

SCHOOL

Everyone is required to attend school from age six until the 18th birthday. If you are between the ages of six and 18 and do not go to school regularly, you can be taken to juvenile court.

Since 1983, high school seniors have been required to pass a proficiency test to receive a regular diploma. If you drop out of school, you can take a test and receive a GED (Graduate Equivalency Diploma) certificate when you are 18.

Every school must have rules about things such as dress code, punishment, suspension, smoking, class attendance, etc. The rules must be posted in each school. If you break the rules of your school, you can be suspended or expelled.

If you are suspended from school:

1. You must be told what you are accused of and the evidence against you.
2. You must be given the opportunity to request a hearing to explain your side of the story.
3. Your parents will be notified.

Children who are found to be carrying drugs or weapons on school property, or who assault a teacher, may be expelled from their current school setting for up to one calendar year.

Principals have the right to search students' lockers and all other areas of the school if they think there might be illegal drugs or dangerous weapons on the school property. They may also search you, your purse, pockets and car. You cannot refuse these searches, but you can tell other people around that you do not consent to them. Students and visitors on school grounds are subject to search with reasonable suspicion by principal.

If you drop out of school you will not be able to obtain a driver's license until your 18th birthday.

If your family receives Families First, benefits can be reduced if you do not attend school.

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Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth
authorization number 316087. 10,000 copies. This public
document was promulgated at a cost of \$0.15 per copy.

YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MINOR



“I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession a duty.”

-John D. Rockefeller Jr., American industrialist



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MINORS

In Tennessee, a minor is any person under the age of 18. When you turn 18, you have all of the rights and responsibilities of an adult except that you cannot buy or drink alcohol until you are 21.

As a minor, you have the right to be supported and protected by your parents. This means that they must give you necessary food, shelter, clothes, education and medical care. Your parents can choose your friends, clothes and religion. They can also give you jobs to do around the house and tell you what time you must be home.

Your parents must give their permission for you to get a driver's license, get married and receive some types of medical treatment.

If you refuse to obey the reasonable rules your parents have made or if you run away from home or refuse to go to school, you can be taken to a juvenile court.

HOTLINE NUMBERS

National Runaway Safeline 1-800-786-2929

The National Runaway Safeline provides confidential counseling and can tell you where the nearest runaway shelter is located. It will also let you make a long distance call home at no charge. The Safeline can also call your parents for you and give them a message without telling them where you are. **Home Free**, a service provided by the Safeline, will arrange free transportation for runaways ages 12-20 to their home town. All that is required for free transportation home is verification that the child is a runaway and that the child can return home.

Child Abuse Hotline 1-877-237-0004

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Tennessee Redline 1-800-889-9789

The Tennessee Redline provides information on alcohol and drug abuse and mental health resources, from local counseling services to domestic violence shelters.

STD National Hotline 1-800-232-4636

The STD National Hotline provides free written information about sexually transmitted diseases upon request. The STD Hotline is also available to answer questions about STD symptoms, treatment and prevention. Information from the American Sexual Health Association is available from www.iwannaknow.org or 1-800-227-8922

Family Assistance Service Center 1-866-311-4287 615-743-2000

Family Assistance Service Center provides information on Food Stamps, TennCare and Families First. If you are calling from a cell phone or the local Nashville area, use the 743-2000 number.

CHILD WELFARE/JUVENILE JUSTICE

You can be taken into custody for:

1. **Being dependent, neglected or abused.** You can be taken from your home if your health or safety is seriously threatened or if there is reason to believe you will be taken out of town. You can only be taken away from home if there is no other way to keep you safe.
2. **Status offenses.** Acts that are against the law only for minors (drinking alcohol, using tobacco, curfew violation, skipping school, running away, being unruly, etc.). However, you have procedural and due process protections to ensure state custody is necessary.
3. **Delinquent offenses.** Acts that would be crimes if committed by adults (traffic violations, theft, assault, disorderly conduct, vandalism, etc.).

If you are charged with a delinquent offense:

1. You have a right not to answer questions. Anything you say can be used against you in court.
2. You have a right to have your parents told where you are and why.
3. You have a right to talk with a lawyer. You can ask to have one appointed for you.
4. You have the right to stop talking anytime during questioning and wait until your lawyer comes.
5. In most cases, the police must tell you your rights before asking you questions related to a delinquent offense.
6. If you are placed in detention, you have all the above rights, plus the right to a detention hearing within three days (not counting weekends and holidays).
7. If you are placed in detention for a status offense, your detention hearing must take place within 24 hours (not counting weekends and holidays).
8. The law says youth should not be placed in an adult jail, except in very limited circumstances (i.e., a transfer to adult criminal court). Even in the limited circumstances a juvenile is placed in an adult jail, the juvenile and adult inmates must be separated by sight and sound.

Youth found guilty by the juvenile court of committing an alcohol or drug offense may lose their driver's licenses for up to one year.

Laws are very complicated and confusing even for adults. Before you talk to the police or other authorities or sign anything, it is important for you to talk with an adult who knows the law and can help you decide what is best for you. If you have to go to court, it is important to get a lawyer. If you cannot afford a lawyer and want one, ask to have one

HEALTH

For most types of medical treatment, your parents must give their consent. However, you can receive information and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) without your parents' permission or knowledge. You can also get birth control information and contraceptives to avoid pregnancy without your parents' permission or knowledge.

If you get pregnant, you have several choices:

1. Have the baby and keep it.
2. Have the baby and give it up for adoption.
3. Have an abortion. (*See Note)
4. You can leave your baby, up to 3 days old, with an employee at any hospital, birthing center, community health clinic or outpatient, walk-in clinic in Tennessee.

If you need help or want more information on birth control, STDs, pregnancy, prenatal care or pregnancy options, you can call or go to your local health department. There is a public health department in every county in Tennessee, and all of them provide STD screening, referral and/or treatment; family planning services; pregnancy testing; and birth control. Prenatal and postnatal care programs are available in some counties. Look in the phone book under the name of the county you live in (Davidson, Madison, Greene, etc.). Then look for **Health Department**.

TENNCARE

Children under the age of 21 can apply for TennCare Medicaid at any time. TennCare Medicaid has two main groups: Categorically Needy and Medically Needy. You must meet all of the rules of one of these groups to qualify. Your income and resources will count, too. Resources are things like bank accounts, cars and land.

You must apply for TennCare through the Health Insurance Marketplace. Apply:

1. Online at www.healthcare.gov ;or
2. By calling **1-800-318-2596**. They can mail an application to you or help you apply online.

If you do not have a computer and/or internet access, you can apply at a kiosk at your county DHS office. DHS office addresses are available from the agency website (<http://www.tn.gov/humanserv>).

*NOTE

This pamphlet explains some of your rights and responsibilities as a minor. You should be aware that laws, including those in the pamphlet, can be changed. To get more up-to-date answers to your questions, contact the people and offices listed under each subject.

MENTAL HEALTH

If you have problems that you feel you cannot discuss with your parents or a close adult friend, teacher, minister, etc., you can get help or talk with someone at a mental health center. Each center has its own rules about whether you need your parents' permission to receive counseling. The center can also help determine if there will be a cost for the counseling. You can ask about these things when you call.

Every county in Tennessee is served by a local mental health center, although not every county has a facility. To find the one nearest you, look in the Yellow Pages under **Mental Health Services**. You may also call the TennCare Partners Advocacy Line at 1-800-809-9957. Mental health centers also help with alcohol and drug problems.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call the **Specialized Crisis Services** in your area. (Details available at www.tn.gov/mental/recovery/crisis_serv.shtml.)

Northeast Region:

Frontier Health 1-877-928-9062

Blount, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, and Sevier counties

Helen Ross McNabb 1-865-539-2409

Davidson County

Mental Health Cooperative 615-726-0125

All other counties, contact Youth Villages at:

East Region 1-866-791-9224

Southeast Region 1-866-791-9225

North Middle Region 1-866-791-9221

South Middle Region 1-866-791-9222

Rural West Region 1-866-791-9227

Memphis Region 1-866-791-9226

WORKING

If you are under 14, the law does not allow you to work except in certain jobs. These laws are for your safety and protection. Some of the kinds of work you may do include housework or work for a parent or guardian in a non-hazardous occupation; farm work; selling or delivering newspapers; errand and delivery service work by foot, bicycle or public transportation; and work in which you are self-employed (example: babysitting).

If you are 14 or 15, you may not work during school hours. When school is in session, you may work no more than three hours a day, 18 hours a week, no later than 7 p.m. or earlier than 6 a.m. During the summer, you may work no more than eight hours a day, 40 hours a week, no later than 9 p.m. or earlier than 6 a.m.

If you are 16 or 17 and enrolled in school, you may not work during school hours. When school is in session, you may work no later than 10 p.m., Sunday through Thursday nights. With notarized permission from your parents or guardians, you may work no later than midnight three of the Sunday through Thursday nights. This restriction does not apply to Friday or Saturday nights, or days when there is no school. There are no restrictions on the number of hours per week you may work with parental permission.

HOW OLD DOES A CHILD IN TENNESSEE HAVE TO BE TO:

EDUCATION

Start kindergarten

5 years old by August 15

Start first grade

6 years old by September 30

Be required to start kindergarten

By 6 years old

Drop out of school

18 years old

EMPLOYMENT

Hold gainful employment

14 years with restrictions

16-17 years with fewer restrictions

18 years old

Work any hours

DRIVING

Obtain a restricted driver's license for a motorcycle

14 years old

Obtain a learner's permit

15 years old

Obtain a restricted hardship driver's license

14 years old

Obtain an intermediate "restricted" driver's license

16 years old

with signature of parent/responsible adult

Obtain an intermediate "unrestricted" driver's license

1 year after being issued "restricted" driver's license

Obtain a regular driver's license

18 years old

Drop out of school

No license until 18 years old

Adjudicated on alcohol or drug offense

Lose license for one year

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Be a juvenile (subject to the juvenile court)

Under 18 years old

Be an unruly juvenile

Under 18 years old

Be sent to training school

Under 18 years old

Be tried as an adult in criminal court for serious offenses against persons

No lower age limit

Be tried as an adult in criminal court for delinquent offenses

16 years old

Be sent to adult prison

Over 18 years old or convicted as an adult

OTHER

Obtain services for family planning, pregnancy and STDs without parental consent

No age restriction

Release a child for adoption

A parent of any age

Agree to be adopted

14 years old

Have an abortion

18 years or younger with appropriate consent

Be subject to child abuse and neglect laws

Under 18 years old

Be emancipated for specific purposes

By judicial review - no age stated

Marry without parental consent

18 years old

Marry with parental consent

16 years old

Marry with approval of court

Under 16 years old

Vote

18 years old

Obtain a credit card

18 years old

Receive a commercial tattoo

18 years old

Purchase tobacco products

18 years old

Purchase liquor, wine or beer

21 years old