generally have a minimum eight-hour duty day.

“Teacher hours” are the minimum hours that teachers are expected to be on duty and available at school, both to teach and so that parents and students can have access to them. As professional employees exempt from the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, teachers do not work specific “hours,” and may be expected to perform work outside the normal “teacher hours” as necessary.

Non-instructional paraprofessional support staff (non-exempt personnel in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act) such as secretaries and technical assistants are expected to report for duty for eight hours each day, excluding a 30-minute non-paid lunch break.

### Attendance and Absence from Work

#### Policy DEC (LOCAL)

**Regular Attendance and Promptness.** Proper workplace etiquette is required of all employees. This requirement includes regular attendance at work as well as arriving and departing at the times established for the site. Regular and reliable attendance is an essential job function for all District employees.

- All employees are expected to report to work on time on a regular basis. Employees who will be absent or late arriving to work are required to contact the administrator of their department before the beginning work time, and according to campus or departmental procedures regarding whom to contact and when contact must be made. If a contract/campus staff member is unable to report to work, they must notify the principal or designated administrator by 6:00 a.m. at the secondary level or by 6:30 a.m. at the elementary level and immediately submit the absence into the electronic absence management system. It is appropriate to call the evening before if an employee knows that they are going to be absent from work. For contract campus employees, the absence must also be entered into the online absence reporting system by 6:00 a.m. the secondary level and/or by 6:30 a.m. at the elementary level. Non-contract employees who will be absent or late arriving to work are required to contact their designated department before the beginning work time. If an employee is ill or unable to report to work, the employee should contact the department the evening before being out and/or by the time established by each specific department.
- Absence without communication by the employee for more than three consecutive workdays can lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Excessive absences and documented absences may also lead to termination.
- A doctor's release will be required and must be presented to the department office or supervisor before returning to work for any absence due to personal illness or family illness of more than three consecutive workdays or as required for an HR-approved protected leave. The District reserves the right to check with the doctor on an employee's work status and determine if the employee can perform their assigned duties.

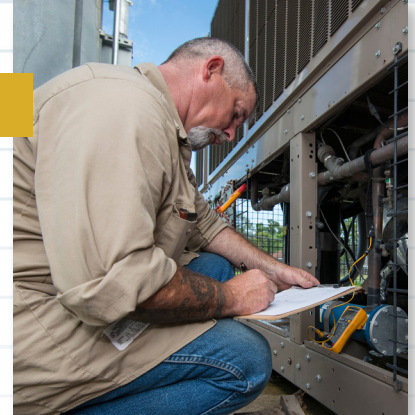




## EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

The District may also require medical certification due to a questionable pattern of absences or when deemed necessary by the supervisor or Superintendent. Refer to [DEC \(LOCAL\)](#).

Time off for religious holidays will be reasonably accommodated so long as the time off does not cause undue hardship on the conduct of District business. Employees may request to use an available paid discretionary personal leave day or take an unpaid leave day for the purpose of religious holiday observance. Approved day(s) for religious holiday observance will not be counted in the total days used for discipline due to high absenteeism or the performance evaluation.



### Time & Attendance System: TimeClock Plus (TCP)

The District's time & attendance system is TimeClock Plus (TCP) and must be utilized by all non-exempt personnel and their managers.

All campuses and department locations need two-time recorders, as no one can enter or modify their own time. All modifications must be approved by a supervisor.

Non-exempt employees (hourly and positive pay) must clock in and out each day, including clocking in and out for lunch. Morning and afternoon breaks cannot be combined with lunch. Note that lunch is unpaid time, and the 15-minute breaks are paid time. Overtime must be pre-approved by the employee's supervisor prior to working. All time worked by non-exempt staff must be compensated and failure to do so shall be assessed for disciplinary action, rather than denials of paid time worked. Exempt staff eligible for extra-duty pay must clock in and out for the extra duty assignment.

Information about TimeClock Plus (TCP), FAQs, Quick Reference Guides, and videos can be found on the District's webpage at the [TimeClock Plus Solution Center](#).

**Timekeeping Records.** All non-exempt employees are eligible to receive overtime compensation for work performed beyond 40 hours per week and are required to maintain an accurate record of time worked.

Entries on the official time keeping record must:

- Reflect actual time worked each day.
- Not be completed in advance.

Be monitored and approved by the supervisor. Non-exempt employees are prohibited from working "off the clock." Working off the clock includes performing tangible work while off duty, monitoring/responding to email, voice and text messages, and

other forms of communication regarding work while off duty. Failure to adhere to these standards will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **Duty-Free Lunch**

Each classroom teacher, media specialist, or full-time librarian is entitled to a 30-minute lunch period free from all duties and responsibilities connected with the instruction and supervision of students. The implementation of this requirement may not result in a lengthened school day. Refer to Education Code 21.405.

If necessary, because of a personnel shortage, extreme economic conditions, or unavoidable or unforeseen circumstances, and in accordance with commissioner rules, the District may require a classroom teacher or librarian to supervise students during lunch no more than one day in any school week. Refer to Education Code 21.405.

Principals are required to reach out to HISD Legal Services to provide guidance in determining whether one of the following exceptional circumstances exists:

- A personnel shortage exists when, despite reasonable efforts to use non-teaching personnel or the assistance of community volunteers to supervise students during lunch, no other personnel are available.
- Extreme economic conditions exist when the percentage of a local tax increase, including the cost of implementing duty-free lunch requirements, would place the District in jeopardy of a potential roll-back election.
- Unavoidable or unforeseen circumstances exist when, because of illness, epidemic, or natural or man-made disaster, the District is unable to find individuals to supervise students during lunch. Refer to 19 Texas Administrative Code 145.24.

Even under exceptional circumstances, a classroom teacher or librarian may not be required to supervise students during their duty-free lunch period more than one day in any school week.

### **Lactation Support**

**Policies** [DEAB](#), [DG](#)

The District supports the practice of expressing breast milk and makes reasonable accommodations for the needs of employees who express breast milk for up to one year after the child's birth. A place, other than a multiple user bathroom, which is shielded from view and free from intrusion from other employees and the public where the employee can express breast milk will be provided.

A reasonable amount of break time will be provided when the employee has a need to express milk. For nonexempt employees, these breaks are unpaid and are not counted

## EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

as hours worked. Employees should meet with their supervisor to discuss their needs and arrange break times.

The Providing Urgent Maternal Protections of Nursing Mothers Act (PUMP Act) requires an employee to notify the District if they believe the District is out of compliance in providing breaks for a nursing mother. The employee must give the District 10 days to come into compliance before making any claim of liability against the District. An employee with concerns should contact the ADA Coordinator at [ADA@HoustonISD.org](mailto:ADA@HoustonISD.org).

### **Pregnant Workers Fairness Act** **Policy [DIA](#)**

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) provides consideration of accommodations to employees who have known limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. An employee seeking a PWFA accommodation should contact the ADA Coordinator at [ADA@HoustonISD.org](mailto:ADA@HoustonISD.org) to begin the interactive process.

### **Notification to Parents Regarding Qualifications** **Policies [DK](#), [DBA](#)**

In schools receiving Title I funds, the District is required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to notify parents at the beginning of each school year that they may request information regarding the professional qualifications of their child's teacher. "Inappropriately certified" or "uncertified" teachers include individuals on an emergency permit (including individuals waiting to take a certification exam) and individuals who do not hold any certificate or permit. ESSA also requires that parents be notified if their child has been assigned or taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet applicable state certification or licensure requirements.

Texas law requires that parents be notified if their child is assigned for more than 30 consecutive instructional days to a teacher who does not hold an appropriate teaching certificate. This notice is not required if parental notice under ESSA is sent. Inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers include individuals on an emergency permit (including individuals waiting to take a certification exam) and individuals who do not hold any certificate or permit. Information relating to teacher certification will be made available to the public upon request. Employees who have questions about their certification status can call Employee Services at 713-556-7400 or email [EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org](mailto:EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org).

### **Outside Employment and Tutoring** **Policy [DBD \(LOCAL\)](#)**

Employees are required to disclose in writing to their immediate supervisor any outside employment that may create a potential conflict of interest with their

## EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

assigned duties and responsibilities or the best interest of the District. Supervisors will consider outside employment on a case-by-case basis and determine whether it should be prohibited because of a conflict of interest.

Additionally, an employee shall not recommend, endorse, or require students to purchase any product, material, or service in which the employee has a financial interest. An employee may sell personal goods or services to other District employees. However, the District employee receiving the personal goods or services must not be someone within the employee's supervisory chain of command. Further, the employee who sells goods or services may not use District time or equipment for the outside employment, including work created as part of the employee's job in the District (refer to [District Copyright Materials in policy CY4](#)). During the school year, an employee may not privately tutor or provide child or respite care services for pay to a district student the employee also teaches or serves. An employee must also disclose in writing to their immediate supervisor any private tutoring or child or respite care services for pay of any district students. The employee's principal or supervisor shall determine if the tutoring or services creates a conflict of interest with the proper discharge of the employee's assigned duties and responsibilities.

### Performance Evaluation

**Policies [DN](#), [DNA](#), [DNB](#)**

Evaluation of an employee's job performance is a continuous process that focuses on improvement. Performance evaluation is based on an employee's assigned job duties and other job-related criteria. All employees will participate in the evaluation process with their assigned supervisor at least annually. Written evaluations will be completed on forms approved by the District. Reports, correspondence, and memoranda may also be used to document performance information. All employees will have electronic access to their written evaluation, participate in a performance conference with their supervisor, and have the opportunity to respond to the evaluation.

Upon receiving a report, a nursing review committee may review a nurse's nursing services, qualifications, and quality of patient care, as well as the merits of a complaint concerning a nurse, and a determination or recommendation regarding





## EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

a complaint. A nurse may request, orally or in writing, a determination by the committee regarding conduct requested of the nurse believed to violate the nurse's duty to a patient.

### **Employee Involvement**

**Policies** [BQA](#), [BQB](#)

At both the campus and district levels, Houston ISD offers opportunities for input in matters that affect employees and influence the instructional effectiveness of the District. As part of the District's planning and decision-making process, employees may be chosen to serve on district- or campus-level advisory committees. Plans and detailed information about the shared decision-making process are available from school leadership.

### **Staff Professional Development**

**Policy** [DMA](#)

Staff professional development activities are organized to meet the needs of employees and the District. Staff development for instructional personnel is related to achieving campus performance objectives. Staff professional development for noninstructional personnel is designed to meet specific compliance requirements (e.g., bus drivers) and continued employee skill development.

Individuals holding renewable SBEC certificates are responsible for obtaining the required training hours and maintaining appropriate documentation.

The completion of various district-wide virtual training modules, including but not limited to, child abuse, Title IX, bloodborne pathogens, Code of Ethics, etc. is required on an annual or periodic basis as assigned and designated for each employee via the District's online platform (OneSource) or in-person trainings.

### **Planning and Preparation Time**

Each classroom teacher is entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning.

A planning and preparation period under this section may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day. There are no exceptions or waivers provided for less than 45 minutes within the instructional day for any teacher or due to a specialized instructional program.

During a planning and preparation period, a classroom teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity. Refer to TEC §21.404. All activities during individual planning sessions must be directly related to instructional preparation as defined above.



**Duty Assignments.** Principals may assign duties to employees in addition to those specified in job descriptions. Such duties may include the following:

- Lunch period duty in accordance with law
- Recess duty
- Hall duty
  - ◇ Classroom housekeeping duties including:
    - ◇ Turning out lights
    - ◇ Closing windows
    - ◇ Locking doors
    - ◇ Maintaining neat and attractive classrooms
    - ◇ Other tasks of similar nature
- Duty at extracurricular activities
- Bus loading duty
- Parking lot duty

For any extra duty assigned by the principal, she/he will prepare a schedule of these duty assignments. A copy of the schedule will be available, and orientation will be provided for such duty assignments.

## Dress Code

The dress and grooming of district employees will be clean, neat, in a manner appropriate for their assignments, and in accordance with any additional standards established by their supervisors and approved by the Superintendent. There may be exceptions to the dress code on certain occasions as approved by supervisor.

All district employees are role models and should dress accordingly to reflect good judgment and the high standards of the community:

- No apparel or grooming that has or may have an adverse impact on the educational process is permitted. Specifically, district employees are not permitted to wear shirts or pants with writing or emblems unless it is campus or district related.
- Consideration will be given to staff members' content area assignment, grade level assignment, special program assignment, or department assignment.
- Professional dress for men includes dress slacks and collared shirts with appropriate shoes and socks.

Professional dress for women includes dresses, slacks or skirts with appropriate blouse/top and shoes.

If specific concerns regarding an employee's dress, grooming, or appearance should arise, the employee's supervisor will determine the appropriateness of the item in question.

The principals or supervisors, in collaboration with their staff members, may set additional guidelines to meet the needs of the specific campus or building.

## Identification Badges

Employees will be photographed at the time of employment and an ID badge will be prepared for the employee's use at no cost to the employee. Each employee will wear their ID badge at all times while on district property and when conducting district business. The badge must be clearly visible, except in cases where the type of work does not permit the display.

If the identification badge is lost or destroyed, the employee will contact Employee Services at [EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org](mailto:EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org) to get a replacement. A campus identification badge may not be substituted for the official ID badge. There will be no defacing of, deletions or additions to, or ornamentation added to the official badge.



# COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS



## COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

### Salaries, Wages, and Stipends

Policies [DEA](#), [DEAA](#), [DEAB](#)

Employees are paid in accordance with administrative guidelines and an established pay structure. The District's pay plans are reviewed by the administration each year and adjusted as needed. All district positions are classified as exempt or nonexempt according to federal law. Professional employees and academic administrators are generally classified as exempt and are paid bi-weekly salaries. Exempt employees are not entitled to overtime compensation. Other employees are generally classified as nonexempt and are paid an hourly wage or salary and receive compensatory time or overtime pay for each hour worked beyond 40 in a workweek. Nonexempt employees are not authorized to work beyond their normal work schedule without advanced approval from their supervisor. See [Compensatory Time and Overtime Pay section on page 36](#) for important related information.

Employees may access their salary and payroll statements in OneSource Employee Self-Service. Classroom teachers, full-time librarians, full-time nurses, and full-time counselors will be paid no less than the minimum state salary schedule. Contract employees who perform extracurricular or supplemental duties may be given additional compensation on top of their base pay in accordance with the District's extra-duty pay schedule.

Employees should contact Employee Services Department at **713-556-7400** for more information about the District's pay schedules or their own pay.



### Service Records

#### Policy [DBA](#)

To receive service credit for prior work experience, new hires under a Teacher Placement Table must submit service records within 30 business days of start date to receive a retroactive starting pay adjustment. Otherwise, the effective date of change is the date upon which the Compensation Department receives the official service record. It is the responsibility of the employee to provide all official documentation.



### Paychecks

All salaried and hourly employees are paid on a biweekly basis on Wednesdays. To ensure that payroll deposits are made in accordance with standardized employee practices, it is required for every employee of the District to provide their authorization for the District to initiate credit entries directly to their account(s) at their respective financial institutions or to a pay card. The authorization also allows the District to make debit entries and credit entry adjustments to employee-designated accounts. Every effort will be made to ensure the accuracy of the pay, leave, and other information on each paycheck. It is the employee's responsibility to review their payroll statement for accuracy each pay day, including but not limited to compensation, leave, federal withholding status, and deductions. Payroll statements (paycheck stubs) are not issued to employees. Payroll statements can be accessed through OneSource Employee Self-Service (ESS) via [MyHISD](#). Employees are to contact the Payroll Department with questions regarding payroll statements and should contact Houston ISD's Technology Service Desk (TSD) regarding log-in problems with ESS.

Employees leaving Houston ISD will receive their final paycheck according to the District's pay schedule, unless doing so would result in an overpayment. The final pay statement will be deposited directly into the financial institution on file.

Paychecks will not be released to any person other than the District employee named on the check without the employee's written authorization, or as approved otherwise by law.

This link will direct you to HISD's [24-25 payroll calendar](#). The Payroll Department may be contacted for support at 713-556-7400 or [Payroll@HoustonISD.org](mailto:Payroll@HoustonISD.org).

### Automatic Payroll Deposit

Direct Deposit or Pay Card deposit of earnings is a requirement by the District for all employees who meet the eligibility requirement as an active district employee. Active employees must make a depository selection of any depository institution that is a member of the Federal Reserve System (verify with your bank). It is the employee's responsibility to complete a change form and notify the Payroll Department nine (9) business days in advance of any changes in the employee's bank status. The direct deposit request form can be obtained from HR's Employee Services via email at [EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org](mailto:EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org) or in-person at Employee Services, 4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092.

### Payroll Deductions

#### Policy [CFEA](#)

The District is required to make the following automatic payroll deductions:

- Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) or Social Security employee contributions for employees not active in TRS (exception for some long-term substitute)
- Federal income tax required for all full-time employees
- Medicare tax (applicable only to employees hired after March 31, 1986)
- Child support and spousal maintenance, if applicable
- Delinquent federal education loan payments, if applicable

Other payroll deductions available to employees include contributions for the employee's share of premiums for medical insurance, as well as deductions for dental, vision, supplemental life and AD&D, disability, and other supplemental insurance. Additionally, employees may choose to have deductions for annuities and higher education savings plans, also known as prepaid tuition programs. Employees also may request payroll deduction for professional organization payment of membership dues to professional organizations and certain charitable contributions approved by the board. Unauthorized or unpaid leave results in automatic salary deductions.

**Overpayments.** Employees are not entitled to any funds the District overpays. An overpayment occurs if an employee is paid more than the amount the employee should have been paid under the assigned pay grade and applicable supplemental pay.

If an overpayment is reported in the current fiscal year, a payment plan will be developed to recoup the payment. Generally, an overpayment will be paid in one pay cycle. However, if this creates an undue hardship for the employee, the District has the discretion to develop a plan for regular payroll deductions in the same fiscal year.

An agreement between an employee and the District must be in place in order to deduct any overpayment.

## COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS (CONTINUED)



An overpayment occurs if an employee is paid more than what is due to him/her. Overpayment may be caused due to several reasons which include but are not limited to incorrect pay grades, overpaid stipends, incorrect additional hours, etc. Should an employee receive an overpayment of gross earnings that are not due to the employee, then that overpayment will be deducted on the next paycheck and or subsequent pay checks until the amount overpaid is recovered. In some cases, a repayment plan may be entered into between the employee and HISD to allow for a more gradual repayment of the amount owed to avoid the employee not receiving any earnings for one or more pay cycles. All the effort is made to recover the overpayment within the current year it is generated or discovered, however, it might span over other years depending on each scenario.

The District is required to retrieve those funds as the District is a state agency and if the overpayment was not retrieved it would be considered a gift of public funds. The required payment plan will be in writing and added to personnel file. The District reserves the right to report to a collection agency and bar future employment for lack of repayment.

**Pay Periods.** All regular employees will receive their annual compensation in 26 payments. Employees who work less than 12 months, who are hired after the beginning of the school year, will be paid over the remaining pay periods in the school year. Less than 12-month employees will have escrow saved for non-workdays.

12-month (260 day) employees will receive 1/26th of their annual salary, regardless of when they were hired.

For reference, these links will direct you to HISD's [24-25 payroll calendar](#) and [24-25 work calendars](#).

**Errors and Discrepancies in Salaries.** Employees should always discuss errors or discrepancies of payroll information with their immediate supervisors or Payroll Department at 713-556-6440 or [Payroll@HoustonISD.org](mailto:Payroll@HoustonISD.org).

## Supplemental Duties

### Policy [DK \(LOCAL\)](#)

Assigned supplemental duties for which supplemental pay is received may be modified or discontinued by the District or the employee at any time. Paid supplemental duties are not part of the District's contractual obligation to contract employees, nor do they create an employment contract with at-will employees.

## Compensatory Time and Overtime Pay

### Policies [DEA](#), [DEAB](#), [DEC](#)

The District compensates nonexempt employees for overtime in accordance with federal wage and hour laws. Only nonexempt employees (hourly employees and paraprofessional employees) are entitled to overtime compensation. Nonexempt employees are not authorized to work beyond their normal work schedule without advance approval from their supervisor. An employee must complete an overtime request form and the supervisor must approve the form before the employee engages in the overtime work. A nonexempt employee who works overtime without prior approval may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Foreseeable work must be approved 24 hours in advance. If unforeseeable, employee must submit the form within 24 hours of completing the work.



- Compensatory Time can be used as an option instead of overtime. Note though that for non-exempt employees, compensatory time earned over 40 hours in a work week accumulate at 1.5 hours per hours worked over 40 hours. Managers need to monitor the accumulation and usage of compensatory time. Compensatory time should be used in the following pay period in which it is earned or within a reasonable period.
- Hourly non-exempt personnel will be compensated for overtime by monetary payment.
- The use of earned compensatory time must be approved in advance by the campus and/or immediate supervisor. The usage of compensatory time may not cause an undue disruption to the operation of the District.
- The work week is defined as 12:00 a.m. Sunday through 11:59 p.m. Saturday.
- Total compensatory hours due may not exceed forty (40) at any time during the year, except with the written approval of the appropriate Chief or Division Superintendent.



## COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS (CONTINUED)

- All compensatory time must be used each year before the end of the employee's regular days of service. No time can be carried over from one year to the next. It must be used during the year in which it was earned or the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires that it be converted to payment.
- Although the use of leave time and/or vacation time does qualify for regular payment, it does not count as actual hours worked under the Fair Labor Standards Act and will not be credited as time worked for overtime compensation by the District.

Nonexempt employees are paid based on an hourly rate and are required to clock in and out for hours worked. Employees are expected to work all hours and days scheduled per their work calendar or turn in leave. Any scheduled hours not worked or where no leave time is submitted will not be paid. Weekly hours worked beyond 40 hours will be paid at time and a half (1.5 x hours over 40).

The following applies to all nonexempt employees:

- Employees can accumulate up to 40 hours of comp time.
- Comp time must be used in the duty year that it is earned.
- Use of comp time may be at the employee's request with supervisor approval, as workload permits, or at the supervisor's direction.
- An employee is required to use comp time before using available paid leave (e.g., sick, personal, vacation).
- Time records will be maintained on all nonexempt employees for the purpose of wage and salary administration.

### Compensation During an Emergency Closure

**Policies [EB](#), [DEA](#), [DEC](#), [CKC](#)**

In the event the Superintendent has closed the District, individual campus(es), or facilities, the employees eligible for emergency closure leave will be paid using their available emergency closure leave at the rates established by Board policies and regulations.

Non-exempt employees will be paid according to policy. Exempt employees will be given compensatory time not to exceed eight hours per day as determined by his or her immediate supervisor. If stipulated in the HISD Compensation Plan, the Superintendent, in emergency situations, may grant up to five additional days of compensatory time each school year for work significantly beyond the scope of an employee's normal duties. This is in addition to the five compensatory days exempt employees are eligible to earn and accumulate each school year.

### Travel Expense Reimbursement

#### Policy [DEE](#)

Before any travel expenses are incurred by an employee, the employee's supervisor must give approval. For approved travel, employees will be reimbursed for mileage and other travel expenditures according to the current rate schedule established by the District unless they receive a "car allowance" at a flat rate. Employees must submit receipts, to the extent possible, to be reimbursed for allowable expenses other than mileage.



### Health, Dental, and Life Insurance

#### Policy [CRD](#)

Group health insurance coverage is available to benefit eligible employees. The District's contribution to employee medical insurance premiums is approved by the Board. Detailed descriptions of insurance coverage, prices, and eligibility requirements are provided to all employees online in a separate booklet titled Benefits Guide which may be found [here](#).

The health insurance plan year is from January 1st through December 31st. New employees must complete online enrollment within the first 31 days of employment. Current employees can make changes in their insurance coverage during Annual Enrollment period or when they experience a qualifying life event (e.g., marriage, divorce, birth). Employees should contact the Benefits Service Center by phone at 877-780-4473 for more information.

### Supplemental Insurance Benefits

#### Policy [CRD](#)

At their own expense, employees may enroll in supplemental insurance programs for dental, vision, supplemental life, spouse life, child life and other supplemental plans. Premiums for these programs are paid by payroll deductions. Employees should contact the Benefits Service Center for more information.

### Cafeteria Plan Benefits (Section 125)

Employees may be eligible to participate in the Cafeteria Plan (Section 125) and may accept or reject this benefit. This plan allows eligible employees to pay certain insurance premiums on a pre-tax or post-tax basis, as predetermined by the elected benefit. Each provider of these benefits handles employee claims made on these accounts.

### Benefit Elections

Any premiums deducted from the employee's paycheck will be "locked in" for the duration of the plan year, which begins January 1 and ends December 31. New enrollments may only be requested during the annual enrollment period, or within 31 days after a qualifying life event.

Qualifying life events are defined as situations involving a change in family status or other qualified events, as specified by IRS Section 125 regulations. These events are listed below:

- Change in employee's legal marital status.
- Change in the number of employee's dependents (birth, adoption, death).
- Change in employment status of employee, spouse, or dependent affecting eligibility.
- Employee's dependent satisfies or ceases to satisfy eligibility requirements.
- Gain of other coverage under another employer's plan (e.g., open enrollment of spouse's employer).
- Loss of coverage.
- COBRA qualifying events.
- Judgment, decree, or order.
- Medicare or Medicaid eligibility.

A change of election must be related to the reason for the change. The employee must request a change of election within 31 calendar days of the date of the qualifying life event. Changes requested after this time frame will not be permitted until the next annual enrollment period.

Changes typically take effect on the first day of the month following event date; however, some effective dates may vary. All life events require verification documentation, and any new dependents must be approved with the appropriate documentation. Confirm with the HISD Benefits Service Center about the date(s) your coverage changes become effective. Employees must contact the Benefits Service Center for assistance with a change of election.







### **Workers' Compensation Insurance**

**Policies** [CRE](#), [DECA](#)

The District, in accordance with state law, provides workers' compensation benefits to employees who suffer a work-related illness or are injured on the job. The District workers' compensation insurance is self-insured with excess coverage provided by a third party.

All work-related accidents or injuries should be reported immediately to the employees' immediate supervisor. Employees who are unable to work because of a work-related injury will be notified of their rights and responsibilities under the Texas Labor Code. If you are injured at work, tell your supervisor immediately. For emergencies, you may go to the nearest emergency room. You may also contact [HISDWorkComp@HoustonISD.org](mailto:HISDWorkComp@HoustonISD.org) for any questions about treatment for a work-related injury. See [Workers' Compensation Benefits section on page 55](#) for important related information. Visit [Workers' Compensation](#) for further information, such as related forms and documents.

### **Unemployment Compensation Insurance**

**Policy** [CRE](#)

Employees who have been laid off or terminated through no fault of their own may be eligible for unemployment compensation benefits. Employees are not eligible to collect unemployment benefits during regularly scheduled breaks in the school year or the summer months if they have employment contracts or reasonable assurance of returning to service. Employees with questions about unemployment benefits should contact HISD Unemployment Office at **713-556-9200**.





### Teacher Retirement System

All personnel employed on a regular basis for at least four and a half months are members of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS). Substitutes not receiving TRS service retirement benefits who work at least 90 days a year are also eligible for TRS membership and to purchase a year of creditable service in TRS. To earn a year of TRS membership credit, an employee must work in a TRS-eligible position or receive paid leave from a TRS-eligible position for at least 90 days during the school year. If an employee will not meet the 90-day requirement and has worked in excess of five days in a workweek, it is the employee's responsibility to ensure the additional day(s) have been reported. Members should carefully review years of service reported when TRS provides them with an annual statement of their account showing all deposits and the total account balance for the year ending August 31, as well as an estimate of their retirement benefits.

Employees who plan to retire under TRS should notify Houston ISD Retirement Counselor at **713-695-5561** two months prior to your retirement date. Information on the application procedures for TRS benefits is available from TRS at Teacher Retirement System of Texas, 1000 Red River Street, Austin, TX 78701-2698, or call **800-223-8778** or **512-542-6400**. TRS information is also available on the web ([www.trs.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov)). See [TRS Benefits Handbook](#), pages 42-43 for information on restrictions of employment of retirees in Texas public schools.

# LEAVES AND ABSENCES



## LEAVES AND ABSENCES

### ***Policies [DEC](#), [DECA](#), [DECB](#)***

The District offers employees paid and unpaid leaves of absence in times of personal need. This handbook describes the basic types of leave available and restrictions on leaves of absence. Employees who expect to be absent for an extended period of more than three days should contact the Leave Administration department at [LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org](mailto:LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org) for information about applicable leave-of-absence and requirements for communicating with the District. Employees should contact the Benefits department at [BenefitsOffice@HoustonISD.org](mailto:BenefitsOffice@HoustonISD.org) for information regarding the payment of insurance premiums while on leave.

Earned compensatory time will be used before any available paid state, local, or vacation leave. Unless an employee requests a different order, available paid state and local leave will be used in the following order:

- Local Personal Leave
- State Personal Leave
- State Sick Leave (accumulated prior to the 1995-1996 school year)
- Vacation Leave (if applicable)

**Recording Absences.** Non-exempt employees are required to accurately record all time worked using HISD's time & attendance system and must report absences in 15-minute increments.

Exempt employees are required to follow the next guidelines:

- **Leave Accounting:** Our leave accounting system will reflect an 8-hour workday for all exempt employees, including teachers, nurses, counselors, librarians, teacher specialists, and campus administrators. This is for leave accrual purposes only and does not affect your actual work schedule, which continues to be determined by your supervisor.

- **Absence Reporting (Non-Teachers):** Exempt professionals are not required to track their time in hourly increments. Therefore, only absences for half or full days need to be entered into the system. Exception: Absences must be recorded, in all increments, for approved intermittent time off through Family Medical Leave (FML) or an approved ADA accommodation. Both intermittent FML and ADA accommodations must be approved in writing by HR's Leave Administration Department.
- **Absence Reporting (Teachers):** If a teacher is absent for more than two hours, then a half day of leave may be taken, and a substitute should be secured. If the teacher returns before the end of the half day, then ultimately no leave is recorded, and the substitute teacher may be utilized as a floater to complete their assignment. Similarly, if a teacher intends to be out a full day, then a full-day sub should be secured. But if they return during the second half of the day, then only a half day of leave must be taken. Exception: Absences must be recorded, in all increments, for approved intermittent time off through Family Medical Leave (FML) or an approved ADA accommodation. Both intermittent FML and ADA accommodations must be approved in writing by HR's Leave Administration Department.
- **Scheduling Appointments:** We encourage you to schedule appointments outside of instructional hours and workdays whenever possible. This helps to maintain consistency in operations, classroom instruction, and supports your colleagues.
- **Attendance and Coverage:** A pattern of late arrivals or frequent absences may be addressed in performance appraisals and could result in disciplinary action. It is important to coordinate with campus leadership to ensure adequate class coverage during any absence and to make effective use of the Frontline substitute system.



Employees must follow district and department or campus procedures to report or request any leave of absence and complete the appropriate form or certification. Any unapproved absences or absences beyond accumulated or available paid leave shall result in deduction from the employee's pay.

## LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)

If an employee does not report or request leave of absence(s) according to district procedures, the incident is considered a “no call/no show”. An employee who is absent for two consecutive days without notice is considered to have abandoned their job and may face disciplinary consequences up to and including termination.

If you have any questions, please contact Leave Administration at [LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org](mailto:LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org) or 713-556-6590.



**Immediate Family.** For purposes of leave other than family and medical leave, immediate family is defined as the following:

- Spouse
- Son or daughter, including a biological, adopted, or foster child, a son- or daughter-in-law, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child for whom the employee stands in loco parentis
- Parent, stepparent, parent-in-law, or another individual who stands in loco parentis to the employee
- Sibling, stepsibling, and sibling-in-law
- Grandparent and grandchild
- Any person residing in the employee’s household at the time of illness or death

For purposes of family and medical leave, the definition of family is limited to spouse, parent, son or daughter, and next of kin. The definition of these are found in Policy [DECA \(LEGAL\)](#).

**Medical Certification.** Any employee, who is absent three or more days because of a personal or family illness, must submit a medical certification from a qualified health care provider confirming the specific dates of the illness, the reason for the illness, and—in the case of personal illness—the employee’s fitness to return to work.

The District may require medical certification due to an employee’s questionable pattern of absences or when deemed necessary by the supervisor or superintendent. The District may also request medical certification when an employee requests leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for the employee’s serious health condition, a serious health condition of the employee’s spouse, parent, or child, or for military caregiver leave.



## LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) prohibits covered employers from requesting or requiring genetic information of an individual or family member of the individual, except as specifically allowed by this law. To comply with this law, we ask that employees and health care providers do not provide any genetic information in any medical certification. ‘Genetic information,’ as defined by GINA, includes an individual’s family medical history, the results of an individual’s or family member’s genetic tests, the fact that an individual or an individual’s family member sought or received genetic services, and genetic information of a fetus carried by an individual or an individual’s family member, or an embryo lawfully held by an individual or family member receiving assistive reproductive services.

**Continuation of Health Insurance.** Employees, who take an unpaid leave of absence on an approved leave of absence other than family and medical leave, may continue their insurance benefits at their own expense. Health insurance benefits for employees on paid leave and leave designated under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) will be paid by the District as they were prior to the leave. Otherwise, the District does not pay any portion of insurance premiums for employees who are on unpaid leave.

### Use of Leave Days

Employees must follow district and department or campus procedures to report or request any leave of absence and complete the appropriate form or certification. Employees in violation of the following neutral absenteeism rules in [DEC8 \(REGULATION\)](#) will be subject to disciplinary action if they do not apply for and receive approval from Human Resources for protected leave:

- (1) “Regardless of the amount of leave in an employee’s leave bank, no employee may be absent for more than 15 days of leave” and
- (2) “An employee who is absent beyond their allocated number of days will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal”.

Employees are expected to adhere to these and all other absenteeism regulations as outlined in DEC8.

**Personal Leave.** Personal leave may be used for two general purposes: nondiscretionary and discretionary.

**Nondiscretionary.** Leave taken for personal or family illness, family emergency, a death in the family, or active military service is considered nondiscretionary leave. Reasons for this type of leave allow very little, if any, advance planning. Nondiscretionary may be used in the same manner as state sick leave.

**Discretionary.** Leave taken at an employee’s discretion that can be scheduled in advance is considered discretionary leave. An employee wishing to take discretionary personal leave must submit a request to his or her principal or

## LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)

supervisor at least two weeks in advance of the anticipated absence, or as soon as possible. The employee must make every effort to provide advance notice to his or her principal or supervisor of the need for leave. The effect of the employee's absence on the educational program or department operations, as well as the availability of substitutes, will be considered by the principal or supervisor.

Discretionary use of state personal leave and local personal leave shall not exceed two consecutive workdays. Principals and supervisors will not approve requests for over two consecutive workdays. However, a division superintendent, chief officer, or designee, may approve such a request in unique and rare circumstances.

**For Campus-Based Employees.** Discretionary use of leave, including vacation days, shall not be permitted during or on:

- The first week of a new semester.
- The day before or after a school holiday or recess day.
- Days scheduled for end-of-semester or end-of-year exams or during days scheduled for exams that are administered across the feeder pattern, unit, or division.
- Days scheduled for state-mandated assessments.
- Professional or staff development days.



**Leave Proration.** If an employee separates from employment with the District before his or her last duty day of the year, or begins employment after the first duty day, advanced state personal leave, local personal leave, and vacation days will be prorated based on the actual time employed. When an employee separates from employment before the last duty day of the employee's work calendar, the employee's final paycheck will be reduced by the amount of state personal leave, local personal leave, or vacation days the employee used beyond his or her pro rata entitlement for the school year.

### State Personal Leave

State law entitles all full-time employees (100% FTE) to five days of paid state personal leave per year. State personal leave is available for use at the beginning of the year. A day of state personal leave is equivalent to the number of hours per day in an employee's usual assignment, whether full-time or part-time. State personal leave accumulates without limit, is transferable to other Texas school districts, and generally transfers to education service centers.

## LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)



### State Sick Leave

State sick leave accumulated before 1995 is available for use and may be transferred to other school districts in Texas. State sick leave may be used for the following reasons only:

- Employee illness
- Illness in the employee's immediate family
- Family emergency (i.e., natural disasters or life-threatening situations)
- Death in the immediate family
- Active military service

### Local Personal Leave

Each employee shall earn five, six, or seven paid local personal leave days per school year based on months of service and in accordance with administrative regulations.

An employee may contribute local leave to the Supplemental Sick Leave Bank in accordance with this policy.

Local leave shall accumulate without limit.

### Vacation Policy [DED](#)

Employees in 12-month, full-time assignments shall earn paid vacation time, accrued annually in accordance with administrative regulations.

Employees are expected to use vacation days in the year in which they are earned. However, employees may accumulate and carry over vacation for a total maximum of 50 days. Employees will receive a lump-sum payment for earned, accumulated, and unused vacation upon separation of employment for any reason. Unused vacation days, not to exceed 50 days, will be paid to an employee separating from the District.

### Supplemental Sick Leave Bank (SSLB)

#### Policy [DEC](#)

The District has established a Supplemental Sick Leave Bank (SSLB) program that employees may join through the contribution of local personal leave. The purpose of the SSLB is to provide additional sick leave days to a member of the program who experiences a catastrophic illness or injury which prevents the member from performing the duties of their position. Leave contributed to the bank will be solely for the use of participating employees. An employee who is a member of the bank may request leave from the bank if the employee experiences a catastrophic illness or injury and the employee has exhausted all paid leave and vacation, if applicable.

Implementation procedures for the SSLB shall be published in the Finance Procedures Manual.



### Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

#### Policy [DECA](#)

Eligible employees can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave from July 1 through June 30.

**Eligibility.** An eligible employee for Family and Medical Leave (FML) is an employee who:

- Has been employed by the District for at least 12 months. The 12 months need not be consecutive.
- Has been employed by the District for at least 1,250 hours of service during the 12 months immediately preceding the commencement of leave.

**Definition of Serious Health Condition.** A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility, or continuing treatment by a health care provider for a condition that either prevents the employee from performing the functions of the employee's job or prevents the qualified family member from participating in school or other daily activities. Subject to certain conditions, the continuing treatment requirement may be met by a period of incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days combined with at least two visits to a health care provider or one visit and a regimen of continuing treatment, or incapacity due to pregnancy, or incapacity due to a chronic condition. Other conditions may meet the definition of continuing treatment.



## LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)

**Qualifying Reasons for FML.** An eligible employee may take FML for the following reasons:

- To care for the employee's child after birth, or placement for adoption or foster care.
- To care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition.
- To care for a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform his or her job.
- For qualifying exigencies related to the foreign deployment of a military member who is the employee's spouse, child, or parent.
- An eligible employee who is a covered servicemember's spouse, child, parent, or next of kin may also take up to 26 weeks of FMLA leave in a single 12-month period to care for the servicemember with a serious injury or illness.

**Use of Paid Leave.** FML runs concurrently with accrued sick and personal leave, temporary disability leave, compensatory time, assault leave, and absences due to a work-related illness or injury. The District will designate the leave as FML, if applicable, and notify the employee that accumulated leave will run concurrently.

**Combined Leave for Spouses.** Spouses who are employed by the District are limited to a combined total of 18 weeks of FML to care for a parent with a serious health condition; or for the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child. Military caregiver leave for spouses is limited to a combined total of 26 weeks.

**Intermittent Leave.** When medically necessary or in the case of a qualifying exigency, an employee may take leave intermittently or on a reduced schedule. The District also permits the use of intermittent or reduced-schedule leave for the care of a newborn child or for adoption or placement of a child with the employee.

**Applying for Family Medical Leave.** Employees that wish to apply for FML should submit an FML application via their Employee Self-Service account, or the employee can contact the HISD Leave Administration department directly for assistance.

**Fitness for Duty Certification.** An employee that takes FML due to the employee's own serious health condition shall provide, before resuming work, a fitness-for-duty certification from the health care provider. When leave is taken for the employee's own serious health condition, the certification must address the employee's ability to perform essential job functions. Fitness for duty is not required when an employee returns to work following leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition; to care for a child following birth, adoption, or foster care placement; or for qualifying exigency leave.

## LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)



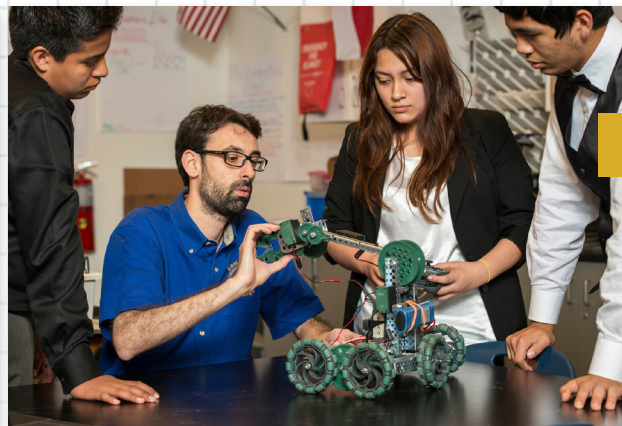
**Reinstatement.** An employee returning to work at the end of FML will be returned to the same position held when the leave began or to an equivalent position with equivalent employment benefits, pay, and other terms and conditions of employment.

In certain cases, instructional employees desiring to return to work at or near the conclusion of a semester may be required to continue on family and medical leave until the end of the semester. The additional time off is not counted against the employee's FML entitlement, and the District will maintain the employees group health insurance and reinstate the employee at the end of the leave according to the procedures outlined in policy. See [DECA \(LEGAL\)](#).

**Failure to Return.** Failure to return from leave at the conclusion of an FML approval and/or after the maximum allotment of FML has been exhausted may result in disciplinary action up to, and including, termination. If, at the expiration of FML, the employee is able to return to work but chooses not to do so, the District may require the employee to reimburse the District's share of insurance premiums paid during any portion of FML when the employee was on unpaid leave. If the employee fails to return to work for a reason beyond the employee's control, such as a continuing personal or family serious health condition or a spouse being unexpectedly transferred more than 75 miles from the district, the District may not require the employee to reimburse the District's share of premiums paid.

**District Contact.** Employees that require FML or have questions should contact the HISD Leave Administration department at [LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org](mailto:LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org) or 713-556-6590 for details on eligibility, requirements, limitations, and application information.

## LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)



### Additional Extended Leaves of Absence

In addition to Family Medical Leave and Temporary Disability Leave, the District offers several extended leave options for eligible, full-time employees.

**Developmental Leave.** An employee may be granted an unpaid leave for one year for the purpose of engaging in a study designed to improve the employee's professional competence. A Developmental Leave shall be effective at the beginning of the semester following the date of request. Upon request, such leave may be extended for one additional year. Upon returning, the employee must provide proof of the academic work completed.

**Political Leave.** An unpaid leave may be granted to any employee seeking or, if elected, serving in a public office. This leave is not to exceed four years if granted.

**Military Leave.** An employee who is inducted or called up for military duty in any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States will be granted an unpaid military leave of absence. Upon return, the employee will be placed in a comparable position within the District. Military leave must not exceed five years, and the employee must return directly to HISD from military service.

**Applying for an Extended Leave of Absence.** Employees that wish to apply for an extended leave of absence should initiate a request for leave by submitting the District Leave of Absence Application to the HISD Leave Administration department at [LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org](mailto:LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org) or 713-556-6590.

**Failure to Return.** Failure to return from leave after the maximum allotment of any extended leave of absence has been exhausted may result in disciplinary action up to, and including, termination.

**District Contact.** Employees requesting an extended leave of absence or additional information regarding the process should contact the HISD Leave Administration department at [LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org](mailto:LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org) or 713-556-6590 for details on eligibility, requirements, application, and reinstatement information.

# LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)

## FMLA – General Provisions

The following text is from the federal notice, Your Employee Rights Under the Family and Medical Leave Act. Specific information that the District has adopted to implement the FMLA follows this general notice.

### What is FMLA leave?

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a federal law that provides eligible employees with **job-protected leave** for qualifying family and medical reasons.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division (WHD) enforces the FMLA for most employees. Eligible employees can take **up to 12 workweeks** of FMLA leave in a 12-month period for:

- The birth, adoption or foster placement of a child with you,
- Your serious mental or physical health condition that makes you unable to work,
- To care for your spouse, child or parent with a serious mental or physical health condition, and
- Certain qualifying reasons related to the foreign deployment of your spouse, child or parent who is a military servicemember.

An eligible employee who is the spouse, child, parent or next of kin of a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness **may take up to 26 workweeks** of FMLA leave in a single 12-month period to care for the servicemember.

You have the right to use FMLA leave in **one block of time**. When it is medically necessary or otherwise permitted, you may take FMLA leave **intermittently in separate blocks of time, or on a reduced schedule** by working less hours each day or week. Read Fact Sheet #28M(c) for more information.

FMLA leave is **not paid leave**, but you may choose, or be required by your employer, to use any employer-provided paid leave if your employer's paid leave policy covers the reason for which you need FMLA leave.

### Am I eligible to take FMLA leave?

You are an **eligible employee** if *all* of the following apply:

- You work for a covered employer,
- You have worked for your employer at least 12 months,
- You have at least 1,250 hours of service for your employer during the 12 months before your leave, and

*continued*



## LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)

- Your employer has at least 50 employees within 75 miles of your work location

Airline flight crew employees have different “hours of service” requirements.

You work for a **covered employer** if **one** of the following applies:

- You work for a private employer that had at least 50 employees during at least 20 workweeks in the current or previous calendar year,
- You work for an elementary or public or private secondary school, or
- You work for a public agency, such as a local, state or federal government agency. Most federal employees are covered by Title II of the FMLA, administered by the Office of Personnel Management

### How do I request FMLA leave?

Generally, **to request FMLA leave you must:**

- Follow your employer’s normal policies for requesting leave,
- Give notice at least 30 days before your need for FMLA leave, or
- If advance notice is not possible, give notice as soon as possible.

You **do not have to share a medical diagnosis** but must provide enough information to your employer so they can determine whether the leave qualifies for FMLA protection. You **must also inform your employer if FMLA leave was previously taken** or approved for the same reason when requesting additional leave.

Your **employer may request certification** from a health care provider to verify medical leave and may request certification of a qualifying exigency.

The FMLA does not affect any federal or state law prohibiting discrimination or supersede any state or local law or collective bargaining agreement that provides greater family or medical leave rights.

State employees may be subject to certain limitations in pursuit of direct lawsuits regarding leave for their own serious health conditions. Most federal and certain congressional employees are also covered by the law but are subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management or Congress

### What does my employer need to do?

If you are eligible for FMLA leave, your employer **must:**

- Allow you to take job-protected time off work for a qualifying reason,
- Continue your group health plan coverage while you are on leave on the same basis as if you had not taken leave, and allow you to return to the

*continued*

## LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)

same job, or a virtually identical job with the same pay, benefits and other working conditions, including shift and location, at the end of your leave.

Your **employer cannot interfere with your FMLA rights** or threaten or punish you for exercising your rights under the law. For example, your employer cannot retaliate against you for requesting FMLA leave or cooperating with a WHD investigation.

After becoming aware that your need for leave is for a reason that may qualify under the FMLA, your **employer must confirm whether you are eligible** or not eligible for FMLA leave. If your employer determines that you are eligible, **your employer must notify you in writing:**

- About your FMLA rights and responsibilities, and
- How much of your requested leave, if any, will be FMLA-protected leave.

### Where can I find more information?

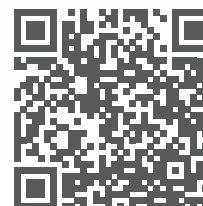
Call 1-866-487-9243 or visit [dol.gov/fmla](https://dol.gov/fmla) to learn more.

If you believe your rights under the FMLA have been violated, you may file a complaint with WHD or file a private lawsuit against your employer in court. Scan the QR code or click [here](#) to learn about our WHD complaint process.



**WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION**  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

**SCAN ME**



## Temporary Disability Leave

The purpose of temporary disability leave is to provide a leave option to employees who are unable to work for an extended period of time because of a physical or mental disability of a temporary nature. Temporary disability leave is for care of the employee only. Temporary disability leave must be taken as a continuous block of time. It may not be taken intermittently or on a reduced schedule. Pregnancy

## LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)



and conditions related to pregnancy are treated the same as any other temporary disability.

**Certified Employees.** Any full-time employee whose position requires certification from the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) is eligible for temporary disability leave. The maximum length of temporary disability leave shall be 180 calendar days.

**Non-Certified Employees.** All other full-time employees shall be eligible for temporary disability leave. The maximum length of temporary disability leave shall be 180 calendar days.

**Applying for Temporary Disability Leave.** Employees must request approval for temporary disability leave. A request for temporary disability leave is initiated when the employee submits a District Leave of Absence Application to the HISD Leave Administration department at [LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org](mailto:LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org) or **713-556-6590**. The request must be accompanied by a physician's statement confirming the employee's inability to work and estimating a probable date of return. If temporary disability leave is approved, the length of leave is no longer than 180 calendar days.

### **Workers' Compensation Benefits** **Policies [CRE](#), [DEC](#)**

An employee absent from duty because of a job-related illness or injury may be eligible for workers' compensation weekly income benefits if the absence exceeds seven calendar days.

## LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)

An employee receiving workers' compensation wage benefits for a job-related illness or injury will receive workers compensation indemnity payments in addition to partial-day increments of sick leave or any other paid leave benefits to make up the difference between wage benefits and pre-injury or -illness wages. While an employee is receiving workers' compensation wage benefits, the District will charge available leave proportionately so that the employee receives an amount equal to the employee's regular salary. Visit [Workers' Compensation](#) for further information, such as related forms and documents.



### **Assault Leave** **Policies [DEC](#), [CRE \(LOCAL\)](#)**

Assault leave provides extended job income and benefits protection to an employee who is injured as the result of a physical assault suffered during the performance of his or her job. An incident involving an assault is a work-related injury and should be immediately reported to [HISDWorkComp@HoustonISD.org](mailto:HISDWorkComp@HoustonISD.org).

An injury is treated as an assault if the person causing the injury could be prosecuted for assault or could not be prosecuted only because that person's age or mental capacity renders the person non responsible for purposes of criminal liability.

A District employee who is physically assaulted during the performance of regular duties is entitled to the number of days of leave medically necessary (up to two years) to recover from the physical injuries he or she sustained as a result of the assault. At the request of an employee, the District will immediately assign the employee to assault leave. Days of leave granted under the assault leave provision will not be deducted from accrued personal leave and must be coordinated with workers' compensation benefits. Upon investigation the District may change the assault leave status and charge leave used against the employee's accrued paid leave. The employee's pay will be deducted if accrued paid leave is not available. If assault leave initially filed, upon investigation, is no longer granted, the employee is still eligible for workers compensation benefits, as applicable. Assault leave coordinates with workers compensation leave. All injuries under this policy should be reported to [HISDWorkComp@HoustonISD.org](mailto:HISDWorkComp@HoustonISD.org).

### **Bereavement Leave** **Policy [DEC](#)**

An employee who is eligible for the comprehensive leave program shall be granted three (3) days of funeral leave, per occurrence, upon the death of a spouse, parent, current parent-in-law, child, sibling, or any other person residing in the employee's home at the time of death. Such leave shall be taken with no loss of pay or other paid leave.



## LEAVES AND ABSENCES (CONTINUED)

Additional days in excess of the three days, or leave for the bereavement of any other person not covered by this provision, shall be deducted from the employee's accrued leave bank(s).

A regular hourly employee shall not be eligible for funeral leave and may use accrued leave for a death in the employee's immediate family.

### **Jury Duty**

**Policies** [DEC](#), [DG](#)

The District provides paid leave to employees who are summoned to jury duty including service on a grand jury. The District will not discharge, threaten to discharge, intimidate, or coerce any regular employee because of juror or grand juror service or for the employee's attendance or scheduled attendance in connection with the service in any court in the United States. Employees who report to the court for jury duty may keep any compensation the court provides. An employee should report a summons for jury duty to his or her supervisor as soon as it is received and may be required to provide the District a copy of the summons to document the need for leave.

An employee may be required to report back to work as soon as they are released from jury duty. The supervisor may consider the travel time required and the nature of the individual's position when determining the need to report to work. A copy of the release from jury duty or documentation of time spent at the court may be required.

### **Compliance with a Subpoena**

**Policy** [DEC](#)

Employees subpoenaed for non-District, mandatory court appearances as court witnesses may be absent without loss of pay provided a copy of the subpoena is submitted to the department's time recorder and maintained in the department's payroll files.

Absences for court appearances related to an employee's personal business will be deducted from the employee's personal leave or taken by the employee as leave without pay.

### **Truancy Court Appearances**

An employee who is a parent, guardian of a child, or a court-appointed guardian ad litem of a child who is required to miss work to attend a truancy court hearing may use personal leave or compensatory time for the absence. If no personal leave or compensatory time is available, the absence may be taken by the employee as leave without pay.

### Religious Observance

The District will reasonably accommodate an employee's request for absence for a religious holiday or observance. Accommodations such as changes to work schedules or approving a day of absence will be made unless they pose an undue hardship to the District. The employee may use any accumulated personal leave for this purpose. Employees who have exhausted applicable paid leave may be granted an unpaid day of absence. Employees with questions regarding a religious holiday or observance should contact [ADA@HoustonISD.org](mailto:ADA@HoustonISD.org).

### Military Leave

*Policies [DECB](#), [DEC7 \(REGULATION\)](#), [DEC8 \(REGULATION\)](#)*

**Paid Leave for Military Service.** Any employee who is a member of the Texas National Guard, Texas State Guard, reserve component of the United States Armed Forces, or a member of a state or federally authorized Urban Search and Rescue Team is entitled to 15 days of paid leave per fiscal year when engaged in authorized training or duty orders by proper authority. An additional seven days of leave per fiscal year are available if called to state active duty in response to a disaster. In addition, an employee is entitled to use available state and local personal or sick leave during a time of active military service.



**Reemployment after Military Leave.** Employees who leave the District to enter into the United States uniformed services or who are ordered to active duty as a member of the military force of any state (e.g., National or State Guard) may return to employment if they are honorably discharged. Employees who wish to return to the District will be reemployed provided they can be qualified to perform the required duties. Employees returning to work following military leave should contact [LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org](mailto:LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org). In most cases, the length of federal military service cannot exceed five years.

**Continuation of Health Insurance.** Employees who perform service in the uniformed services may elect to continue their health plan coverage at their own cost for a period not to exceed 24 months. Employees should contact [BenefitsOffice@HoustonISD.org](mailto:BenefitsOffice@HoustonISD.org) for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.



### **Mental Health Leave for Peace Officers and Licensed Telecommunicators**

A District peace officer or a full-time licensed telecommunicator (e.g., a police dispatcher) who experiences a traumatic event in the scope of employment will be granted a maximum of five days of mental health leave per traumatic event. The amount of leave time necessary is determined by the Chief of Police or designee.

### **Quarantine Leave for Peace Officers**

A District peace officer shall be granted five (5) days of quarantine leave when ordered by the local health authority or supervisor to quarantine or isolate due to possible known exposure to a communicable disease while on duty.

### **Leave for Police Officers for Illness or Injury**

A full-time district employed licensed police officer who regularly serves in a law enforcement capacity in a district police department is entitled to a paid leave of absence (LOA) for an illness or injury related to the person's line of duty. If necessary, the leave shall continue for a maximum of two (2) years, with no loss of pay.

If unable to return to work at the end of the paid leave and any extension, a police officer may be placed on temporary disability leave and can use accumulated sick, vacation, and other accrued leave before being placed in an unpaid leave status. At the end of the temporary disability leave, the police officer will be reinstated at the same rank and with the same seniority the person had before going on temporary disability leave.





## COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

### *Policy [DGBA](#)*

In an effort to hear and resolve employee concerns or complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible, the board has adopted an orderly grievance process. Employees are encouraged to discuss their concerns and or complaints through informal conferences with their supervisors, principal or other appropriate administrator at any time. Concerns should be expressed as soon as possible to allow early resolution at the lowest possible administrative level.

If an informal conference regarding a complaint fails to reach the outcome requested by the employee, she or he may initiate the formal process described below by timely filing a formal grievance. Even after initiating the formal grievance process, employees are encouraged to seek informal resolution of their concerns. An employee whose concerns are resolved may withdraw a formal grievance at any time. The process described in the policy shall not be construed to create new or additional rights beyond those granted by law or Board policy, nor to require a full evidentiary hearing at any level.

The formal grievance process provides all employees with an opportunity to be heard by the highest level of management up to the Board of Managers if they are dissatisfied with an administrative response to the grievance. Once all administrative procedures are exhausted, employees can bring concerns or complaints to the board of managers through the procedures outlined in the grievance process. For ease of reference, the District's policy concerning the process of bringing concerns and complaints may be found at [Policy Online](#).





## EMPLOYEE CONDUCT AND WELFARE

### Standards of Conduct

#### Policy [DH](#)

All employees are expected to work together in a cooperative spirit to serve the best interests of the District and to be courteous to students, one another, and the public. Employees are expected to observe the following standards of conduct:

- Recognize and respect the rights of students, parents, other employees, and members of the community.
- Maintain confidentiality in all matters relating to students and coworkers.
- Report to work according to the assigned schedule.
- Request approvals for foreseeable absences from campus leavers in-person prior to entering in OneSource for formal approval. Notify their immediate supervisor in advance or as early as possible in the event that they must be unexpectedly absent or late. Unauthorized absences, chronic absenteeism, tardiness, and failure to follow procedures for reporting an absence may be cause for disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- Know and comply with department and district policies and procedures.
- Express concerns, complaints, or criticism through appropriate channels.
- Observe all safety rules and regulations and report injuries or unsafe conditions to a supervisor immediately.
- Use district time, funds, and property for authorized district business and activities only.

All district employees should perform their duties in accordance with state and federal law, district policies and procedures, and ethical standards. Violation of policies, regulations, or guidelines, including intentionally making a false claim, offering false statements, or refusing to cooperate with a district investigation may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Alleged incidents of certain misconduct by educators, including having a criminal record, must be reported to State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) not later than the seventh day after the superintendent of Schools knew of the incident. See [Reports to Texas Education Agency State Board for Educator Certification section on page 100](#) for important related information. All district employees must adhere to the *Educators' Code of Ethics*, adopted by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC).

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

### Texas Educators' Code of Ethics

#### 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. See [19 TAC 247.1\(b\)](#) and [DH \(EXHIBIT\)](#).

It is the expectation of the District that all employees adhere to the Educators' Code of Ethics.

#### 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,

*continued*

## EMPLOYEE CONDUCT AND WELFARE (CONTINUED)

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.

**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.

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## 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.

**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

*continued*



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:

- (i) the nature, purpose, timing, and amount of the communication;
- (ii) the subject matter of the communication;
- (iii) whether the communication was made openly or the educator attempted to conceal the communication;
- (iv) whether the communication could be reasonably interpreted as soliciting sexual contact or a romantic relationship;
- (v) whether the communication was sexually explicit; and
- (vi) 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.



### District Investigations

#### *Policy [DH](#)*

When the District investigates a complaint of misconduct, including but not limited to complaints of student abuse or any type of sexual harassment, it expects and requires the cooperation of all employees including the complainant, witnesses, and the accused. During an investigation, the District may interview employees privately and take oral and/or written statements from them. Any employee who fails to cooperate with such an investigation or to provide complete and truthful information may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment. Employees are expected to uphold confidentiality and refrain from discussing the case, facts, suspicions, or allegations with anyone other than with the assigned investigator and/or their legal representative.

### Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

#### *Policies [DH](#), [DIA](#), [DH \(LOCAL\)](#), [DIA\( LOCAL\)](#), and [DIA \(REGULATION\)](#)*

Employees shall not engage in prohibited harassment, including sexual harassment, of other employees, unpaid interns, student teachers, or students. While acting in the course of their employment, employees shall not engage in prohibited harassment of other persons including board members, vendors, contractors, volunteers, or parents. A substantiated charge of harassment will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Employees who believe they have been discriminated or retaliated against or harassed are encouraged to promptly report such incidents to the campus principal, supervisor, or appropriate district official. If the campus principal, supervisor, or district official is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be made directly to the superintendent. A complaint against the superintendent may be made directly to the board.

Any district employee who believes that she or he has experienced prohibited conduct based on sex, including sexual harassment, or believes that another employee has experienced such prohibited conduct, should immediately report the alleged acts. The employee may report the alleged acts to his or her supervisor, the campus principal, the Title IX coordinator, or the superintendent. The District's Title IX coordinator's name and contact information is listed in the [Equal Employment Opportunity section on page 14](#) of this handbook.

The District's policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating discrimination, harassment, and retaliation is available here [DIA LOCAL](#).

**Title IX Coordinator.** Reports of discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment, may be directed to the Title IX Coordinator. Additional information on Title IX may be found at [www.HoustonISD.org/TitleIX](http://www.HoustonISD.org/TitleIX). The District designates the following employees to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended:

■ **Danielle Delone, Senior Investigator Analyst** or  
**Breanna Turner, Employee Relations Coordinator 2**  
Employee Relations | 4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092  
[TitleIXComplaints@HoustonISD.org](mailto:TitleIXComplaints@HoustonISD.org)  
713-556-7313

**ADA Representative.** Reports of discrimination based on disability may be directed to the ADA Representative. The District designates the following person to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which incorporates and expands upon the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973:

■ **Sabrina Ikhimokpa, Director of Leave Administration**  
4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092  
[ADA@HoustonISD.org](mailto:ADA@HoustonISD.org)  
713-556-6590

**Superintendent of Schools.** The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall serve as coordinator for purposes of district compliance with all other anti-discrimination laws. The designee for DIA discrimination claims is Danielle Delone, Senior Investigator Analyst.

For additional information on reporting procedures, see [FFH \(LOCAL\)](#) and [FFG \(LOCAL\)](#).

### Harassment of Students

**Policies** [DF](#), [DH](#), [DHB](#), [FFG](#), [FFH](#), [FFI](#), [GRA](#)

Sexual and other harassment of students by employees are forms of discrimination and are prohibited by law. Romantic or inappropriate social relationships between students and district employees are prohibited.

Employees who suspect a student may have experienced prohibited harassment are obligated to report their concerns to the campus principal or other appropriate district official. Any district employee who suspects or receives direct or indirect notice that a student or group of students has or may have experienced prohibited conduct based on sex, including sexual harassment, of a student shall immediately



notify the District's Title IX coordinator, the ADA/Section 504 coordinator, or superintendent and take any other steps required by district policy.

All allegations of prohibited harassment of a student by an employee or adult will be reported to the student's parents and promptly investigated. An employee who knows of or has reasonable cause to believe that child abuse or neglect occurred child abuse must also report his or her knowledge or suspicion to the appropriate authorities, as required by law. See [Reporting Suspected Child Abuse section on page 68](#) and [Bullying section on page 105](#) for important related information.

The District's policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating harassment of students may be found in Board Policy [DHB \(Legal\)](#) and [FFH \(LOCAL\)](#).

### **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

**Policies [DG](#), [FFG](#), [GRA](#), [DE](#), [DH](#)**

All employees with reasonable cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect, as defined by Texas Family Code §261.001, are required by state law to make a report to a law enforcement agency, Child Protective Services (CPS), or appropriate state agency (e.g., state agency operating, licensing, certifying, or registering the facility) within 48 hours of the event that led to the suspicion. Alleged abuse or neglect involving a person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child (including a teacher) must be reported to CPS.

Employees are also required to make a report if they have reasonable cause to believe that an adult was a victim of abuse or neglect as a child and they determine in good faith that the disclosure of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of another child, elderly person, or person with a disability.



Reports to Child Protective Services can be made Online at [Texas Abuse Hotline Website](#) or to the Texas Abuse Hotline **800-252-5400**. State law specifies that an employee may not delegate to or rely on another person or administrator to make the report.

Under state law, any person reporting or assisting in the investigation of reported child abuse or neglect is immune from liability unless the report is made in bad faith or with malicious intent. In addition, the District is prohibited from taking an adverse employment action against a certified or licensed professional who, in good faith, reports child abuse or neglect or who participates in an investigation regarding an allegation of child abuse or neglect.

An employee's failure to make the required report may result in prosecution as a Class A misdemeanor. The offense of failure to report by a professional may be a state jail felony if it is shown the individual intended to conceal the abuse or neglect. In addition, a certified employee's failure to report may result in disciplinary procedures by State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) for a violation of the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics.

Employees who suspect that a student has been or may be abused or neglected should also report their concerns to the campus principal. This includes students with disabilities who are no longer minors. Employees are not required to report their concern to the principal before making a report to the appropriate agency. In addition, employees must cooperate with investigators of child abuse and neglect.

Reporting the concern to the principal does not relieve the employee of the requirement to report it to the appropriate state agency and law enforcement. In addition, employees must cooperate with investigators of child abuse and neglect. Interference with a child abuse investigation by denying an interviewer's request to interview a student at school or requiring the presence of a parent or school administrator against the desires of the duly authorized investigator is prohibited.

### **Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment of Children**

The District has established a plan for addressing sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children which may be access at [FFH \(Local\)](#). As an employee, it is important for you to be aware of warning signs that could indicate a child may have been or is being sexually abused or maltreated. Sexual abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as a failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child. Maltreatment is defined as abuse or neglect. Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility under state law for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect following the procedures described in the [Reporting Suspected Child Abuse section on page 68](#).

### Reporting Crime

#### Policy [DG](#)

The Texas Whistleblower Act protects district employees who make good faith reports of violations of law by the District to an appropriate law enforcement authority. The District is prohibited from suspending, terminating the employment of, or taking other adverse personnel action against an employee who makes a report under the Act. State law also provides employees with the right to report a crime witnessed at the school to any peace officer with authority to investigate the crime.

### Technology Resources

#### Policy [CQ](#)

The District's technology resources, including its networks the internet, computer systems, email accounts, devices connected to its networks, and all district-owned devices used on or off school property, are primarily for administrative and instructional purposes in accordance with administrative regulations. Limited personal use of the resources is permitted with the exception of cell phones, which are for business use only, if the use:

- Imposes no tangible cost to the District.
- Does not unduly burden the District's technology resources.
- Has no adverse effect on job performance or on a student's academic performance.
- Is not used for commercial or political reasons.

Electronic mail transmissions and other use of the District's technology resources are not confidential or considered private and may be monitored at any time to ensure appropriate use.

Employees are required to abide by the provisions of the District's acceptable use agreement and administrative procedures. Failure to do so may result in suspension of access or termination of privileges and may lead to disciplinary and/or legal action. Employees with questions about computer use and data management can contact Information Technology.

**Internet Filter.** Houston ISD uses a web filter to manage access to various inappropriate locations. However, even with a filter, there may still be sites accessible via the Internet that contain material that is illegal, defamatory, inaccurate, or controversial. Although the District will attempt to limit access to objectionable material by using software, controlling all materials on the Internet is impossible. Employees are expected to monitor student Internet use and to report inappropriate Internet sites not filtered to administration.



**Email.** Email is a district service provided by public funds. Email is for instructional and administrative use. Sending jokes, chain letters, etc. via email is considered an inappropriate use of district equipment. Electronic mail transmissions and other use of the electronic communications system by employees shall not be considered private and are archived as records for an indefinite period of time. Email may be monitored at any time by designated district staff to ensure appropriate use. This monitoring may include activity logging, virus scanning, and content scanning.

Any memo or correspondence sent via email must follow the same district guidelines as is used for other correspondence distribution.

Records retention guidelines apply to email correspondence and must be followed. Email is viewed as a public document. Care should be given to the tone of the email. Also, grammar and spelling should be checked before an email is sent. Be mindful of the unique forwarding properties associated with email.

**Electronic Storage.** The District has provided technology users with access to network storage locations for files. The storage area provides a place where school-related items can be stored from year to year.

To enforce acceptable use guidelines and to maintain the integrity of the District's technology resources, shared network space and any district storage space will be monitored by district staff. Inappropriate files such as games, music, inappropriate images, movies, videos, and files that consume storage space will be deleted. External electronic storage devices are subject to monitoring if used or purchased with district resources.

**Network Behavior.** Network/Internet users are responsible for their actions in accessing available resources. The following standards will apply to all users of the Network/Internet:

- The user in whose name a system account is issued will be responsible at all times for its proper use. Users may not use another person's account.
- The system may not be used for illegal purposes, in support of illegal activities, or for any other activity prohibited by district policy.
- Users may not redistribute copyrighted programs or data without the written permission of the copyright holder or designee. Such permission must be specified in the document or must be obtained directly from the copyright holder or designee in accordance with applicable copyright laws, district policy, and administrative regulations.
- Computers are joined to either a student or employee domain for management and inventory. Computers should not be removed from these domains.

**Inappropriate Use.** Inappropriate use includes, but is not limited to, those uses that violate the law, which are specifically named as violations below, that violate

the rules of network etiquette, or that hamper the integrity or security of this, or any networks connected to the District's network.

**Inappropriate Language.** Using obscene, profane, lewd, vulgar, rude, inflammatory, threatening, or disrespectful language in emails distributed through District email is prohibited. Sending messages that could cause danger or disruption, personal attacks, including prejudicial or discriminatory attacks, are prohibited.



**Commercial Use.** Use for commercial, income-generating or “for-profit” activities, product advertisement, or political lobbying is prohibited. Sending unsolicited junk mail or chain letters is prohibited. Use of the District’s resources for promoting activities or events for individuals or organizations not directly affiliated with or sanctioned by the District is prohibited.

**Vandalism/Mischief.** Vandalism and mischief are prohibited. Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm or destroy data of another user, the Network/Internet, or any networks that are connected to the Network/Internet. This includes, but is not limited to:

- The creation or propagation of computer viruses, spyware, and malware. Any interference with the work of other users, with or without malicious intent, is construed as mischief and is strictly prohibited.
- Deleting, examining, copying, or modifying files and/or data belonging to other users, without their permission, is prohibited.
- Forgery of electronic mail messages is prohibited. Reading, deleting, copying, or modifying the electronic mail of other users without their permission is prohibited, unless permitted by district policy or authorized by the Superintendent of Schools or designee.
- Deliberate attempts to exceed, evade, or change resource quotas are prohibited. The deliberate causing of network congestion through mass consumption of system resources is prohibited.
- Unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding students and employees are prohibited.

**Security.** If a user identifies or has knowledge of a security problem on the Network/Internet, such as filtering software not working, the user should immediately notify the campus/department administrator or the System Administrator. The security problem should not be shared with others. Attempting to bypass security and filtering software is prohibited.



Attempts to log on to the Network/Internet impersonating a system administrator or Houston ISD employee may result in revocation of the user's access to the Network/Internet.

**Transmitting, Storing, or Accessing Confidential Information.** Teachers, staff, and students may not redistribute or forward confidential information (i.e., educational records, directory information, personnel records, etc.) without proper authorization. Confidential information should never be accessed, transmitted, redistributed, or forwarded to outside individuals who are not expressly authorized to receive the information. Revealing such personal information as home addresses or phone numbers of users or others is prohibited. In order to reduce the loss of confidential information due to theft or misplacement, student/staff confidential information should not be stored on portable devices such as memory sticks or on hard drives or home machines. This information should be stored on the District's drive. Extreme caution should be used if data is stored on cloud storage (Google docs, drop box, etc.). Cloud based storage should not be used for any data that is considered confidential. This storage is not provided by the District and is subject to the acceptable use guidelines of the particular site being used.

**Modification of Computer.** Modifying or changing computer settings and/or internal or external configurations without appropriate permission is prohibited.

**Campus, District, or Organizational Websites.** Web pages must adhere to the guidelines established by Communication Services, including accessibility standards. Web pages hosted on the Houston ISD web server or embedded on other websites and hyperlinks from these pages must not contain information that is in violation of (or promotes the violation of) any district policy or regulation, nor any local, state, or federal regulation or law.

Web pages that contain time-sensitive information, such as calendars, school events, staff information, etc., must be updated on a scheduled basis. Web pages must be checked periodically to make sure that links are current and operable.

**External Links.** Extreme caution should be used when adding a link to an external web page. In all cases where an external link (link to a site external to Houston ISD domain) is used, special precautions should be made to ensure the appropriateness and the trustworthiness of the site. It is the responsibility of the person who authorized the links to check them frequently and to verify the site.

**Cell Phones and Smartphones.** All cell phones and other smart phone devices issued to employees by the District are intended to be used for district business only. District cell phones may not be used to call directory assistance unless it is an emergency. All data generated, received, or stored on district owned equipment, including text messages, is the property of the District and generally is considered public information that is subject to public inspection. See [Records Retention section on page 95](#) for further requirements.



### Personal Use of Electronic Communications

#### *Policies [CQ](#), [DH](#)*

Employees in a public school system are responsible for modeling and teaching high standards of decency and civic values. District employees must model the character they are expected to teach, both on and off the worksite. This applies to electronic communications.

Electronic communications include all forms of social media, such as text messaging, instant messaging, electronic mail (email), web logs (blogs), wikis, electronic forums (chat rooms), video-sharing websites (e.g., YouTube, TikTok), editorial comments posted on the Internet, and social network sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram). Electronic communications also include all forms of telecommunication such as landlines, cell phones, and web-based applications.

As role models for the District's students, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not acting as district employees. Employees will be held to the same professional standards in their public use of electronic communications as they are for any other public conduct. If an employee's use of electronic communications interferes with the employee's ability to effectively perform his or her job duties, the employee is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. If an employee wishes to use a social network site or similar media for personal purposes, the employee is responsible for the content on the employee's page, including content added by the employee, the employee's friends, or members of the public who can access the employee's page, and for web links on the employee's page. The employee is also responsible for maintaining privacy settings appropriate to the content. Employees who maintain social networking sites for their private use should not share that site with students.

If an employee posts messages or pictures which diminish the employee's professionalism or discredits the employee's capacity to maintain the respect of students and parents, the employee's ability to effectively perform his or her job will be impaired. This type of material includes, but is not limited to, text or pictures involving hate speech, nudity, obscenity, vulgarity, conduct illegal for a minor, or sexually explicit content.



An employee who uses electronic communications for personal purposes shall observe the following:

- The employee may not set up or update the employee's personal social network page(s) using the District's computers, network, or equipment.
- The employee shall limit use of personal electronic communication devices to send or receive calls, text messages, pictures, and videos to breaks, mealtimes, and before and after scheduled work hours, unless there is an emergency or the use is authorized by a supervisor to conduct district business.
- The employee shall not use the District's logo or other copyrighted material of the District without express written consent.
- The employee is prohibited from knowingly communicating with students through a personal social network page; the employee must create a separate social network page ("professional page") for the purposes of communicating with students.
- The employee may not post student names, photographs, or videos in which students appear on personal online social media.
- The employee continues to be subject to applicable state and federal laws, local policies, administrative regulations, and the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators, even when communicating regarding personal and private matters, regardless of whether the employee is using private or public equipment, on or off campus. These restrictions include:
  - ◇ Confidentiality of student records. See Policy [FL](#).
  - ◇ Confidentiality of health or personnel information concerning colleagues, unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law. See [DH \(EXHIBIT\)](#).
  - ◇ Confidentiality of district records, including educator evaluations and private email addresses. See Policy [GBA](#).
  - ◇ Copyright law. See Policy [CY](#).
  - ◇ Prohibition against harming others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system. See [DH \(EXHIBIT\)](#).

See [Electronic Media, Communication Systems, and Technology Resources Acceptable Use Guidelines section on page 76](#) for regulations on employee communication with students through electronic media.

### Electronic Media, Communication Systems, and Technology Resources Acceptable Use Guidelines

#### Policy [DH](#)

Houston ISD makes a variety of communications and information technologies available to students and district employees. These technologies, when properly used, promote educational excellence in the District by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication. Illegal, unethical, or inappropriate use of these technologies can have dramatic consequences, harming the District, its students, and its employees.

These acceptable use guidelines are intended to minimize the likelihood of such harm by educating Houston ISD students and employees and setting standards which will serve to protect students and staff. Any attempt to violate the provisions of these guidelines may result in revocation of the user's access to the Network/Internet, regardless of the success or failure of the attempt. In addition, disciplinary action consistent with the District's employment policy and/or appropriate legal action, which may include restitution, may be taken. District administrators will make the final determination as to what constitutes inappropriate use. The System Administrator or other administrator may deny, revoke, or suspend network/internet/resource access as necessary, pending the outcome of an investigation. The expectations of the District are that all network and technology resource users will comply with all policies, procedures, and guidelines outlined below.

### Use of Electronic Communication with Students

#### Policy [DH](#)

The following definitions will apply for the use of electronic media with students:

- *“Electronic communications”* means any communication facilitated by the use of any electronic device, including a telephone, cellular telephone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant, or pager. The term includes but is not limited to email, text messages, instant messages, and any communication made through an Internet website, including a social media website or a social networking website.
- *“Communicate”* means to convey information and includes a one-way communication as well as a dialogue between two or more people. A public communication by an employee that is not targeted at students (e.g., a posting on the employee's personal social network page or a blog) is not a communication; however, the employee may be subject to district regulations on personal electronic communications (see [Personal Use of Electronic Communications section on page 74](#)). Unsolicited contact from a student through electronic means is not a communication.
- *“Certified or licensed employee”* will mean a person employed in a position requiring SBEC certification or a professional license, and whose job duties may require the employee to communicate electronically with



students. The term includes classroom teachers, counselors, principals, librarians, media specialist, paraprofessionals, nurses, educational diagnosticians, licensed therapists, and athletic trainers.

An employee who communicates electronically with students shall observe the following: The employee must comply with the provisions outlined below:

- The employee is prohibited from knowingly communicating with students using any form of electronic communications, including mobile and web applications, which are not provided or accessible by the District unless a specific exception is noted below.
- Only a teacher, trainer, or other employee who has an extracurricular duty may use text messaging, and then only to communicate with students who participate in the extracurricular activity over which the employee has responsibility. Teachers, coaches, UIL sponsors, and other relevant staff are encouraged to use group messaging platforms such as GroupMe, Remind, or similar apps to communicate with students. These platforms ensure that all students and their parents are included in the communications. Due to the nature of the communication, should there be a need to communicate with a singular student as opposed to the entire team or group using text messaging, the staff member shall comply with the following protocol, as agreed upon by the manager/principal:
  1. The employee shall include at least one of the student's parents or guardians as a recipient on each text message to the student so that the student and parent receive the same message; or
  2. The employee shall include his or her immediate supervisor as a recipient on each text message to the student so that the student and supervisor receive the same message; or
  3. For each text message addressed to one or more students, the employee shall send a copy of the text message to the employee's district email address.
- The employee shall limit communications to matters within the scope of the employee's professional responsibilities (e.g., for classroom teachers, matters relating to class work, homework, and tests; for an employee with an extracurricular duty, matters relating to the extracurricular activity).
- The employee is prohibited from knowingly communicating with students through a personal social network page; the employee must create a separate social network page ("professional page") for the



purpose of communicating with students. The employee must enable administration and parents to access the employee's professional page. Personal online social media may not be associated with professional online social media. All communication via various media by staff with parents and students will be professional and of the appropriate nature, purpose, timing, and amount.

- The employee shall not communicate directly with a student one-on-one between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. All communications during that time should be in a group app that includes all participating students, their parents and chaperons if applicable. An employee may, however, make public posts to a social network site, blog, or similar application at any time.
- The employee continues to be subject to applicable state and federal laws, local policies, administrative regulations, and the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators including:
  - ◇ Compliance with the Public Information Act and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Privacy Act, copyright law, open records request, etc. including retention and confidentiality of student records. See policies [CPC](#) and [FL](#).
  - ◇ Copyright law. See policy [CY](#).
  - ◇ Prohibitions against soliciting or engaging in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student. See policy [DH](#).
- All staff are required to use school email accounts for all electronic communications with parents. Communication about school issues through personal email accounts or text messages are not allowed as they cannot be preserved in accordance with the District's record retention policy.
- An employee shall notify his or her supervisor in writing within one business day if a student engages in an improper electronic communication with the employee. The employee should describe the form and content of the electronic communication.

An employee is not subject to the provisions regarding electronic communications with a student to the extent the employee has a social or family relationship with a student. For example, an employee may have a relationship with a niece or nephew, a student who is the child of an adult friend, a student who is a friend of the employee's child, or a member or participant in the same civic, social, recreational, or religious organization. An employee who claims an exception based on a social relationship shall provide written consent from the student's parent. The written consent shall include an acknowledgement by the parent that employee provided a copy of this protocol and:



Upon request from administration, an employee will provide the phone number(s), social network site(s), or other information regarding the method(s) of electronic media the employee uses to communicate with any currently-enrolled students. Upon written request from a parent or student, the employee shall discontinue communicating with the student through email, text messaging, instant messaging, or any other form of one-to-one communication.

Employees are not required to disclose their personal email address or personal phone number to students or parents.

For more information regarding electronic communication with students, see policy [DH](#).

**Team or Club Social Networking Sites.** Employees who maintain a social networking site for the sole purpose of communicating with students and parents such as a team or club site must:

- Have written principal approval.
- Have parent permission annually from each student invited to the site kept on file in accordance with record retention policies.
- Keep the site private and accessible to only the students and parents who are involved in the team or club.
- Delete the membership of the site at the end of each school year.
- Ensure that all posts are made publicly – no private messaging.
- Ensure that all members of the social site have the same access to view communications.
- Give full access to campus administration personnel charged with monitoring activity on the site.

**Text Messaging.** Communication with students through text messaging is only permitted between staff members who have extracurricular responsibilities and the students for which that employee is responsible. Written permission must be obtained from each student's parent with whom the employee will be communicating by text messaging. All communication with students, including text messaging, must:

- Be professional and appropriate.
- Be limited to matters and times within the scope of the employee's professional responsibilities.

### Public Information on Private Devices

**Policies** [DH](#), [GB](#)

Employees should not maintain district information on privately owned devices. Any district information must be forwarded or transferred to the District to be preserved. The District will take reasonable efforts to obtain public information in compliance with the Public Information Act. Reasonable efforts may include:

- Verbal or written directive
- Remote access to district-owned devices and services

### Criminal History Background Checks

**Policy** [DBAA](#)

Employees may be subject to a review of their criminal history record information at any time during employment. National criminal history checks based on an individual's fingerprints, photo, and other identification will be conducted on certain employees and entered into the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Clearinghouse. This database provides the District and State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) with access to an applicant's and employee's current national criminal history and updates to the employee's subsequent criminal history.

Pursuant to Texas Education Code, Section 22.082, the District shall obtain the criminal history record as defined in [DBAA \(LEGAL\)](#) for each applicant for employment who, in the opinion of the District, is a serious candidate and may be offered a position. The District may obtain the information from any law enforcement agency including but not limited to a police department, the Department of Public Safety, the Texas Department of Corrections, or the Federal Bureau of Investigation. See [DBAA \(LEGAL\)](#).





### Employee Arrests and Convictions

*Policies [DH](#), [DHB](#), [DHC](#)*

The District may suspend or terminate the employment of any person convicted of a felony or misdemeanor if the crime directly relates to the duties and responsibilities of the individual or directly relates to, or adversely affects, the mission of the District.

Employees are required to disclose a prior record when requested to do so at the time of employment. Failure to do so could result in termination of employment.

For information on convictions and moral turpitude, including definition and applicable offenses, see [DBAA \(LOCAL\)](#).

An employee must notify his or her principal or immediate supervisor within three calendar days of any arrest, indictment, conviction, no contest or guilty plea, or other adjudication of any felony, and any of the other offenses listed below:

- Crimes involving school property or funds
- Crimes involving attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit that would entitle any person to hold or obtain a position as an educator
- Crimes that occur wholly or in part on school property or at a school-sponsored activity
- Crimes involving moral turpitude

Moral turpitude includes the following:

- Dishonesty
- Fraud
- Deceit
- Theft
- Misrepresentation
- Deliberate violence
- Base, vile, or depraved acts that are intended to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of the actor
- Crimes involving any felony possession or conspiracy to possess, or any misdemeanor or felony transfer, sale, distribution, or conspiracy to transfer, sell, or distribute any controlled substance
- Felonies involving driving while intoxicated (DWI)
- Acts constituting abuse or neglect under the Texas Family Code

**Certified Employees.** The superintendent and directors are required to report the misconduct or criminal history of a certified employee or individual applying for certification or permit to TEA Division of Educator Investigations. Information about misconduct or allegations of misconduct of a certified employee obtained by a means other than the criminal history clearinghouse that results in termination, resignation, or criminal history (e.g., arrest, indictment, prosecution, conviction, or other disposition by the criminal justice system, including probation and deferred adjudication) will be reported to TEA.

Misconduct or allegations of misconduct include:

- Abused or otherwise committed an unlawful act with a student or minor
- Possessed, transferred, sold, or distributed a controlled substance
- Illegally transferred, appropriated, or expended school property or funds
- Attempted by fraudulent means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit to gain employment or additional compensation
- Committed a criminal offense on school property or at a school-sponsored event, or
- Solicited or engaged in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student or minor

**Uncertified Employees.** Misconduct or criminal history of an uncertified employee also must be reported to TEA. Information about misconduct or the allegations of misconduct obtained by a means other than the criminal history clearinghouse that results in termination, resignation, or criminal history (e.g., arrest, indictment, prosecution, conviction, or other disposition by the criminal justice system, including probation and deferred adjudication) will be reported to TEA.

Misconduct or allegations of misconduct include:

- Abuse or unlawful act with a student or minor, or
- Involvement in a romantic relationship with or solicited or engaged in sexual contact with a student or minor

### Drug-Free Workplace Requirements

**Policies** [DH](#), [DHE](#)

The District prohibits the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of controlled substances, illegal drugs, inhalants, and alcohol in the workplace. Employees who violate this prohibition shall be recommended for termination.

Compliance with these requirements and prohibitions is mandatory and is a condition of employment. As a further condition of employment, an employee shall notify the Superintendent of Schools of any criminal drug statute conviction for



a violation occurring in the workplace no later five (5) days after such conviction. Within seven days of receiving such notice from the employee or any other source—the District shall notify the granting agency of the conviction. Within a timely manner of receiving notice from an employee of a conviction for any drug statute violation occurring in the workplace, the District shall either (1) take appropriate personnel action against the employee, up to and including termination of employment, or (2) require the employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a federal, state, or local health agency, law enforcement agency, or other appropriate agency.

### **Alcohol and Drug-Abuse Prevention**

#### ***Policies [DH](#), [DHE](#), [DI](#)***

Houston ISD is committed to maintaining an alcohol- and drug-free environment and will not tolerate the use of alcohol and illegal drugs in the workplace and at school-related or school-sanctioned activities on or off school property. Employees who use or are under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs as defined by the Texas Controlled Substances Act during working hours may be dismissed.

**Alcohol and Drugs.** Employees shall not unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, use, or be under the influence of any of the following substances during working hours while at school or at school related activities during or outside of usual working hours:

- Any controlled substance or dangerous drug as defined by law, including but not limited to marijuana, any narcotic drug, hallucinogen, stimulant, depressant, amphetamine, or barbiturate.
- Alcohol or any alcoholic beverage.
- Any abusable glue, aerosol paint, or any other chemical substance for inhalation.
- Any other intoxicant, or mood-changing, mind altering, or behavior-altering drugs.

**Exceptions.** An employee shall not be in violation of this policy if the employee:

4. Possesses or dispenses a substance listed above as part of the employee's job responsibilities;
5. Uses or possesses a controlled substance or drug authorized by a licensed physician prescribed for the employee's personal use; or
6. Possesses a controlled substance or drug that a licensed physician has prescribed for the employee's child or other individual for whom the employee is a legal guardian.

### **Tobacco and Nicotine Products and E-Cigarette Use**

**Policies** [DH](#), [FNCD](#), [GKA](#)

State law prohibits smoking, using tobacco and nicotine products, or e-cigarettes on all district-owned property and at school-related or school-sanctioned activities, on or off school property. This includes all buildings, playground areas, parking facilities, and facilities used for athletics and other activities. Drivers of district-owned vehicles are prohibited from smoking, using tobacco products, or e-cigarettes while inside the vehicle. Notices stating that smoking is prohibited by law and punishable by a fine are displayed in prominent places in all school buildings.

Employees are prohibited from possessing or using any type of nicotine product, including nicotine pouches, regardless of whether the product contains tobacco, while on school property or while attending an off-campus school-related activity. Exceptions may be made for smoking cessation products with supervisor approval.

### **Fraud and Financial Impropriety**

**Policy** [CAA](#)

All employees should act with integrity and diligence in duties involving the District's financial resources. The District prohibits fraud and financial impropriety, as defined below. Fraud and financial impropriety include the following:

- Forgery or unauthorized alteration of any document or account belonging to the District
- Forgery or unauthorized alteration of a check, bank draft, or any other financial document
- Misappropriation of funds, securities, supplies, or other district assets including employee time
- Impropriety in the handling of money or reporting of district financial transactions
- Profiteering as a result of insider knowledge of district information or activities





- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential or proprietary information to outside parties
- Unauthorized disclosure of investment activities engaged in or contemplated by the District
- Accepting or seeking anything of material value from contractors, vendors, or other persons providing services or materials to the District, except as otherwise permitted by law or district policy
- Inappropriately destroying, removing, or using records, furniture, fixtures, or equipment
- Failing to provide financial records required by federal, state, or local entities
- Failure to disclose conflicts of interest as required by law or district policy
- Any other dishonest act regarding the finances of the District
- Failure to comply with requirements imposed by law, the awarding agency, or a pass-through entity for state and federal awards

**Fraud and Ethics Violations.** In order to improve Houston ISD and to demonstrate a commitment to high ethical standards, the District has provided employees with a simple, risk-free way to anonymously and confidentially report activities that may involve criminal, unethical, or otherwise inappropriate behavior in violation of public law and/or Houston ISD policies. Employees can file a report by dialing the toll-free Hotline at **800-455-9551**, online with “[Houston ISD Hotline](#)”. If you choose to remain anonymous, the hotline provider will not request identifying information, and their phone and computer systems do not collect that type of information. The District guarantees that reports submitted via the hotline will be handled promptly and discreetly. No retaliatory action will be taken against anyone for reporting or inquiring in good faith, or for seeking guidance on how to deal with potential or suspected wrongdoing.

### **Conflict of Interest**

#### **Policies CB, DBD**

Employees are required to disclose in writing to the District any situation that creates a potential conflict of interest with proper discharge of assigned duties and responsibilities or creates a potential conflict of interest with the best interests of the District. This includes the following:

- A personal financial interest
- A business interest
- Any other obligation or relationship
- Non-school employment

Employees should contact their supervisor for additional information.

All district employees shall avoid employment, financial, business, social, or other relationships that might be opposed to the interests of the District or might create the appearance of impropriety or might cause a conflict with the performance of their duties. Employees shall at all times conduct themselves in a manner that avoids even the appearance of conflict between their personal interests and those of the District.

Conflict of interest situations may arise in many ways. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Employment with a vendor/contractor, regardless of the nature of the employment, while employed by the District.
2. Contract award with a vendor in which an employee or his or her family have a substantial ownership or management interest.
3. Ownership of, or substantial interest in, a company that is a supplier of the District.
4. Acting independently as a consultant to a district supplier.
5. Accepting expense-paid invitations to sports or entertainment events from a long-time friend who is also a district vendor.
6. Socializing with vendors or persons interested in doing business with the District under circumstances that create the appearance of impropriety.

Any employee who may have a conflict situation, actual or potential, shall report all pertinent details in writing to his or her supervisor. If the proper resolution is not apparent to the supervisor, the supervisor shall refer the matter to the Superintendent of Schools or designee for resolution. If a conflict of interest develops accidentally or unexpectedly, the matter shall be reported to the supervisor immediately.

### Gifts and Favors

#### Policy [DBD](#)

Employees may not accept gifts or favors that could influence, or be construed to influence, the employee's discharge of assigned duties. Gifts with an aggregate value of \$50.00 or more per person or entity are presumed to be inappropriate.

The acceptance of a gift, favor, or service by an administrator or teacher that might reasonably tend to influence the selection of textbooks, electronic textbooks, instructional materials or technological equipment may result in prosecution of a Class B misdemeanor offense. This does not include staff development, teacher training, or instructional materials such as maps or worksheets that convey information to students or contribute to the learning process.

### Copyrighted Materials

#### Policy [CY](#)

Employees are expected to comply with the provisions of federal copyright law relating to the unauthorized use, reproduction, distribution, performance, or display of copyrighted materials (i.e., printed material, videos, computer data and programs, etc.). Electronic media and other materials, including motion pictures and other audiovisual works, are to be used in the classroom for instructional purposes only. Duplication or backup of computer programs and data must be made within the provisions of the purchase agreement.

### Associations and Political Activities

#### Policy [DGA](#)

The District will not directly or indirectly discourage employees from participating in political affairs or require any employee to join any group, club, committee, organization, or association. Employees may join or refuse to join any professional association or organization.

An individual's employment will not be affected by membership or a decision not to be a member of any employee organization that exists for the purpose of dealing with employers concerning grievances, labor disputes, wages, rates of pay, hours of employment, or conditions of work. Use of district resources including work time for political activities is prohibited.

The District encourages personal participation in the political process, including voting. Employees who need to be absent from work to vote during the early voting period or on election day must communicate with their immediate supervisor prior to the absence.



## Charitable Contributions

### Policy [DG](#)

The Board or any employee may not directly or indirectly require or coerce an employee to make a contribution to a charitable organization or in response to a fundraiser. Employees cannot be required to attend a meeting called for the purpose of soliciting charitable contributions. In addition, the Board or any employee may not directly or indirectly require or coerce an employee to refrain from making a contribution to a charitable organization or in response to a fund raiser or attending a meeting called for the purpose of soliciting charitable contributions.

## Safety and Security

### Policy [CK](#)

The District has developed and promotes a comprehensive program to ensure the safety and security of its employees, students, and visitors. The safety and security program includes written guidelines and procedures for responding to emergencies and activities to help reduce the frequency of accidents and injuries. See [Emergencies section on page 94](#) section for additional information.

Employees must follow established protocols and response to emergencies for each campus and department. Refer to written security procedures specific to your location and work area.

To prevent or minimize injuries to employees, coworkers, and students and to protect and conserve district equipment, employees must comply with the following requirements:

- Observe all safety rules.
- Keep work areas clean and orderly at all times.
- Immediately report all accidents to their supervisor.
- Operate only equipment or machines for which they have training and authorization.

While driving on district business, employees are required to abide by all state and local traffic laws. Employees driving on district business are prohibited from texting and using other electronic devices that require both visual and manual attention while the vehicle is in motion. Employees will exercise care and sound judgment on whether to use hands-free technology while the vehicle is in motion.

Employees with questions or concerns relating to safety programs and issues can contact [PDConcerns@HoustonISD.org](mailto:PDConcerns@HoustonISD.org) or Craig Straw, Director, Safety and Emergency Management.



### **Safe Operation of District Vehicles**

#### **Policy [DBA](#)**

All district vehicles will be operated in the safest manner possible. The following guidelines will apply:

- Employees must hold a valid Texas driver's license with appropriate class and endorsements for the vehicle they are assigned to operate.
- Employees who must operate a district vehicle must complete driver safety orientation.
- When driving, employees must be physically and mentally capable of operating any vehicle safely. No employee should operate a district vehicle after having consumed alcoholic beverages or having taken medication that may cause drowsiness.
- Drivers will obey all traffic laws and observe legal speed limits at all times. Aggressive driving will not be tolerated. See [DBA \(REGULATION\)](#) for complete policy.
- Any traffic citations will be the responsibility of the driver and shall be reported to their immediate supervisor no later than 48 hours after receiving citation.
- Employees will be responsible for maintaining in good mechanical operating condition any vehicles assigned to them. Vehicle inspections will be done prior to driving and immediately after driving.
- Employees will comply with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations regarding the use of mobile technology devices. Drivers will not use cellular telephones (making, receiving calls or texting) while driving a district vehicle, not even through wireless Bluetooth technology.
- Employees may not hold in hand a GPS directional device while operating a district vehicle.
- Accidents must be reported to dispatch, Risk Management Services, and immediate supervisor immediately after the accident occurred. If a driver is found "at fault" or having a "preventable" accident, driver is required to complete a defensive driving course and undergo driver retraining within 30 days of accident review board findings.
- No guest passengers are allowed in district vehicles unless prior supervisor approval has been given.
- Drivers will not use a district-owned vehicle for personal use without prior approval from the Superintendent of Schools or designee. District vehicles may be used for overnight district travel with prior supervisor approval.



### Possession of Firearms and Weapons

*Policies [DH](#), [FNCG](#), [GKA](#)*

Employees, visitors, and students, including those with a license to carry a handgun, are prohibited from bringing firearms, restricted knives, clubs, or other prohibited weapons onto school premises (i.e., building or portion of a building) or any grounds or building where a school-sponsored activity takes place. A person, including an employee, who holds a license to carry a handgun may transport or store a handgun or other firearm or ammunition in a locked vehicle in a parking lot, garage, or other district provided parking area, provided the handgun or firearm or ammunition is properly stored, and not in plain view.

In the event any person possesses, exhibits, or uses a weapon or firearm or threatens to exhibit or use a firearm or weapon to interfere with the operations of any district school, campus, school-related function, including athletic events, or a building:

1. The principal's first response will be to call Houston ISD Police and/or appropriate law enforcement
2. The principal will also notify the appropriate Division Superintendent who will notify appropriate personnel to ensure proper follow-through.

To ensure the safety of all persons, employees who observe or suspect a violation of the District's weapons policy should report it to their supervisor or call Houston ISD Police Department at **713-892-7777** immediately.

### Visitors in the Workplace

*Policy [GKC](#)*

All visitors are expected to enter any district facility through the main entrance and sign in or report to the building's main office.

Authorized visitors will receive directions or be escorted to their destination. Employees who observe an unauthorized individual on the District premises should immediately direct him or her to the building office or contact the administrator in charge.

### **Asbestos Management Plan**

#### **Policy** [CSC](#)

The District is committed to providing a safe environment for employees. An accredited management planner has developed an asbestos management plan for each school. A copy of the District's management plan is kept in the Facilities, Maintenance, and Operations (FMO) office and is available for inspection during normal business hours. If you have any questions or would like to examine the District's plan in more detail, please contact the District's designated asbestos coordinator:

#### ■ **Manager, Environmental Services (FMO)**

250 McCarty Street, Houston, TX 77029

[ddavis3@HoustonISD.org](mailto:ddavis3@HoustonISD.org)

713-676-9464 (office) | 713-676-9761 (fax)

In this regard, the Environmental Protection Agency's Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act of 1986 (AHERA) requires the inspection of all buildings in the school district for asbestos. An inspection report documenting inspection findings and a management plan documenting protocols for managing each building in the District is on file with each campus and/or facility, as well as the District's Environmental, Health, and Safety Department.

All management plans are checked regularly by licensed asbestos inspectors and management planners as required by AHERA. These plans document any changes in materials which could cause adverse health hazards or concern.

Houston ISD annually notifies all parents, teachers, and other employees of the regulation and management plan, as required by the regulation. Notices are generally posted at main entrances, administrative offices, and/or workrooms. Asbestos management plans are available for inspection during normal business hours.

### **Pest Control Treatment**

#### **Policies** [CLB](#), [DI](#)

The health and safety of all students, visitors, and employees are dependent upon the proper application of chemicals by certified professionals. Houston ISD is committed to maintaining the highest standards for our educational and working environments by ensuring that the application of all pesticides and herbicides is only by licensed and certified Environmental, Health and Safety personnel. The District's policy requires that it follows integrated pest management (IPM) procedures to control pests on all facility grounds. The District strives to use the safest and most effective methods to manage pests, including a variety of non-chemical control measures; however, pesticide use is sometimes necessary to maintain adequate pest control and assure a safe, pest-free environment.

When it is determined that a pesticide must be used to meet the management goals, the least hazardous material will be used. All applications of pesticides will be applied

in accordance with the Federal Insecticides, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (7 USC 136 et seq.) and district policies and procedures, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations in Chapter 40 Code of Federal Regulations, Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations, and state and local regulations. All pesticides used in the District are registered for their intended use by the EPA and the Texas Department of Agriculture and applied only by certified pesticide applicators.

Employees are prohibited from applying any pesticide or herbicide without appropriate training and prior approval of the integrated pest management (IPM) coordinator. Any application of pesticide or herbicide must be done in a manner prescribed by law and the District's integrated pest management program. Pest control information sheets are available from the IPM coordinator at:

■ **Houston ISD Facilities, Maintenance & Operations**

228 McCarty Street, Bldg. 22, Suite 201, Houston, TX 77029  
**713-556-1585**

Notices of planned pest control treatment will be posted in a district building 48 hours before the treatment begins. All outdoor applications will be posted at the time of treatment and signs will remain until it is safe to enter the area. Notices are generally located on main entrances and in administrative offices, workrooms, and cafeterias. In addition, individual employees may request in writing to be notified of pesticide applications. An employee who requests individualized notice will be notified by telephone, written, or electronic means. Pest control information sheets are available from campus principals or facility managers upon request.

The choice of using a pesticide will be made after a review of all other available options and a determination that these options are not acceptable. Staffing and costs will not be adequate reasons for use of chemical control. Non-chemical methods will be implemented whenever possible to control the pests. IPM principles will be employed to manage pest populations. The full range of alternatives, including no action, will be considered.

The District will notify the school, staff, and students of pesticide treatment. The District will provide parents, who wish to be informed in advance of pesticide application, with notification and supply them with information as needed. All notification will be done in accordance with Structural Pest Control Board (SPCB) regulations.

All records of pesticide use, and treatment will be maintained in accordance with the SPCB. All other records required by regulatory agencies will be maintained as required by the appropriate agency. All pest surveillance date information will be maintained to verify the need for treatment.



All district employees are responsible for complying with the District's IPM policy and should assist in its implementation by following these rules:

- All snack foods must be stored in storage containers. Metal or glass jar containers are best.
- No foods, such as cakes, cookies, or pies should be left out in break rooms or classrooms overnight.
- Do not apply any insecticides on school grounds including, but not limited to, roach and ant sprays, wasp sprays, or roach bait stations, etc.

**Bloodborne Pathogen Control.** A district that employs employees who provide services in a public or private facility providing health-care-related services, or who otherwise have a risk of exposure to blood or other material potentially containing bloodborne pathogens in connection with exposure to sharps shall comply with the minimum standards set by the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS). This includes a district that operates a public school health clinic.

A "sharp" is an object used or encountered in a health-care setting that can be reasonably anticipated to penetrate the skin or any other part of the body and to result in an exposure incident, including a needle device, a scalpel, a lancet, a piece of broken glass, a broken capillary tube, an exposed end of a dental wire, or a dental knife, drill, or bur.

See [DBB \(LEGAL\)](#) for more information.

When an employee incurs an exposure incident, the incident must be reported to Health Services at **713-556-7280**. In addition, a [Workers' Compensation Claim form](#) must be completed using the Employee Injury and Treatment (EIT) form and sent directly to the Workers' Compensation Department by fax at **713-556-9224** or email via [HISDWorkComp@HoustonISD.org](mailto:HISDWorkComp@HoustonISD.org).

# GENERAL PROCEDURES



## GENERAL PROCEDURES

### Emergency School Closing

The District may close schools because of severe inclement weather, unforeseen circumstances, epidemics, or other emergency conditions. When such conditions exist, the Superintendent of Schools will make the official decision concerning the closing of the District's facilities. When it becomes necessary to open late, to release students early, or to cancel school, Communication Services district officials may post a notice on the District's website ([www.HoustonISD.org](http://www.HoustonISD.org)), social media, radio stations, and/or television stations. The District may also notify the media so that students, their parents, and employees can make plans accordingly.

### Emergencies

*Policies [CKC](#), [CKD](#)*

All employees should be familiar with the safety procedures for responding to emergencies, including a medical emergency, and the evacuation diagrams posted in their work areas. Employees should locate evacuation diagrams posted in their work areas and be familiar with shelter in place, lockout, and lockdown procedures. Emergency drills will be conducted to familiarize employees and students with safety and evacuation procedures. Each campus is equipped with an automatic external defibrillator. Fire extinguishers are located throughout all district buildings. Employees should know the location of these devices and procedures for their use as required by the roles.

### Purchasing Procedures

*Policy [CH](#)*

All requests for purchases must be submitted to Procurement Services using the District's SAP requisition with the appropriate approval. No purchases, charges, or commitments to buy goods or services for the District can be made without a PO number. The District will not reimburse employees or assume responsibility for purchases made without authorization. Employees are not permitted to purchase

supplies or equipment for personal use through the District's business office. Contact Procurement Services for additional information on purchasing procedures.

### Name and Address Changes

It is the employee's responsibility to notify the District of any address or phone number changes to their personnel profile. Employees can/should make these updates in SAP themselves by

going to Employee Self Service. Educators are also required to update any changes in their information through State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC).

Name Changes. It is the employee's responsibility to notify the District of any legal changes to their name. Employees should come to the Employee Services at [EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org](mailto:EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org) department to complete a name change form and present their new Social Security card so that a copy can be placed in their personnel file with the name change form. Educators are required to update any changes in their information through SBEC.

### Records Retention

*Policies [CPC](#), [FL](#), [GBA](#), [DC](#)*

Current and former employees are considered temporary custodians of district records. Records include any document, including emails and text messages, created, sent, or received by a current or former employee. Employees do not have a personal or property right to public information created or received while acting in their official work capacity or in the transaction of official district business. This means any public information, even if located on a personal device, must be retained and preserved in accordance with the mandatory retention laws of the State.

Employees are reminded that the destruction of district records is the sole responsibility of the Districtwide Records Management Department. If a request for records is received, the employee with possession, custody, or control of public information is required to surrender the information to the District's designated representative no later than the 10th business day after the information is requested or as directed by HISD's Public Information Office. The failure to surrender or return requested documents is grounds for disciplinary action or any other applicable penalties provided by the Texas Public Information Act or other law.

Employees who maintain public information on their personal devices are required to (1) forward the information to the school district email account or the school District's server; or (2) preserve and retain the information, in its original form, on the personal device for the legally mandated retention period.



## Personnel Records

### Policies [DBA](#), [GBA](#)

Most district records, including certain documents maintained in employee personnel records, are public information and must be released upon request. In most cases, an employee's personal email address, home phone number, and personal cell phone number, are confidential and may not be released without the employee's permission.

Employees may choose to have the following personal information withheld:

- Home address
- Home phone number, which includes the employee's personal cell phone number
- Emergency contact information
- Information that reveals whether they have family members

The choice to not allow public access to this information or change an existing choice may be made at any time by submitting a written request to Officer for Public Information and/or by logging into SAP and going to *Employee Self Service*, *Human Capital Management Information*, and then *Public Information Access*. New or terminated employees have 14 days after hire or termination to submit a request. Otherwise, personal information may will be released to the public upon request until a request to withhold the information is submitted or another exception for release of information under law applies. An employee is responsible for notifying the District if he or she is subject to any exception for disclosure of personal or confidential information.

## Emergency Contact Information

### Policy [DC](#)

An employee will be required to provide her/his personal contact information which includes a personal cell phone number and personal email address. At least one emergency contact must be designated. The name, relationship, and a cell phone number must be provided for the emergency contact.

## Facility Use

### Policies [DGA](#), [GKD](#)

Employees who wish to use district facilities for non-district activities/events after school hours must follow procedures outlined in GKD. Real Property Management Department is responsible for scheduling the use of facilities after school hours. Contact this department Real Property Management Department to request use of school facilities and to obtain information on the fees charged, if applicable.



# TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT



## TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

### Resignations

#### *Policies [DFE](#), [DHB](#)*

Resignations should be submitted electronically via the OneSource Employee Self-Service. An employee who chooses to resign from the District shall provide reasonable notice and the reason for resigning. The District considers reasonable notice as two weeks prior to the requested date of resignation.

If an employee provides a resignation to a supervisor, the supervisor shall instruct the employee to submit the resignation via the OneSource Employee Self-Service. Log-in by using the same HISD username and password used for signing into HISD computer and click on “Voluntary Separation” and follow the prompts.

An employee who resigns may request to have an exit interview with the immediate supervisor or Human Resources staff upon request. Separating employees are asked to provide the District with a forwarding address and phone number and complete a questionnaire that provides the District with feedback on their employment experience. Resigning employees should turn in issued equipment, materials, keys, parking lot gate key, badge and uniforms, property including intellectual property, etc. Costs of uniforms may be deducted from an employee’s final paycheck for failure to return district uniforms within three workdays of resignation or termination.

**Certified Employees.** An educator employed under a probationary contract for the following school year, or under a term or continuing contract, may relinquish the position and leave district employment at the end of the school year without penalty by filing a written resignation with the Board or the Board’s designee not later than the 45 days before the first day of instruction of the following school year.

## TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)



A written resignation is submitted via the resignation form on OneSource Employee Self-Service. Log-in by using the same HISD username and password used for signing into HISD computer and click on “Voluntary Separation” and follow the prompts.

An unequivocal resignation filed not later than the 30th day before the first day of instruction of the following school year is effective upon filing with the District and the District cannot reject such a resignation. The resignation cannot be withdrawn by the teacher based on an argument that the District has not accepted the resignation.

The educator may resign, with the consent of the Board or the Board’s designee, at any other time. Refer to [DFE \(LEGAL\)](#).

The principal is required to notify the superintendent or Superintendent’s designee of an educator’s resignation within seven business days following an alleged incident of misconduct for any of the acts listed in Reports to Texas Education Agency. The superintendent or Superintendent’s designee will notify SBEC within seven business days of receiving a report from a principal, or of knowing about an employee’s resignation or termination following an alleged incident of misconduct described above when an employee resigns and there is evidence to indicate that the employee has engaged in such misconduct.

**Non-Certified Employees with Annual Contracts Hourly Employees.** Employees holding a one-year annual contract or hourly employees hired under a working agreement may resign their position at any time. A written notice of resignation should be submitted employee to submit the resignation via the OneSource Employee Self-Service. Log-in by using the same HISD username and password used for signing into HISD computer and click on “Voluntary Separation” and follow the prompts at least two weeks before the effective date. Employees are encouraged to include the reasons for leaving in the resignation form but are not required to do so.

The principal is required to notify the Superintendent of a non-certified employee’s resignation or termination within seven business days following an alleged incident of misconduct or abuse of a student, or if the employee was involved in a romantic relationship with or solicited or engaged in sexual conduct with a student or minor. The Superintendent will notify TEA within seven business days of receiving a report from a principal, or of knowing about an employee’s resignation or termination following an alleged incident of misconduct described above.

# TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

**Re-Employment After Resignation.** An employee who resigns and later seeks re-employment in the District will:

1. Be employed in accordance with state law and applicable policies
2. Be placed on the salary schedule in accordance with state law, applicable policies, and the District's Compensation Plan
3. Have no entitlement to seniority and accumulated unused leave at the time of resignation
4. Be subject to the personnel policies or any settlement agreements pertaining to the reemployment of former employees

An employee who resigns after the District has initiated an investigation of alleged misconduct may be eligible for re-employment only after review and approval by Human Resources.

An employee who resigns or retires to avoid district-initiated termination or nonrenewal will not be eligible for re-employment with the District. Refer to [DFE \(LOCAL\)](#).

## **Nonrenewal of Contract Employees**

**Policies** [DF](#), [DFAB](#), [DFBB](#), [DHB](#)

Employees on probationary term, or continuing contracts may be recommended for termination during the school year according to the procedures outlined in district policies. Employees on probationary or term contracts can be proposed for termination/nonrenewal at the end of the contract term. The Board shall give the employee notice of its decision to not renew the contract for employment not later than the tenth day before the last day of instruction required under the contract. Contract employees dismissed during the school year, suspended without pay, or subject to a reduction in force are entitled to receive notice of the recommended action, an explanation of the basis or grounds for the recommended action, and an opportunity for a hearing as required by applicable law and/or HISD Board policy. The timelines and procedures to be followed when a suspension, termination, or nonrenewal occurs will be provided when a written notice is given to an employee.

Advance notification requirements do not apply when a contract employee is dismissed for failing to obtain or maintain appropriate certification or when the employee's certification is revoked for misconduct. Information on the timelines and procedures can be found in the [DF](#) policy available online.

## **Dismissal of At-Will Noncontract Employees**

**Policies** [DCD](#), [DP](#)

Noncontract employees are employed at will and may be dismissed without notice, a description of the reasons for dismissal, or a hearing. It is unlawful for the District

to dismiss any employee for reasons of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, military status, genetic information, any other basis protected by law, or in retaliation for the exercise of certain protected legal rights. Noncontract employees who are dismissed have the right to grieve the termination. The dismissed employee must follow the District process outlined in this handbook under Complaints and Grievances when pursuing the grievance.

## **Discharge of Convicted Employees**

**Policy** [DF](#)

The District shall discharge any employee who has been convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication community supervision for an offense requiring the registration as a sex offender or convicted of a felony under Title 5 Penal Code if the victim was a minor.

If the offense is more than 30 years before the date the person's employment began or the person satisfied all terms of the court order entered on conviction the requirement to discharge does not apply.

## **Exit Interviews and Procedures**

**Policies** [DC](#), [CY](#)

Information on the continuation of benefits, release of information, and procedures for requesting references will be provided following exit from the District as needed. Separating employees are asked to provide the District with a forwarding address and phone number. Where possible, exit interviews will be scheduled for employees leaving the District to provide information and feedback on the employment experience prior to separation. All district keys, books, property, including intellectual property, and equipment must be returned upon separation from employment.

## **Reports to Texas Education Agency State Board for Educator Certification**

**Policies** [DF](#), [DHB](#), [DHC](#)

**Certified Employees.** The resignation or termination of a certified employee must be reported to the Division of Investigations at TEA within seven (7) business days, if there is evidence that the employee was involved in any of the following:

- Any form of sexual or physical abuse of a minor, or any other unlawful conduct with a student or a minor, regardless of whether the student is enrolled in Houston ISD or another school district or private school.
- Soliciting or engaging in sexual contact or a romantic relationship with a student or minor.



## TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

- The possession, transfer, sale, or distribution of a controlled substance.
- The illegal transfer, appropriation, or expenditure of district or school property or funds.
- An attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit for the purpose of promotion or additional compensation.
- Committing a criminal offense or any part of a criminal offense on district property or at a school-sponsored event.

The reporting requirements above are in addition to the Superintendent of Schools' ongoing duty to notify TEA when a certified employee or an applicant for certification has a reported criminal history or engaged in conduct violating the assessment security procedures established under TEC §39.0301. "Reported criminal history" means any formal criminal justice system charges and dispositions including arrests, detentions, indictments, criminal information, convictions, deferred adjudications, and probations in any state or federal jurisdiction that is obtained by a means other than the Fingerprint-based Applicant Clearinghouse of Texas (FACT).

**Noncertified Employees.** The voluntary or involuntary separation of a noncertified employee from the District must be reported to the Division of Investigations at TEA by the Superintendent if there is evidence the employee abused or otherwise committed an unlawful act with a student or minor, was involved in a romantic relationship with a student or minor, or solicited or engaged in sexual contact with a student or minor.

### Reports Concerning Court-Ordered Withholding

The District is required to report the termination of employees that are under court order or writ of withholding for child support or spousal maintenance (Texas Family Code §8.210, §158.211). Notice of the following must be sent to the support recipient and the court or, in the case of child support, the Texas Attorney General Child Support Division:

- Termination of employment not later than the seventh day after the date of termination
- Employee's last known address
- Name and address of the employee's new employer, if known



# STUDENT INFORMATION



## STUDENT INFORMATION

### Equal Educational Opportunities

*Policies [FB](#), [FFH](#)*

In an effort to promote nondiscrimination and as required by law, Houston ISD does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, or disability in providing education services, activities, and programs, including Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Questions or concerns about discrimination against students based on sex, including sexual harassment should be directed to:

■ **Danielle Delone, Senior Investigator Analyst or**  
**Breanna Turner, Employee Relations Coordinator 2**  
Employee Relations | 4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092  
[TitleIXComplaints@HoustonISD.org](mailto:TitleIXComplaints@HoustonISD.org)  
713-556-7313

### Student Records

*Policy [FL](#)*

Student records are confidential and are protected from unauthorized inspection or use. Employees should take precautions to maintain the confidentiality of all student records. The following people are the only people who have general access to a student's records:

- Parents: Married, separated, or divorced unless parental rights have been legally terminated and the school has been given a copy of the court order terminating parental rights
- The student: The rights of parents transfer to a student who turns 18 or is enrolled in an institution of post-secondary education. A district is not prohibited from granting the student access to the student's records before this time.
- School officials with legitimate educational interests

The Student Handbook provides parents and students with detailed information on student records. Parents or students who want to review student records should be directed to the campus principal for assistance.

### **Parent and Student Complaints**

#### ***Policy*** [FNG](#)

In an effort to hear and resolve parent and student complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible, the board has adopted orderly processes for handling complaints on different issues. Any campus office or the Superintendent of Schools' office can provide parents and students with information on filing a complaint.

Parents are encouraged to discuss problems or complaints with the teacher or the appropriate administrator at any time. Parents and students with complaints that cannot be resolved to their satisfaction should be directed to the campus principal. The formal complaint process provides parents and students with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management if they are dissatisfied with a principal's response.

### **Student Rights and Responsibilities**

#### ***Policy*** [FN](#)

Each student is expected to respect the rights and privileges of other students, teachers, and district staff. All teachers, administrators, and other district personnel are expected to respect the rights and privileges of students.

### **Administering Medication to Students**

#### ***Policies*** [FFAC](#), [FFAF](#)

Only designated employees may administer prescription medication, nonprescription medication, and herbal or dietary supplements to students. Exceptions apply to the self-administration of medication for respiratory distress (asthma medication) medication for anaphylaxis (e.g., EpiPen), opioid antagonists, and medication for diabetes management, if the medication is self-administered in accordance with district policy and procedures. A student who must take any other medication during the school day must have a parent's written request with a physician's order. The medication must be properly and clearly labeled, include the manufacturer label, and in the original container. Contact the principal or school nurse for information on procedures that must be followed when administering medication to students.

### **Dietary Supplements**

#### ***Policies*** [DH](#), [FFAC](#)

District employees are prohibited by state law from knowingly selling, marketing, or distributing a dietary supplement that contains performance-enhancing compounds to a student with whom the employee has contact as part of his or her school district

duties. In addition, employees may not knowingly endorse or suggest the ingestion, intranasal application, or inhalation of a performance-enhancing dietary supplement to any student.

### **Psychotropic Drugs**

#### ***Policy*** [FFAC](#)

A psychotropic drug is a substance used in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a disease or as a component of a medication. It is intended to have an altering effect on perception, emotion, or behavior and is commonly described as a mood- or behavior-altering substance.

District employees are prohibited by state law from doing the following:

- Recommending that a student use a psychotropic drug
- Suggesting a particular diagnosis
- Excluding from class or school-related activity a student whose parent refuses to consent to a psychiatric evaluation or to authorize the administration of a psychotropic drug to a student

### **Student Conduct and Discipline**

#### ***Policies*** [FN](#), [FQ](#)

Students are expected to follow the classroom rules, campus rules, and rules listed in the Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct. Teachers and administrators are responsible for taking disciplinary action based on a range of discipline management strategies that have been adopted by the District. Employees that have concerns about a particular student's conduct should contact the classroom teacher or campus principal.

### **Student Attendance**

#### ***Policy*** [FEB](#)

Teachers and staff should be familiar with the District's policies and procedures for attendance accounting. These procedures require minor students to have parental consent before they are allowed to leave campus. When absent from school, the student upon returning to school, must bring a note signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. These requirements are addressed in campus training and in the Student Handbook. Contact the campus principal for additional information. A student will not be released from school at times other than regular dismissal hours except with the principal's or designee's permission or according to campus sign-out procedures.

Unless a valid court order provides to the contrary, a student will be released to either parent of the student. In the event that one parent has limited custodial or visitation privileges, the school must be provided a copy of the most current court order stipulating the custody agreement. In the event a student has a guardian,



the school will release the student to their legal guardian. The only other person(s) to whom a student will be released at parent/guardian request are those who have been given written permission by the parent or legal guardian. In the event the school initiates removal or release of the student, the student will only be released to persons designated on the school's Emergency Information and Medical/Parent Authorization form. All persons, including parents, should be prepared to present a picture ID to school officials when requesting the release of a student.

## **Bullying** **Policy [FFI](#)**

Bullying is defined by sTEC 37.0832. All employees are required to report student complaints of bullying, including cyberbullying, to the principal or designee. The District's policy includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating bullying of students and is reprinted below or on [FFI \(LOCAL\)](#).

Board Policy prohibits bullying of a student; bullying of a student could occur by physical contact or through electronic means and may include hazing, threats, taunting, teasing, confinement, assault, demands for money, destruction of property, theft of valued possessions, name calling, rumor spreading, or ostracism.

Any district employee who suspects or receives notice that a student or group of students has or may have experienced bullying or cyberbullying shall immediately notify the principal or designee.

"Bullying" means a single significant act or a pattern of acts by one or more students directed at another student that exploits an imbalance of power and involves engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that satisfies the applicability requirements below and that:

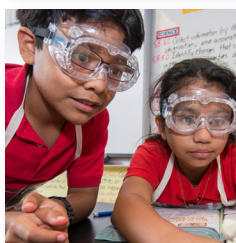
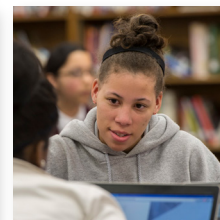
- Has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property.
- Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student.
- Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of a classroom or school.
- Infringes on the rights of the victim at school.

"Cyberbullying" means bullying that is done through the use of any electronic communication device, including through the use of a cellular or other type of telephone, a computer, a camera, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, a social media application, an Internet website, or any other Internet-based communication tool. Reports of bullying shall be made as soon as possible after the alleged act or knowledge of the alleged act. A report may be made orally or in writing.

The principal or designee shall reduce any oral reports to written form and shall investigate the allegations.

### **Hazing** **Policy FNCC**

Students must have prior approval from the principal or designee for any type of “initiation rites” of a school club or organization. While most initiation rites are permissible, engaging in or permitting “hazing” is a criminal offense. Any teacher, administrator, or employee who observes a student engaged in any form of hazing, who has reason to know or suspect that a student intends to engage in hazing or has engaged in hazing must report that fact or suspicion to the designated campus administrator.





The **Houston Independent School District**, as an equal opportunity educational provider and employer, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by law in educational programs or activities that it operates or in employment decisions. The District is required by Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, as well as board policy not to discriminate in such a manner. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

If you suspect discrimination, please contact:

■ **Danielle Delone, Senior Investigator Analyst or  
Breanna Turner, Employee Relations Coordinator 2**  
Employee Relations | 4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092  
[TitleIXComplaints@HoustonISD.org](mailto:TitleIXComplaints@HoustonISD.org)  
713-556-7313

■ **Title VII**  
713-556-7313

■ **Sabrina Ikhimokpa, Section 504**  
713-556-6590

■ **Sabrina Ikhimokpa, Americans with Disabilities Act**  
713-556-6590

General questions about the District should be directed to Employee Services at [EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org](mailto:EmployeeServices@HoustonISD.org) or 713-556-7400.

**Houston Independent School District**  
4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092  
[www.HoustonISD.org](http://www.HoustonISD.org)  
713-556-6000