

Open Carry Law FAQs

Q: CAN HANDGUNS/FIREARMS BE CARRIED OPENLY INTO OR CONCEALED WHEN INSIDE A SCHOOL BUILDING?

A: No, Texas law prohibits open or concealed carry of handguns and other prohibited weapons on physical premises of a school or educational institution. The term “premises” is defined by law as a building or a portion of a building.

Q: CAN HANDGUNS/FIREARMS BE CARRIED OPENLY OR CONCEALED ON SCHOOL GROUNDS AND OTHER BUILDINGS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY?

A: No, Texas law also prohibits open or concealed carry of handguns and other prohibited weapons on any grounds or buildings in which an activity sponsored by a school or educational institution is being conducted. While Texas law does not define the terms “grounds” or “school-sponsored activity,” each situation will be closely analyzed and a determination made based on the specific circumstances and facts of the campus. Generally, HISD interprets these terms to include all district property where students are regularly present during regular school hours, including but not limited to:

- Playground areas
- Practice fields
- Sidewalks and courtyards used by students that connect buildings and temporary buildings on school campuses that cannot be accessed without entering the building
- Outdoor areas used for science experiments while they are in use
- Areas of parking lots in which temporary buildings are located
- Parent drop-off and pick-up lanes and/or areas as determined by each campus generally a one hour before the start of school, one hour after dismissal, and at other times when pick-up and drop-off are occurring.

Q: CAN HANDGUNS/FIREARMS BE CARRIED OPENLY OR CONCEALED IN SCHOOL PARKING LOTS, DRIVEWAYS, AND OTHER PARKING AREAS?

A: Yes, but only during times when a school-sponsored activity is not being conducted in the parking lot, driveway, or other parking area. For example, if the school parking lot is used for band practice after school, handguns/firearms or other prohibited weapons cannot be carried openly or concealed in that parking lot when the band is practicing. However, during the time when the parking lot is used solely for parking vehicles, open and/or concealed carry by parents and other visitors is lawful in these areas.

Q: CAN HANDGUNS/FIREARMS BE CARRIED OPENLY OR CONCEALED ON PUBLIC SIDEWALKS OR WALKWAY SURROUNDING SCHOOL CAMPUSES?

A: Yes, as long as no school-sponsored event or activity is being conducted.

Q: CAN HANDGUNS/FIREARMS BE CARRIED OPENLY OR CONCEALED AT SCHOOL-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES OR EVENTS?

A: No, Texas law prohibits open or concealed carry of handguns and other prohibited weapons at school-sponsored events or activities regardless of whether the events or activities occur on or off school property.

Q: ARE HISD CAMPUSES REQUIRED TO POST SIGNAGE REGARDING THE PROHIBITION AGAINST OPEN CARRY IN SCHOOL BUILDINGS?

A: No, at this time, HISD will not be requiring campuses to post any signage to address open carry, because the law expressly prohibits the carrying of handguns (openly or concealed) inside school buildings, any grounds or building where a school-sponsored event/activity is taking place, in school district passenger vehicles, and at board meetings without posted signage.

Q: ARE HISD EMPLOYEES ALLOWED TO POSSESS AND/OR CARRY HANDGUNS (OPENLY OR CONCEALED) ON DISTRICT PROPERTY?

A: No, current Houston Independent School District Board Policy *prohibits employees* from possessing and/or bringing handguns/firearms and other prohibited weapons on district property, including parking lots.

Board policies addressing open carry legislative changes were approved by the HISD Board for first reading at the January 2016 regular board meeting. The policies will be presented for second reading (final approval) at the March 10, 2016, regular board meeting.