

Youth and the Law: A Guide for Legislators



About this Publication

This publication describes Minnesota laws and court cases that establish rights, responsibilities, and protections for youth. It deals with economic protection, education, families, health and social services, motor vehicles, unlawful acts by and against youth, and juveniles in court.

December 2020

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Introduction

Youth and the Law describes Minnesota statutes, rules, and cases that establish rights, responsibilities, and protections for young people different from those applicable to adults. The purpose of the guidebook is to give legislators an overview of all laws affecting young people and to provide a reference aid on current state policies that apply to youth. The guidebook also should prove useful for evaluating any proposals for changing these policies.

This is intended as a guide to Minnesota state law. Federal statutes and cases are included only in a few areas where they dictate state policy or where state policy has been closely linked with federal law for some other reason. **Youth and the Law** does not attempt to cover federal statutes, cases, or programs in general.

Legal distinctions are generally made between adults, who are statutorily defined as persons age 18 and over, and minors, who are statutorily defined as persons under age 18. **Youth and the Law** uses the terms “minor” and “child” synonymously. Exceptions occur if the text clearly indicates that “child” means a minor of a particular age or means an individual of any age in relation to his or her parents.

Youth and the Law is divided into two parts: Part 1, **The Laws**, consists of substantive laws organized by subject categories, including economic protection for youth, educational rights and responsibilities, family relations, health and social services, motor vehicles, and unlawful acts by and against youths. Part 2, **The Courts**, explains the courts and procedures that deal with youths. A glossary of terms used throughout both parts 1 and 2 is provided at the beginning of the guidebook. There is also an index at the end of the publication.

Unless otherwise noted, all citations are to Minnesota Statutes as amended through November 2020, or Minnesota Rules, as of November 2020.

Glossary of Terms

Age of Majority

Eighteen years of age. ([Minn. Stat. § 645.451](#), subd. 5)

CHIPS

An acronym for a category of juvenile court jurisdiction. “CHIPS” means Child in Need of Protection or Services.

Civil Action

A lawsuit to establish or enforce certain rights. It can be based on a statutory right or a legal rule developed in court cases. It can involve seeking payment of money (damages) or a court order compelling someone to act (specific performance) or refrain from an action (injunction). The lawsuit itself involves no possible criminal punishment (imprisonment, criminal fine, developing a record of a criminal conviction, etc.) although criminal penalties can result if a person involved with the lawsuit does not follow the court’s ruling and orders. Civil action examples: personal injury, breach of contract, marriage dissolution.

Contract

An agreement between two or more persons that creates a legal obligation to do or not to do a particular thing, such as to perform a service or to buy or sell goods or real estate.

Crime

Conduct prohibited by statute and for which the actor may be sentenced to imprisonment, with or without a fine.

Delinquent

A minor ten years old or older who has committed an act that would be a crime if committed by an adult, except for certain misdemeanors classified as juvenile petty offenses.

Felony

A crime punishable by a sentence of more than one year imprisonment in a state prison. Fines for felony offenses are equal to or greater than \$3,000, depending on the offense.

Gross Misdemeanor

A crime punishable by a sentence of imprisonment for more than 90 days but not more than one year, and/or up to a \$3,000 fine.

Juvenile

A person who is younger than 18 years old.

Juvenile Petty Offender

A minor who has committed a juvenile alcohol offense, a juvenile controlled substance offense, a tobacco offense, or a violation of a local ordinance prohibiting conduct by a minor that would be lawful if committed by an adult, except for certain designated misdemeanors and other offenses.

Legal Age or Full Age

Eighteen years of age or older. ([Minn. Stat. § 645.451](#), subd. 6)

Misdemeanor

A crime punishable by a sentence of up to 90 days imprisonment and/or up to a \$1,000 fine.

Petty Misdemeanor

An offense that is not a crime, which carries no possibility of imprisonment, but for which a fine of up to \$300 may be imposed.

Status Offense

Conduct that is unlawful for children, but lawful for adults (e.g., smoking tobacco).

Statute of Limitations

A deadline set by statute for beginning a particular kind of lawsuit or criminal prosecution.

Tort

The area of law that involves the breach of one person's legal duty to another that results in an injury or damage of some kind. It is sometimes defined as the law of legal wrongs committed by private individuals against each other, not based on contracts. Some torts are provided for in statute, while many others are the result of legal rules developed over time in case law. Examples include personal injury and defamation.

Part 1: The Laws

Minnesota law makes many distinctions between the rights and responsibilities of adults and young persons. Part 1 describes the major statutory, regulatory, and case laws that differentiate between youths and adults. These provisions are divided into the areas of economic regulations, education, family relations, health and social services, motor vehicles, and criminal law. There is a miscellaneous section for other age-based provisions.

Usually, legal distinctions are drawn at the age of majority, which is statutorily defined as 18 years of age. Persons under age 18 are minors. They are deemed less able than adults to take responsibility for themselves or to carry out obligations to others. Similarly, they are considered more in need of protection both from their own inexperienced judgments and from the actions of others.

Minnesota law makes some distinctions between adults and youth at points other than 18 years. For example, a few rights are withheld and a few protections are extended until age 19 or 21 in the belief that 18-year-olds are not ready to be entirely on their own in particular areas. On the other hand, not all minors are treated identically under the law. In some instances, younger children are considered in need of greater protection or unable to carry out the greater responsibilities of older children. As a result, certain statutes treat minors under such ages as 16, 14, or 10 differently from minors over those ages.

Economic Protection

Minors' economic rights and activities are heavily regulated by statute because it is believed that minors are much less able than adults to support themselves, to make decisions about managing property, or to bargain as equals in employment and other business situations.

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Child Support

All Parents

If a parent consents to have a child reside with an individual or entity other than the parent, or if the child does so by court order, the parent can be required to pay support for the child.

([Minn. Stat. § 256.87](#), subd. 5)

A parent who has been ordered by a court to pay child support and has the financial ability to pay support but continually fails to do so without good cause may have his or her parental rights terminated by the juvenile court. ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.301](#), subd. 1, para. (b), cl. (3))

Divorced Parents

The court may order either or both parents to pay child support. A parent may also be required to provide health insurance or pay medical or child care expenses for a child. Child means an individual who is (1) under age 18; (2) under age 20 and still attending secondary school; or (3) because of his or her physical or mental condition, unable to support himself or herself. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 518A.26](#), subds. 5, 20; [518A.40](#); [518A.41](#))

Support Guidelines

Statutory guidelines and other specified factors affect the amount of parental support that courts will award to children of divorced parents, unless the parents reach an alternate agreement that is approved by the court. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 518A.34](#); [518A.35](#); [518A.36](#); [518A.43](#))

Unmarried Parents

If an individual admits she or he is a child's parent or if parentage is established in a court action, the individual is legally obligated to support the child and will be ordered to pay the amount indicated in the statutory guidelines. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 257.51](#) to [257.75](#); [518A.44](#))

Enforcement

If a court orders a parent to pay child support, including health insurance or medical or child care costs, legal mechanisms can be used to enforce the order in Minnesota or against a parent who moves to another state. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 256.87](#); [257.67](#); [548.091](#); [ch. 518](#); [ch. 518A](#); [ch. 518C](#))

Stepparents

When a divorced parent seeks a change in court-ordered child support, the income of both parents' new spouses, if any, will not be considered in raising or lowering the support amount. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 518A.29\(f\)](#); [518A.39](#), subd. 2, para. (e), cl. (1))

For further information, see [Minnesota's Child Support Laws](#), House Research Department, November 2015.

Property Rights

Control of a Minor's Earnings or Property

A parent or guardian may claim a minor's wages by notifying the minor's employer. Otherwise, the minor has control of his or her own wages. ([Minn. Stat. § 181.01](#))

A minor may control his or her own savings account. ([Minn. Stat. § 48.30](#))

Minor's Contracts

A minor may make a contract but may choose not to complete it or disaffirm it within a reasonable time after reaching the age of majority, unless it involves the purchase of necessities, like food or shelter. *Miller v. Smith*, 2 N.W. 942 (Minn. 1879); *Kelly, Jr. v. Furlong* 261 N.W. 460 (Minn. 1935). In most cases, any benefits or value received through a contract must be restored to the other party before the minor is released from the obligations of the contract.

Wills

A minor may not make a will. ([Minn. Stat. § 524.2-501](#))

Inheritance from Parents

If there is no will, an adopted individual has a legal right to a share of the adopted parents' estate but not to the birth parents' estate. Special provisions exist to determine inheritance where a child is adopted by certain relatives of a genetic parent or conceived by means of assisted reproduction. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 524.2-118; 524.2-119; 524.2-120](#))

If a person does not make a will, his or her children share the estate with the surviving spouse, if that spouse was married to the children's other parent. If no spouse survives, the children share the estate among themselves. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 524.2-102; 524.2-103](#))

If parents were not married to each other and did not leave wills, the children inherit from either parent. Parentage may be established under the Parentage Act. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 524.2-101; 524.2-116; 524.2-117](#))

A parent who makes a will may intentionally disinherit a child. If it seems a child was omitted from a will by error or because of being born after the parent's death, the child may still be entitled to an inheritance as provided in this statute. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 524.2-108; 524.2-302](#))

Uniform Transfers to Minors Act

Any kind of property (money, real estate, stocks, etc.) may be transferred to a custodian for a minor's benefit. This kind of custodianship lasts until the beneficiary turns 21. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 527.21 to 527.44](#))

Employment

Age Discrimination in Employment

The prohibition against unfair employment practices based on a person's age applies to persons who have reached the age of 18. The law permits different treatment in privileges, benefits, services, or facilities for employees under age 21. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 363A.03](#), subd. 2; [363A.20](#), subd. 9)

Child Labor Standards

The Minnesota Child Labor Standards Act restricts the age, days and hours, and occupations of working minors. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 181A.01](#) to [181A.12](#)) The Commissioner of Labor and Industry may grant exemptions from these restrictions according to established rules if the commissioner finds that the exemption is in the minor's best interests. ([Minn. Stat. § 181A.07](#), subd. 5) Employment of minors is also governed by federal law, which may differ from the Minnesota law described here.

Age Restrictions. No minor under the age of 14 may be employed, except: (1) a minor may be an actor, performer, or model; (2) those 11 and older may be newspaper carriers; (3) those 11 to 13 years of age may be employed as a youth athletic program referee, umpire, or official for an age bracket younger than the minor's own age with adult supervision present and a parent's or guardian's written consent; and (4) those 12 and older may work in agricultural operations. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 181A.04](#), subd. 1; [181A.07](#), subds. 1, 2, 3, and 4a)

Day and Hour Restrictions. On school days, during school hours, no minor under 16 years may be employed except a 14- or 15-year-old with a valid employment certificate, which may be issued by a school district superintendent to a minor for a specific nonhazardous position if a parent or guardian consents, the minor can physically perform the job, and it is in the minor's best interests. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 181A.04](#), subd. 2; [181A.05](#))

No minor under 16 may work any day before 7:00 a.m. or after 9:00 p.m. except as a newspaper carrier. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 181A.04](#), subd. 3; [181A.07](#), subd. 3) However, while school is in session, federal law provides that minors 14 or 15 years of age cannot work later than 7:00 p.m. ([29 C.F.R. § 570.35\(a\)](#))

No one may employ a minor under 16 more than 40 hours per week or more than eight hours in any 24-hour period, except for minors working in agricultural operations with their parents' or guardian's permission. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 181A.04](#), subd. 4; [181A.07](#), subd. 1) However, during the school year, federal law provides that 14- and 15-year-olds performing nonagricultural, nonexempt work cannot work more than three hours on a school day, or more than 18 hours in a school week. ([29 C.F.R. § 570.35\(a\)](#))

No one may employ a high school student under age 18 after 11:00 p.m. on a night before a school day or before 5:00 a.m. on a school day unless an exemption applies. With written permission of a parent or guardian, a student may work until 11:30 p.m. or begin at 4:30 a.m. ([Minn. Stat. § 181A.04](#), subd. 6)

Occupation Restrictions. All minors under age 18 may be excluded from employment in any occupation that the Commissioner of Labor and Industry finds by rule hazardous or detrimental to their well-being. ([Minn. Stat. § 181A.04](#), subd. 5) The commissioner must establish a list of hazardous occupations by rule. ([Minn. Stat. § 181A.09](#), subd. 2) The commissioner also has the power to exempt an individual minor from this restriction under established rules. ([Minn. Stat. § 181A.07](#), subd. 5)

Exceptions apply to the following hazardous occupations provided that certain safety standards and training requirements are met:

- A minor at least 16 years of age can be employed to operate an amusement ride or to load and unload passengers on one ride at a time at a fixed amusement park with adult supervision. ([Minn. Stat. § 181A.04](#), subd. 7)
- A minor at least 16 years of age can be employed to operate lawn care equipment at a golf course, resort, municipality, or rental property if directly employed to perform lawn care. ([Minn. Stat. § 181A.116](#))

Minors under age 18 are prohibited from employment in any rooms in which intoxicating liquor or 3.2 percent malt liquor is served or consumed or in any tasks that involve serving, dispensing, or handling of those liquors that are consumed on the premises except under the following conditions:

- A minor at least 16 years of age can be employed to perform busing, dishwashing, or hosting services in rooms or areas of restaurants, hotels, motels, or resorts where the presence of intoxicating liquor is incidental to food service or preparation.
- A minor at least 16 years of age can be employed to perform busing, dishwashing, or hosting services or to provide waiter or waitress service in rooms or areas where the presence of 3.2 percent malt liquor is incidental to food service or preparation.
- A minor at least 16 years of age can be employed to provide musical entertainment in those rooms or areas where the presence of intoxicating liquor and 3.2 percent malt liquor is incidental to food service or preparation.

Minors are not prevented from working at tasks not prohibited by law in establishments where liquor is sold, served, dispensed, or handled in those rooms or areas where no liquor is consumed or served. ([Minn. Stat. § 181A.115](#))

Child Labor Exemptions. Minors employed to do home chores, babysitting, or by their parents are exempt from the above child labor restrictions. ([Minn. Stat. § 181A.07](#), subd. 4) The commissioner may also grant exemptions to minors participating in approved training or apprenticeship programs. ([Minn. Stat. § 181A.07](#), subd. 7)

Federal law provides that minors under age 16, working in particularly hazardous agricultural work for their parents, are exempt only if they work on a farm owned or operated by the parent. ([29 U.S.C. § 213\(c\)\(2\)](#); [Minn. Stat. § 181A.11](#))

Minimum Wage

Minnesota employers are subject to the following minimum wage rate requirements for minors and young adults. ([Minn. Stat. § 177.24](#), subd. 1, paras. (c), (e), and (f)) Youth and training wage rates have existed in Minnesota's minimum wage law for many years.

Effective Date	Training Wage and Youth Wage
January 1, 2020	\$8.15
January 1, 2021	\$8.21

The training wage is a special rate that may be paid during the first 90 consecutive days of employment to a person under the age of 20 regardless of the size of the employer. The training wage rate is the same as the youth wage rate. ([Minn. Stat. § 177.24](#), subd. 1, para. (c))

A youth wage may be paid to employees under the age of 18. The youth wage rate for large employers is the same as the minimum wage rate for small employers regardless of age. ([Minn. Stat. § 177.24](#), subd. 1, paras. (b)(2), (e))

The minimum wage does not apply to persons under the age of 18 who are: (1) employed in certain agricultural work; (2) working as a corn detasseler; or (3) working less than 20 hours per workweek for a municipality as part of a recreational program. The minimum wage also does not apply to any person engaged in babysitting as a sole practitioner. ([Minn. Stat. § 177.23](#), subd. 7, cls. (3), (4), (12), (14))

Unemployment Insurance Benefits

High school students are not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits any week they attend high school or during any vacation or period in between academic terms or years. ([Minn. Stat. § 268.085](#), subd. 2, cl. (3)) However, minors working in covered employment who are not in high school may be eligible for unemployment compensation if they satisfy the statutory requirements. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 268.035](#), subd. 12; [268.069](#), subd. 1; [268.085](#), subd. 1) A minor's covered wages are taxable for employers subject to unemployment insurance tax law. ([Minn. Stat. § 268.035](#), subd. 24)

The following employment areas are not eligible for unemployment compensation: (1) agricultural employment by a child under 16 for an employer not covered by federal unemployment tax law; (2) employment of a child under 18 by their parent; (3) work performed at a school, college, or university by a student enrolled there; (4) work performed by a full-time student for academic credit as part of an academic program; and (5) newspaper delivery by anyone under 18. ([Minn. Stat. § 268.035](#), subds. 11; 20, cls. (18), (20), (21), (32), (34))

Workers' Compensation

The workers' compensation system compensates minor employees as well as adult employees who are injured in the course and scope of their employment. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 176.011](#), subd. 9,

para. (a), cl. (2); [176.091](#)) A guardian or conservator is appointed to represent the interests of a minor who has a covered workers' compensation injury or who is a dependent eligible for survivor benefits. ([Minn. Stat. § 176.092](#))

A minor with a workers' compensation-covered injury that results in permanent total disability receives the maximum temporary total disability benefit available, regardless of their wage at the time of injury. ([Minn. Stat. § 176.101](#), subds. 1, para. (b), cl. (1); 4; 6, para. (b))

Income Tax Treatment of Dependents with Earned Income

Minors who earn income may be subject to income tax on their earnings. If they are not eligible to be claimed as a "dependent" on someone else's return, they will be subject to tax on the same basis as an ordinary taxpayer. If they are eligible to be claimed as a dependent (typically by a parent who partially pays for their support), special rules apply. These rules also apply to adults who are claimed as dependents on another's tax return, but they apply most often to teenagers and young adults (usually students) who rely on their parents or others for financial support.

Individuals who are eligible to be claimed as a dependent on someone else's return receive a reduced standard deduction. For tax year 2020, the standard deduction for such individuals is limited to the lesser of:

- \$1,100, or
- the individual's earned income for the year plus \$350, but not more than the regular standard deduction amount (\$12,400).

For tax year 2020, a dependent youth who earns more than \$12,400 may be subject to federal income tax on their earnings.

Educational Rights and Responsibilities

The state of Minnesota is required by its constitution to provide a free public education to all children in the state. This section provides an overview of some of the rights and responsibilities of students attending elementary and secondary schools.

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Compulsory Attendance; School Choice Options

Age of Attendance; Compulsory Attendance

Every child between the ages of seven and 17 must attend school. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.22](#), subd. 5) A school board's annual school calendar must include at least 165 days of instruction for students in grades 1 to 11 unless the commissioner approves a four-day week schedule.

Minimum hours of instruction are specified for kindergarten students (425), students in grades 1 to 6 (935), and students in grades 7 through 12 (1,020). All-day kindergarten must include at least 850 hours of instruction. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.41](#)) A student who is 17 must attend school unless the student formally withdraws from school. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.22](#), subd. 8) A minor parent or an 18- or 19-year-old parent who has not completed high school must attend school in order to remain eligible for the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). ([Minn. Stat. § 256J.54](#), subd. 5)

A child must receive developmental screening before enrolling in kindergarten or first grade in a public school. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.17](#))

A school-age child may be excused from mandatory attendance requirements under certain circumstances. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.22](#), subd. 12) See also Exemption from Compulsory Attendance under First Amendment Rights, page 51.

Undocumented children who are not legal residents of the United States are entitled to attend public school through grade 12. *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202, 102 S. Ct. 2382 (1982).

School districts must facilitate the enrollment, placement, participation, and graduation of children in military families whose parents experience frequent moves and deployment. ([Minn. Stat. § 127A.85](#))

Truancy

A child subject to compulsory instruction requirements is considered a “**continuing truant**” if the child is in elementary school and absent three school days without a valid excuse or if the child is in middle, junior high, or high school and absent three or more class periods on three school days without a valid excuse. ([Minn. Stat. § 260A.02](#), subd. 3)

School officials must notify a child's parent that the child is a continuing truant. ([Minn. Stat. § 260A.03](#))

A child under age 17 is considered a “**habitual truant**” if the child is in elementary school and absent seven school days without a lawful excuse or if the child is in middle, junior high, or high school and absent one or more class periods on seven school days without a lawful excuse. A child who is 17 is considered a habitual truant if the child is absent one or more class periods on seven school days without a lawful excuse and has not formally withdrawn from school. ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.007](#), subd. 19)

Legitimate Exemptions

A parent may apply to a district to have a child excused from attending school for reasons of physical or mental health, including illness, medical or dental appointments, family emergencies, the death or serious illness or funeral of an immediate family member, active duty in the military, ongoing mental health treatment, other district exemptions, completed graduation requirements, or if the child is attending a school for religious instruction. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.22](#), subd. 12) A student may be excused from a physical education class if a physician indicates physical education will jeopardize the student's health or if a parent requests an exemption on religious grounds. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.026](#))

Instruction Requirements

Instruction must occur either in a public school, a nonpublic school, church or religious organization, or a homeschool. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.22](#), subd. 4)

Instruction is required in specific subject areas and must be provided by a person who meets the specific requirements for instructors. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 120A.22](#), subds. 9, 10)

The performance of every child not enrolled in a public school must be assessed each year. All persons in charge of providing instruction to a child must document that the child received instruction and was assessed as required by law. This reporting requirement does not apply to a child receiving instruction from an accredited or state-recognized nonpublic school, person, or other institution. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.24](#), subds. 1 to 3)

Depending on their qualifications as instructors, parents instructing their children in a homeschool may be required to provide additional assessment and document their children's instruction. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 120A.22](#), subd. 11, para. (b))

Penalty

It is a misdemeanor for a person responsible for instruction in an unaccredited nonpublic school, home, or other institution to fail to comply with compulsory instruction requirements. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.26](#))

It is a petty misdemeanor for a person who is legally responsible for a school-age child to fail or refuse to provide instruction for that child. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.34](#))

Residency Requirements

School-age children who reside within a district that operates public schools may attend those schools without charge. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.20](#), subd. 1)

The district of residence for a homeless school-age student is the district in which the parent or guardian resides unless parental rights were terminated, the parent doesn't reside in Minnesota, or the parent is subject to the supervision of the Commissioner of Corrections, in which case the district of residence is the district in which the student resided when the student became homeless. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.20](#), subd. 2)

The district of residence of a school-age student whose divorced or legally separated parents share joint physical custody and reside in different school districts is designated by the student's parents. ([Minn. Stat. § 127A.47](#), subd. 3)

Immunization Requirements

No child may enroll or remain enrolled in any elementary or secondary school or child care facility unless an immunization statement is submitted to the school or facility. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.15](#), subd. 1) A child need not be immunized if immunization conflicts with a parent's conscientiously held beliefs. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.15](#), subd. 3, para. (d))

Effective Teachers

In certain circumstances, school administrators must not place students in the classroom of a teacher who is in an improvement process or who has not had a summative evaluation. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 122A.40](#), subd.8, para. (d); [122A.41](#), subd. 5, para. (d))

School Conferences

An employer must give an employee up to 16 hours leave during a 12-month period to attend school conferences or school-related activities involving the employee's child if the conferences or school-related activities cannot be scheduled during nonwork hours. ([Minn. Stat. § 181.9412](#), subd. 2) A child's parent or guardian may designate one additional adult to attend school conferences and school-related events. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.32](#), subd. 10a)

Enrollment Options ("Open Enrollment")

Students in kindergarten through grade 12 may opt to attend a school or program in a nonresident district. ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.03](#)) A district may limit nonresident enrollment to the lesser of 1 percent of the district's total enrollment at each grade level or the number of district residents at that grade level enrolled in a nonresident district. If applications exceed available seats, the district must hold a lottery to determine the students that will receive seats. A school board must adopt specific standards for accepting and rejecting timely applications; the standards may not include a student's previous academic achievement, athletic or other extracurricular ability, disabling conditions, English proficiency, previous disciplinary proceedings, or district of residence.

A district may terminate the enrollment of a nonresident student at the end of the school year if the student is a habitual truant and other conditions are met. A district also may terminate the enrollment of a nonresident student over 17 who is absent without lawful excuse for one or more periods on 15 school days and has not withdrawn from school. ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.03](#), subd. 12)

A district may refuse to enroll a student expelled for possessing a dangerous weapon, possessing or using an illegal drug, selling or soliciting the sale of a controlled substance at school or a school function, or committing a third-degree assault. ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.03](#), subd. 1)

Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO); Transfer Curriculum

Eligible 10th, 11th, or 12th grade public school students and 11th or 12th grade nonpublic or homeschooled students may apply to enroll in a course or program provided by a postsecondary institution. Tenth grade public school students, with the requisite 8th grade reading test score, may apply to enroll in a career and technical education course offered by a Minnesota state college or university. ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.09](#), subd. 5a)

A student enrolled in a graduation incentives program under [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.68](#), may enroll full-time in a middle or early college program and earn developmental college credit for completing remedial or developmental college courses. ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.09](#), subd. 9)

Students may receive secondary or postsecondary credit for successfully completing a PSEO or concurrent enrollment course. All Minnesota State institutions must give full credit to a high school student who completes postsecondary credit at a Minnesota State institution and enrolls in a Minnesota State institution after graduating. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 124D.09](#), subd. 12; [135A.101](#), subd. 3)

Concurrent Enrollment

Eligible students in 10th, 11th, or 12th grade may enroll in a nonsectarian course taught by a qualified secondary school teacher or a postsecondary faculty member that is offered at a secondary school or another location under an agreement between a public school board and a public or private postsecondary institution. ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.09](#), subd. 10) Students in 9th and 10th grade may apply to enroll in a world language course currently available to the 11th and 12th grade students or in a concurrent enrollment course under an agreement between the district and the postsecondary institution. ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.09](#), subd. 5b)

Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and College-Level Exam Programs

Students are eligible to receive Minnesota State college credit for earning a satisfactory score on a College-level Exam Program (CLEP) exam, a score of three or higher on an Advanced Placement (AP) exam, or a score of four or higher on an International Baccalaureate (IB) exam. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 120B.13](#); [120B.131](#))

Graduation Incentives Program

Eligible at-risk students who have experienced or are experiencing difficulty in the traditional education system may enroll in a state-approved alternative program. ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.68](#))

Area Learning Centers

Students 16 years or older who are eligible to participate in the graduation incentives program or receive special education services may attend or be assigned to an area learning center (ALC) or alternative learning program to receive academic instruction leading to a high school diploma. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 120A.22](#), subd. 5, para. (c); [123A.05](#) to [123A.09](#))

Adult Basic Education

Students over age 17 who are not enrolled in school and students ages 19 to 21 who have not yet graduated from a Minnesota high school and, but for their age, are eligible to participate in an adult basic education (ABE) program may enroll in a day or evening ABE program to earn a high school diploma, an equivalency certificate, or a standard adult high school diploma. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 120B.02](#), subd. 2, para. (b); [124D.52](#))

Online Learning

Students may enroll in a full-time online learning program or in supplemental online learning for credit. The courses must be rigorous, aligned with state academic standards, equivalent to other courses, and must provide student-to-teacher communication. ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.095](#))

Shared Time Programs

Students in regular and special education programs may fulfill state compulsory attendance requirements by attending public school programs for part of the regular school day and nonpublic school programs for the remainder of the school day. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 126C.01](#), subd. 8; [126C.19](#); [125A.18](#))

Charter Schools

Students may attend charter schools, which are public schools independently operated by teachers, parents, and community members. ([Minn. Stat. ch. 124E](#)) See [Charter Schools](#), House Research Department, August 2018.

A charter school must not limit admission based on achievement, aptitude, or athletic ability. ([Minn. Stat. § 124E.11](#)) A charter school for deaf and hard-of-hearing students may enroll pre-K students with that disability. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 124E.03](#), subd. 3; [124E.11](#), para. (h))

All federal civil rights laws apply to charter schools and traditional schools equally. (Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, “*Dear Colleague*” letter, May 14, 2014.) Some state requirements, including requirements relating to student discipline and academic standards, apply to charter schools in the same manner as school districts. ([Minn. Stat. § 124E.03](#))

Homeschools

Students may attend a homeschool where parent educators provide instruction in required subject areas and periodically report student achievement and other information to the district superintendent. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 120A.22](#), subds. 10, 11; [120A.24](#))

Single-Sex Education

Federal Title IX regulations allow public and private coeducational elementary and secondary schools to offer single-sex classes and extracurricular activities under certain circumstances, and allow school districts to operate single-sex schools if student enrollment is voluntary and

other conditions are met. Vocational schools that receive federal funds may not offer single-sex programs. (Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972)

Particular District Schools

Attending a particular public school is a privilege and not a right for a student. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.36](#))

State Graduation, Statewide Testing, and K-12 Curriculum Requirements

Graduation Requirements

State law requires students to complete credit requirements and meet state academic standards in order to graduate from high school. A school district may adopt graduation requirements that exceed state requirements. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.02](#), subd. 2)

Students must complete the following high school credit requirements:

- four language arts credits
- three math credits
- three science credits
- three and a half social studies credits
- one arts credit
- at least seven elective credits

Students may use a career and technical education course to fulfill a science, math, or arts credit requirement; an agriculture science course to fulfill a science credit requirement; a computer science credit to fulfill a math credit; and a Project Lead the Way credit to fulfill a science or math credit requirement. ([Minn. Stat. § 124B.024](#), subds. 1 and 2, paras. (b), (c), (e) and (f)) Districts decide whether students meet course credit requirements by successfully completing an academic year of study or by demonstrating mastery of the applicable subject matter. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.018](#), subd. 4)

K-12 Academic Standards

The Department of Education adopts state standards in language arts, math, science, social studies, physical education, and the arts. The department reviews and revises the state standards on a ten-year cycle. School districts must adopt their own health standards, and may adopt their own arts standards, rather than the state arts standards. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.021](#)) Districts must also adopt elective standards in career and technical education, and world languages. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.022](#))

Required Areas of Instruction

All children, including children in homeschools or other nonpublic schools, must receive instruction in:

- basic communication skills including reading and writing, literature, and fine arts;
- math and science;
- social studies including history, geography, economics, government, and citizenship; and
- health and physical education.

([Minn. Stat. § 120A.22](#), subd. 9)

Statewide Testing Requirements

Federal and state law requires statewide assessments; in Minnesota, these tests are known as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs). States must test students annually in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 and in high school, and in science in specific grade bands. In Minnesota, students take the science assessments in grades 6, 8, and once in high school. ([Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 U.S.C. ch. 70](#); [Minn. Stat. § 120B.30](#)) School districts may administer additional districtwide or schoolwide assessments, up to ten hours per school year for students in grades one through six, and up to 11 hours for students in grades seven through 12. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.301](#))

Nationally Recognized College Entrance Exam

Students are encouraged to take a nationally recognized college entrance exam. Districts must pay exam fees for students in grade 11 or 12 who qualify for free or reduced-price meals one time to the extent funding is available for this purpose. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.30](#), subd. 1, para. (e))

English Language Proficiency

English learners take the ACCESS, an assessment used to measure English learners' progress toward meeting Minnesota standards for English language development. English learners who receive special education services and meet participation guidelines may take the Alternative ACCESS for ELLs.

Civics Test

Students enrolled in grade 9 in the 2017-2018 school year and later must take a civics test and correctly answer 30 of 50 questions from the U.S. naturalization test. A district cannot prevent a student from graduating or deny a diploma to a student who does not correctly answer 30 civics test questions. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.02](#), subd. 3)

No Required Score or Level of Proficiency

Students are not required to achieve a specified score or level of proficiency on statewide assessments in order to graduate from high school. All students receive test scores but do not pass or fail the statewide assessments. A student who receives a college-ready ACT or SAT score or meets a career and college-ready Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment benchmark is not required to take a remedial, noncredit course at a Minnesota State institution in that subject area. ([Minn. Stat. § 136F.302](#))

Circumstances for Not Participating in Testing

The Minnesota Department of Education must list the circumstances under which a student may be unable to take a required statewide test without being penalized. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.30](#), subd. 1b) The department must also publish a form that notifies parents of their right not to have their child participate in required assessments, and asks parents the basis for the decision. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.31](#), subd. 4a)

Career and College Readiness Assessments

The Department of Education, in consultation with Minnesota State, must establish benchmarks on the high school assessments that show a path toward career and college readiness. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.30](#), subd. 1)

Alternative Assessment for Students With Disabilities

Students with an individualized education program (IEP) may take the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS), an alternative assessment to the MCA. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.30](#), subd. 1a, para. (g))

Adult Basic Education Students

Adult basic education students must be given diagnostic information about the targeted interventions they need to seek postsecondary education or employment without need for postsecondary remediation. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.30](#), subd. 1, para. (f))

Health-related Education

School districts must develop and implement a program targeted to adolescents to prevent and reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections and diseases. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.23](#), subd. 1)

Physical Education

Students must satisfactorily complete statewide physical education standards. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.021](#), subd. 1, para. (c))

CPR Instruction

Students must receive onetime CPR and automatic external defibrillator instruction as part of the grade 7 to 12 curriculum. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.236](#))

Early Graduation

A high school student who completes all required courses and meets all required standards may graduate early if the student, the student's parent, and school officials approve. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.07](#))

Review of Instructional Materials

A school district must adopt a procedure for parents and adult students to review instructional materials given to students. School personnel must make reasonable arrangements for alternative instruction if a parent or adult student objects to the content of the materials. Parents and adult students may provide alternative instruction if the school board fails to satisfy their concerns, but may not receive payment for their costs. School personnel may evaluate the quality of a student's work, but must not penalize the student merely because the student arranges alternative instruction. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.20](#))

Bilingual and Multilingual Certificates and Seals

School districts, charter schools, and nonpublic schools may award bilingual and multilingual certificates and seals to K-12 students who demonstrate a requisite level of proficiency in languages other than English, including American Sign Language and indigenous languages. Students who are eligible to receive a state seal may also receive elective world language credits, community services credits, and college foreign language credits. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.022](#), subd. 1b; [Laws 2014, ch. 272](#), art. 1, § 42) See [World Language Proficiency for High School Students](#), House Research Department, July 2015.

Discipline; Harassment and Bullying; Violence in Schools; Bus Privileges

Corporal Punishment; Reasonable Force

A teacher, principal, school employee, school bus driver, or district agent may use reasonable force when it is necessary to restrain a student or prevent bodily harm or death. A teacher or principal may also use reasonable force to correct a child. A school official who uses reasonable force within the exercise of lawful authority has a defense against criminal prosecution and civil liability. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.582; 609.06](#), subd. 1, cl. (6); [123B.25](#), para. (c))

A school official may not use corporal punishment to discipline a child. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.58](#)) Corporal punishment means hitting or spanking a person with or without an object, or using unreasonable physical force that causes bodily harm or substantial emotional harm.

Dismissal Generally

Dismissals from public school are generally governed by the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40 to 121A.56](#)) A dismissal is the denial of the current educational program to any pupil and includes an exclusion, expulsion, and suspension. The compulsory attendance law does not apply to regular education students during a dismissal. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.52](#))

Grounds for dismissal are the willful violation of reasonable, clearly defined school board regulations, significant disruptive conduct, or endangering persons or property. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.45](#), subd. 2) A student may be dismissed for a "willful violation" when the student is aware of a school policy and makes a deliberate, intentional decision to violate the policy. *In the*

Matter of the Expulsion of A.D. from United South Central Pub. Sch. No. 2134, 883 N.W.2d 251 (Minn. 2016).

A public school student is entitled to due process and equal protection guarantees when facing dismissal proceedings. Possible outcomes of a dismissal proceeding include exclusion, expulsion, or suspension. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.42](#)) A school must attempt to provide a student subject to dismissal with an alternative education program, except where the student creates an immediate and substantial danger to self or to surrounding persons or property. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.45](#), subd. 1) The alternative educational services must be adequate to allow a student to make progress towards meeting graduation standards and help prepare students for readmission. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.55](#))

A school's discipline policy must address students' inappropriate behavior and recognize the school's continuing responsibility to educate a student it dismisses. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.55](#))

Preschool and Prekindergarten Students

A public school-based preschool or prekindergarten program may exclude or expel a student only after using nonexclusionary discipline and only if there is an ongoing safety threat to the child or others. A preschool or prekindergarten student is not otherwise subject to dismissal. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.425](#))

Suspension

A student is suspended when the school administration prohibits a student from attending school for no more than ten days. A dismissal that lasts one day or less is not a suspension, except as provided in federal law for a student with a disability. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.41](#), subd. 10)

The U.S. Supreme Court declared that suspending a student from a public school requires procedural due process, including written or oral notice of the charges, an explanation of the evidence the authorities have, and an opportunity for the student to present his or her side of the story. These requirements do not include the right to counsel, a right to confront and cross-examine witnesses, or a right to call the student's own witnesses. *Goss v. Lopez*, [419 U.S. 565](#), 95 S. Ct. 729 (1975).

Under Minnesota law, a student is entitled to notice and a meeting with an administrator who will notify the student of the grounds for the suspension. A district must also give a student written notice of the grounds and other information, and make reasonable efforts to notify the parents of the suspension as soon as possible. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.46](#)) A school district may suspend a student for up to ten days, or 15 days if the student poses an immediate and substantial danger or the district is in the process of expelling the student. A suspension may include a readmission plan. A readmission plan must include, where appropriate, a provision to implement alternative educational services upon readmission. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.41](#), subd. 10)

Expulsion and Exclusion

An expulsion prohibits an enrolled student from attending school for up to 12 months from the date of expulsion, while an exclusion prevents a student from enrolling in school during that school year. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.41](#), subds. 4 and 5) The school must notify the student of his or her right of reinstatement within ten days of the end of the dismissal period. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.54](#))

A school district may not impose an exclusion or expulsion without giving a student a notice of intent to take action, including a complete statement of facts and appeal procedures, and an opportunity for a hearing. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.47](#))

A school must prepare an admission or readmission plan for a student who is expelled or excluded. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.47](#), subd. 14) The readmission plan must not obligate a parent to provide Ritalin or other similar medication to a child as a condition of readmission unless a health or safety emergency applies. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 125A.091](#), subd. 5; [260A.01](#), para. (b))

Firearms in School

A school board must expel for one year any student who brings a firearm to school. The board may modify this expulsion requirement on a case-by-case basis. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.44](#)) A school official must refer to the criminal justice or juvenile delinquency system any pupil who unlawfully brings a firearm to school. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.05](#); [609.66](#), subd. 1d)

Removal from Class or School

A student is removed from class when a teacher, principal, or other school district employee prohibits the student from attending a class or other activity period for up to five days. A district must adopt a policy stating the grounds and procedures for removal from class. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.61](#), subd. 1)

If a student willfully engages in disruptive, dangerous, or unsanctioned conduct, a school official may remove the student from class. A student who engages in assault or violent behavior must be removed from class immediately.

Removal from class is not considered a dismissal under the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.41](#), subd. 2; [121A.60](#); [121A.61](#)) School officials must meet with the parent of a student who has been removed from school more than ten times in one school year to determine the student's need for assessment or other services or whether the student should be assessed for a mental health disorder. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.45](#), subd. 3)

Physical Holding or Seclusion

Trained school staff may use physical holding or seclusion to restrain a student with a disability only in an emergency. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 125A.0941](#); [125A.0942](#), subd. 3)

Discipline off School Grounds

A school district may impose reasonable discipline on a student for misconduct on a bus, in a school parking lot, on a field trip, or at an extracurricular activity if the misconduct adversely affects the educational process. *In re Expulsion of Z.K. and S.K.*, 695 N.W.2d 656 (Minn. App. 2005) (citing *In re Expulsion of J.M. MDCFL* (Feb. 18, 1997)) (two students lured a third student away from the school and shot the student with a BB gun).

Tennessen Warning

The government must give individuals notice when collecting private or confidential information from them. This is called a Tennessen warning notice. A school official must give a student a Tennessen warning when asking the student for private or confidential information as part of a disciplinary investigation. Failing to give the warning prevents school officials from using that information to discipline the student, although the student can still be disciplined. (Minn. Stat. §§ 13.04, subd. 2; 13.05, subd. 4)

Student Disciplinary Records

A school must include disciplinary information when transmitting the education records of a student transferring to another school and must notify the student and the student's parent that it is transmitting the student's disciplinary records. (Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, subd. 7, para. (c); 34 C.F.R. § 99.34)

Revocation of Bus Riding Privileges

A district may revoke the bus riding privileges of any student who violates the district's school bus safety or student conduct policy. This is not considered an exclusion, expulsion, or suspension under the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act. (Minn. Stat. § 121A.59)

Sexual Harassment in Schools Prohibited

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination, and is prohibited by state and federal law. Educational sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that (1) is a term or condition of receiving education, (2) is used as a factor in decisions affecting a person's education, or (3) has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with a person's education. Educational sexual harassment can occur when school district employees, independent contractors, visitors to the school, or volunteers sexually harass students or when students sexually harass other students. (Minn. Stat. §§ 363A.03, subd. 43; 363A.13, subd. 1; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972)

Victims' Remedies

Under the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Franklin v. Gwinnet County Pub. Sch.*, 503 U.S. 60, 112 S. Ct. 1028 (1992), private individuals have the right to file lawsuits under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 claiming they have been victims of sex discrimination in school. Courts may award monetary damages as a remedy.

A student may not recover money damages for teacher-student sexual harassment unless a school district official with authority to institute corrective measures has actual notice of, and is deliberately indifferent to, the teacher's misconduct. *Gebser v. Lago Vista Indep. Sch. Dist.*, [524 U.S. 274](#), 118 S. Ct. 1989 (1998).

A school district was liable for failing to protect a student from years of bullying, including verbal, physical, and sexual harassment. *Patterson v. Hudson Area Sch.*, 551 F.3d 438 (6th Cir. 2009), cert. denied, 558 U.S. 880, 130 S. Ct. 299 (2009).

Student-on-Student Harassment

A student may recover money for student-on-student harassment if (1) school officials are deliberately indifferent to sexual harassment, (2) school officials have actual knowledge of the student-on-student harassment, and (3) the harassment is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it denies the harassed student access to educational opportunities or benefits provided by the school. *Davis v. Monroe County Bd. of Educ.*, [526 U.S. 629](#), 119 S. Ct. 1661 (1999).

Student Bullying

Public schools, including charter schools, must have a comprehensive student bullying policy. Student-on-student bullying is prohibited at school, at school functions and activities, and on school transportation, and covers students' use of electronic technology and communications at school, and elsewhere if such use materially and substantially disrupts student learning or the school environment. The law does not apply to homeschool and nonpublic school students unless the students voluntarily participate in public school activities, where they are subject to the same bullying policy as public school students participating in the activity. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.031](#)) See *Student Bullying Policy*, House Research Department, August 2014.

Student Hazing

Each school board must adopt a written hazing policy that applies to student behavior on and off school property and during and after school hours and includes reporting procedures and disciplinary consequences. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.69](#), subd. 3)

Possession of Dangerous Weapons on School Property

It is unlawful for any person to possess, store, keep, use, or brandish a dangerous weapon, a replica firearm, or a BB gun on elementary, middle, or secondary school property or on a school bus while students are being transported. The offense is punishable by either gross misdemeanor or felony penalties depending on the type of weapon and activity involved and whether the person is knowingly on school property. The law exempts certain activities from its scope, such as firearm safety courses and the possession of a weapon with the permission of the school principal. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.66](#), subd. 1d)

Reports of Dangerous Weapon Incidents on School Property

The Commissioner of Education must provide an electronic format for schools to report aggregate data on dangerous weapon incidents occurring on school property, the area surrounding school property, and in school buses while students are being transported. The form must include certain specified information about the incident, including the offender and victim involved in the incident, the cost of the incident to the school and the victim, and the school's response to the incident. The commissioner must compile and forward the information annually to the legislature and the public safety commissioner. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.06](#))

Use of Force Against School Officials

It is a gross misdemeanor to assault and inflict demonstrable bodily harm on a school official while the official is performing official duties. A similar assault against a nonschool official would be a misdemeanor-level offense. "School official" means a teacher, administrator, or other employee of a public or private school. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.2231](#), subd. 5)

Violence Prevention Education Programs

Minnesota law encourages all school districts to integrate a violence prevention program into their existing K-12 curricula. The law also directs the Commissioner of Education to assist school districts, on request, in developing and implementing such programs.

Notice of Violent Students

Teachers must be notified before a student with a history of violent behavior is placed in the teacher's classroom. Violent behavior includes documented physical assault of a district employee by a student. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.64](#)) A probation officer must notify the school principal if a student/juvenile is adjudicated delinquent for acts committed on school property, acts that would be criminal acts if committed by an adult, or acts that involve the possession or use of a dangerous weapon. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.171](#), subd. 3)

Crisis Management; School Safety Drills

School districts and charter schools must have a crisis management policy to address potential violent situations. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.035](#))

Public and private schools must have at least five school lockdown drills, five school fire drills, and one tornado drill. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.035; 121A.037](#))

For more on this discipline, dismissals, and other related topics, see [Student Discipline](#), House Research Department, December 2021.

Tobacco Use; Medications; Medical Cannabis

Tobacco and Electronic Cigarettes

No one may smoke or use tobacco or carry or use an activated electronic cigarette (also called an electronic delivery device) in a public school or charter school. The prohibition extends to all school facilities that a district owns, rents, or leases and all district vehicles. An exception exists for an adult member of an Indian tribe who lights tobacco as part of a traditional Indian ceremony. ([Minn. Stat. § 144.4165](#))

Asthma Inhalers

An asthmatic student may possess and use an asthma inhaler in school after demonstrating that the student can do so safely. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.221](#))

EpiPens

A student who is prescribed epinephrine auto-injectors for severe allergic reactions may possess or have immediate access to an EpiPen during the school day. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.2205](#))

Districts and schools may keep a supply of undesignated epinephrine. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.2207](#))

Nonprescription Pain Relievers in School

A secondary student may possess and use nonprescription pain relievers in school with a parent's written permission. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.222](#))

Medical Cannabis

State laws authorizing the use and possession of medical cannabis do not permit the use or possession of medical cannabis on a school bus or van or on the grounds of any preschool, primary school, or secondary school. ([Minn. Stat. § 152.23](#))

Children with Disabilities

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

A child may be eligible for special education services under the federal IDEA, which relies upon procedural safeguards to ensure appropriate educational services, or under Section 504, a federal law that bars discrimination on the basis of disability in federally funded programs. IDEA provides federal funding to states and school districts for expenses incurred in providing special education and related services to those children with disabilities covered by the act. To be eligible for this funding, states must provide a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) for all children with certain disabilities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is a broader, less prescriptive civil rights statute that covers some children with disabilities not served under IDEA who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. All districts must identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities. This "child find" mandate applies to public and private school children, highly mobile children, migrant

children, homeless children, and children who are wards of the state. (20 U.S.C. § 1412 (a)(3)) Federal law requires school districts to provide educational services to all children regardless of the severity of their handicap. *Timothy W. v. Rochester, N.H. Sch. Dist.*, 875 F.2d 954 (1st Cir. 1989), cert. denied, 493 U.S. 983, 110 S. Ct. 519 (1989).

Availability of Services and Procedural Requirements under State Law

Each school district must provide appropriate nondiscriminatory instruction and services for children with disabilities from birth through age 21 or until the child completes secondary school, whichever comes first. (Minn. Stat. § 125A.03) Students with disabilities who complete secondary school or its equivalent must be granted a high school diploma. (Minn. Stat. § 125A.04)

State and federal law guarantees procedural safeguards and parental participation in the assessment and educational placement of children with disabilities. (Minn. Stat. § 125A.091; 34 C.F.R. part 300) To receive such services, a child must be found (1) eligible for special education services according to statewide eligibility criteria, and (2) in need of such services. (Minn. Stat. § 125A.02; 34 C.F.R. § 300.8) If school district personnel find that a child meets the eligibility criteria and is in need of special education services, a team that includes the child's parents and appropriately trained school personnel will, after a comprehensive evaluation, develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that contains, among other things, annual educational goals for the child. Each district, at the beginning of each school year, must have in effect an IEP for each child with a disability. The child's IEP team may authorize certain Medical Assistance services for the child. (Minn. Stat. §§ 125A.03; 125A.08; 256B.0625, subd. 26; 34 C.F.R. § 300.704(c)(8))

Level of Service

The IDEA requires that a special education student receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), as enunciated in *Board of Education v. Rowley*, 458 U.S. 176, 102 S. Ct. 3034 (1982), (requiring that an IEP be reasonably calculated to enable the child to receive educational benefits). The 8th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the IDEA requires only that children benefit from an education and allows educators to determine appropriate teaching methods. *E.S. v. Indep. Sch. Dist. No. 196*, 135 F.3d 566 (8th Cir. 1998).

Related Services

A district must provide children with related services, which encompass supportive services that "may be required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education." (20 U.S.C. § 1401 (26)) Services provided by a physician (other than for diagnostic and evaluation purposes) are subject to the medical services exclusion, but services that can be provided by a nurse or qualified layperson are not. *Cedar Rapids Cmty. Sch. Dist. v. Garret F.*, 526 U.S. 66, 119 S. Ct. 992 (1999); *Irving Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Tatro*, 468 U.S. 883, 104 S. Ct. 3371 (1984). A school district may be obligated to pay for a residential treatment setting as a related service in order to ensure that an emotionally disturbed child receives the educational benefit to which the child is entitled under the IDEA. *Wayzata Indep. Sch. Dist. No. 284 v. A.C.* 258 F.3d 769 (8th Cir. 2001).

Early Childhood Choice

A parent of a child with a disability not yet enrolled in kindergarten and not open-enrolled in another district may ask the resident district to enter into a tuition agreement to allow the child to attend an early childhood program in the nonresident district chosen by the child's family if certain conditions are met. ([Minn. Stat. § 125A.13](#), para. (b))

Early Intervention

Academic and behavioral interventions in general education are available to help students at academic or behavioral risk and to prevent inappropriate referrals to special education. A K-12 student identified as being unable to read at grade level must be provided with alternative instruction. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 120B.12](#), subd. 2; [125A.56](#))

Dyslexia

Students with dyslexia must meet state and federal eligibility criteria in order to qualify for special education services. ([Minn. Stat. § 125A.01](#), subd. 2)

Children Not Yet Eligible for Special Education

In certain circumstances, children who are in the regular education program and have not been determined to need special education may still be covered by IDEA procedural protections relating to suspensions and expulsions. ([34 C.F.R. § 300.534](#))

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Parents are encouraged to use alternative dispute resolution processes to resolve disputes related to educating a child with disabilities. ([Minn. Stat. § 125A.091](#), subd. 6)

Participation in Statewide Assessments

Children with disabilities must be included in state- and district-wide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations where necessary. Accommodations may include variations in the setting, timing, response, and scheduling that take into account a child's disabilities. ([34 C.F.R. § 300.160](#))

Supplementary Services for Extracurricular Activities

School districts must provide supplementary aids and services to students with disabilities for extracurricular and nonacademic activities included in an IEP, regardless of whether the activity is required for the student's education. *Indep. Sch. Dist. No. 12, Centennial v. Minnesota Dept. of Educ.*, 788 N.W.2d 907 (Minn. 2010). See also Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, [34 C.F.R. § 104.37](#) (districts must offer qualified students with disabilities access to extracurricular athletic activities equal to that of students without disabilities).

Restrictive Procedures

“Restrictive procedures” is the use of physical holding or seclusion in an emergency. ([Minn. Stat. § 125A.0941](#)) Qualified and trained professionals may use restrictive procedures on a child with disabilities only in response to behavior that constitutes an emergency and only if the procedures are consistent with applicable statutory requirements governing the use of such procedures. ([Minn. Stat. § 125A.0942](#), subd. 2)

Inclusion; Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Children with disabilities must be educated in the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent appropriate. ([34 C.F.R. § 300.114](#)) Criteria for determining whether the regular classroom is the LRE include the potential benefits to the child, potential disruption to the classroom, and the cost of aids and services. *A.W. v. Northwest R-1 Sch. Dist.*, 813 F.2d 158 (8th Cir. 1987)

Suspension, Exclusion, and Expulsion

When a child with an IEP is suspended from school for misbehavior that is unrelated to the pupil’s disabilities, the district must provide the child with special education and related services. A district must begin reviewing a child’s IEP and the relationship between the child’s disability and behavior and determine the appropriateness of the child’s education plan before expelling or excluding the child. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.43](#))

The IDEA prohibits school districts from cutting off services to any child with a disability for disciplinary reasons. This requirement applies to children with disabilities excluded from school for more than ten days. A suspension of fewer than ten days is a removal from the current placement rather than a change of placement. ([34 C.F.R. § 300.530](#))

The district must review the child’s IEP after five consecutive school days of suspension or ten school days if the child is suspended for ten or more cumulative days in the same school year. *Honig v. Doe*, [484 U.S. 305](#), 108 S. Ct. 592 (1988). ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.43](#))

Firearms or Illegal Drugs in School; Alternative Placements

A district may unilaterally place a child with disabilities in an alternative setting for up to 45 days if the child carries a weapon to school or a school function; uses, possesses, sells, or solicits illegal drugs at school or a school function; or inflicts serious bodily injury on another person at school or on school premises. In addition, a court may order a change of placement. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.43; 121A.44; 34 C.F.R. § 300.530\(g\)](#))

Education Records

A district may not limit the frequency with which a disabled child’s parent or guardian inspects the child’s education records. A district may charge a fee for reproducing the education records unless the fee impairs the ability of the parent or guardian to inspect or review the records. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.32](#), subd. 10)

Sympathomimetic Medications

A parent, after consulting with professional providers, may agree or disagree to provide a child with sympathomimetic drugs (Ritalin or other similar drugs) unless a health or safety emergency applies. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 125A.091](#), subd. 5, para. (b); [144.344](#))

Transfer of Parental Rights at Age of Majority

By federal law, when a student reaches age 18, the procedural rights for special education transfer to the student. ([34 C.F.R. § 300.520](#))

Participation in Athletics; Title IX

State Discrimination Law; Opportunity to Use Ice Arenas

All educational institutions must provide equal opportunity for both sexes to participate in athletic programs. Depending upon the grade level, past circumstances, extent of interest, and the particular sport, sports programs may offer single-sex teams in some cases. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.04](#)) Any school district that operates and maintains an ice arena must offer equal sports opportunities for male and female students to use the ice arena. ([Minn. Stat. § 126C.45](#))

Federal Discrimination Law

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits sex discrimination in federally assisted interscholastic athletic programs, specifies what educational institutions must do to avoid losing federal funds. ([20 U.S.C. § 1681](#)) Factors used to determine whether equal athletic opportunities are available for members of both sexes include: accommodation of athletic interests and abilities of both sexes; equipment and supplies; schedule of game and practice time; coaching and academic tutoring opportunities; and locker rooms and other facilities. ([34 C.F.R. § 106.41](#)) Third-party school employees, including students' athletic coaches, who report gender discrimination on students' behalf, may have a private right of action under Title IX. *Jackson v. Birmingham Bd. of Educ.*, [544 U.S. 167](#), 125 S. Ct. 1497 (2005).

Title IX specifically prohibits discrimination based on pregnancy. (Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, "Dear Colleague" letter, June 25, 2013.)

Districts may provide nonvocational voluntary single-sex classes or extracurricular activities under Title IX if the education is substantially related to an important governmental or educational objective. ([34 C.F.R. § 106.34\(b\)](#))

Transgender Students

The Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA) prohibits discrimination in the "full utilization of or benefit from any educational institution" on the basis of sexual orientation, which includes being transgender. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 363A.03](#), subd. 44; [363A.14](#)) The Minnesota Court of Appeals has held that the "full utilization" of schools includes use of school facilities, including locker rooms. In that case, a school district required a transgender student to use a different locker-room facility than the one used by students of the gender with which the student identified.

The court allowed the student to sue the school district for violating the MHRA and the equal protection clause of the Minnesota Constitution. *N.H. v. Anoka-Hennepin Sch. Dist.*, 950 N.W.2d 553 (Minn. Ct. App. 2020).

Discrimination based on transgender status may also violate Title IX. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education issued guidance stating that schools must provide transgender students with access to bathrooms, locker rooms, and sex-segregated classes that match their gender identity, even if that differs from their sex at birth. Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education and the Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice “Dear Colleague” letter, May 13, 2016. In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education withdrew this guidance. (Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education and the Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice “Dear Colleague” letter, Feb. 22, 2017) The U.S. Supreme Court has not ruled on this issue.

Equal Protection Clause

Courts have applied the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment to allow females to try out for male teams in contact and noncontact sports, but have not found a right for females to participate on male teams when there is a separate female team available. See, *Brendan v. Indep. Sch. Dist.* 742, 477 F.2d 1292 (8th Cir. 1973); *Leffel v. Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Ass’n.*, 444 F.Supp. 1117 (E.D. Wis. 1978); *O’Connor v. Bd. of Educ., Dist. #23*, 645 F.2d 578 (7th Cir. 1981).

Schools must show an “exceedingly persuasive” justification for treating males and females differently, meaning the differential treatment must serve important government objectives and the discriminatory means employed are substantially related to achieving those objectives. The Eighth Circuit has found that restricting participation on a dance team to girls only is unconstitutional. The all-girls team was intended to remedy the historic underrepresentation of girls in high school athletics, a problem that the court found no longer existed. *D.M. v. Minnesota High School League*, 917 F.3d 994 (8th Cir. 2019).

Right to Participate

Students generally have no claim of entitlement to participate in extracurricular activities. *Brown v. Wells*, 181 N.W.2d 708 (Minn. 1970). Participation in extracurricular activities is not a constitutionally protected property interest and is not of equal importance with the right to an education. Without a protected property interest, there are generally no due process requirements in dismissing a student from a team; however, some courts have said that the minimal due process standards in *Goss v. Lopez* must be met. *Palmer v. Merluzzi*, 868 F.2d 90 (3d Cir. 1989). A federal court in Minnesota found that even if *Goss* applies, participating in sports is only one aspect of the educational process, and a student that otherwise participates in the educational process is not denied a property right protected by due process. *De La Torre v. Minnesota High School League*, 202 F. Supp. 3d 1046 (D. Minn. 2016).

Athletic programs not offered for credit are not included in the statutory protections under the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.56](#), subd. 2)

Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) Activities

Any student in grades 7 to 12 who wishes to participate in a high school league-sponsored activity must be under 20 years old or 22 years old for students in an adapted athletics program, attend school regularly, and be fully enrolled in the school according to Minnesota Department of Education criteria. Homeschools need not become MSHSL members to participate in MSHSL events. (MSHSL Bylaws 101.00, 102.00)

Ban on Recruiting Student Athletes

A state-sponsored high school athletic league may prohibit school officials and coaches from contacting prospective student athletes to recruit them for their athletic programs. *Tennessee Secondary Sch. Athletic Ass'n v. Brentwood Acad.*, 551 U.S. 291, 127 S. Ct. 2489 (2007).

Transfer Students

A transfer student is eligible for varsity competition if the student withdraws from the previous school in good standing and: (1) the student enrolls in 9th grade for the first time; (2) the student's parents move to a different district; (3) a court orders a change in a student's residence; (4) a student of divorced parents sharing joint custody moves once to reside with the other parent; or (5) a student's parents move to Minnesota for the first time. (MSHSL Bylaws 111.00) The student's school initially determines eligibility and the student may appeal under the high school league's fair hearing procedures.

A student with an IEP or Section 504 plan who seeks to transfer between schools to overcome barriers to academic success is eligible to participate at the new school. Special rules also apply for a student who enrolls in or is readmitted to a recovery-focused high school after successfully completing a program to treat alcohol or substance abuse, mental illness, or emotional disturbance. ([Minn. Stat. § 128C.02](#), subd. 5)

Homeschool Students

School districts must provide resident homeschool students with an equal opportunity to participate in the extracurricular activities of the district. ([Minn. Stat. § 123B.49](#), subd. 4) All students participating in extracurricular activities must meet the same eligibility criteria. (MSHSL Bylaws 104.00)

Student Athlete Concussions

Among other requirements, a qualified health care provider must evaluate and grant written authorization before a student athlete who is diagnosed with or suspected of sustaining a concussion is allowed to return to play. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.38](#))

Public School Fee Law

Prohibited Fees

Public school education is free to all eligible students. School boards may not charge fees for necessary goods and services such as instructional materials and supplies, required library books, required school activities, lockers, graduation caps and gowns, and bus fees to students who live more than two miles from school. A school board may require payment of transportation services not required by law if guidelines are established to guarantee that no one is denied transportation based on inability to pay. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 123B.35; 123B.36; 123B.37](#)) See [Minnesota's Public School Fee Law](#), House Research Department, July 2019.

Authorized Fees

School districts may require students to pay for certain school-related costs specified in statute, such as fees for school uniforms, extracurricular activities, security deposits, personal athletic equipment, supplementary field trips, musical instruments, driver education, and personal stationery supplies. A board may charge fees for books a student loses or destroys. School districts must charge the same admission fees for extracurricular activities to public school students and students attending a homeschool with five or fewer students. School districts must hold a public hearing before imposing a fee that is not authorized or prohibited by statute. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 123B.36; 123B.38](#))

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against a poor family's equal protection challenge to a North Dakota law allowing some school districts to charge a busing fee while providing students in other districts with free transportation. *Kadrmas v. Dickinson Pub. Sch.*, [487 U.S. 450](#), 108 S. Ct. 2481 (1988).

Withholding Grades or Diploma

A school district may not withhold the grades or diploma of a student who fails to pay student fees. ([Minn. Stat. § 123B.37](#), subd. 2)

Access to Students' Education Records; Student Surveys

The two main laws that affect the privacy and disclosure of education records are the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") and its associated regulations ([20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99](#)), and section 13.32 of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act ([Minn. Stat. § 13.32](#)).

Limit on Disclosure

Schools must obtain written permission from a parent or a student over 18 before disclosing information in education records unless a statutory exception applies. For example, an outbreak of H1N1 in a school may constitute a "health and safety emergency" that would allow school officials to disclose personally identifiable information about students on a case-by-case basis, consistent with the circumstances of the threat to students' health. ([20 U.S.C. § 1232g](#))

(b)(1) and (2); [34 CFR § 99.36](#); [Minn. Stat. § 13.32](#), subd. 3) See [Federal and State Laws Governing Access to Student Records](#), House Research Department, December 2015.

Right to Inspect and Review

School districts annually must publish and distribute or post the procedures by which individuals may access a student's records. Parents and students have the right to inspect and review education records within ten working days. Schools are not required to provide copies of materials in education records unless parents or students cannot inspect the records personally. Schools may charge a fee for providing copies of education records and remote access to data. ([34 C.F.R. § 99.10\(a\)](#); [Minn. Stat. §§ 13.03; 13.04; 13.32](#), subd. 1)

Right to Request That a School Correct Records

Parents and students have the right to request that a school correct education records they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If a school refuses to change the records, parents and students have the right to a formal hearing. If the school still refuses to correct the records after the hearing, the parent or student may place written comments about the contested information in the records. ([20 U.S.C. § 1232g](#) (a)(2)) Parents and students may also challenge the accuracy of their educational records under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.04](#), subd. 4.)

Access by Parents to Student Records

A minor student may request that a school deny the student's parents access to educational data about the student. If a school official reasonably concludes that disclosing the information to the parent or guardian could lead to physical or emotional harm to the minor, the official may withhold the data. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 13.02](#), subd. 8; [13.32](#), subd. 2) Education data include the health services of a school nurse working in a public school setting. If the data concern certain medical, dental, mental, or other health services, the school official may release the data if failing to inform the parent would seriously jeopardize the minor's health. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 144.341](#) to [144.347](#)) Under state rule, school officials must not deny parents access to a student's education records unless the student is a full-time college student or is 18 years old. ([Minn. Rules, part 1205.0500](#), subp. 4) The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) gives parents access to a student's college records if the student is a dependent for federal tax purposes. ([34 CFR § 99.31\(a\)\(8\)](#))

Student Transfers

School districts, charter schools, and nonpublic schools that receive public services or aid must transmit a transfer student's educational records within ten business days, upon request, to the school district, charter school, or nonpublic school enrolling the student. The district or school transmitting the records must include in the records information about formal disciplinary actions taken against the student and inform the student and the student's parents that the student's disciplinary records are being transferred. A principal must remove and destroy a probable cause notice included in a student's records if certain conditions are met. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.22](#), subd. 7)

Directory Information

Directory information is defined in federal privacy law (FERPA, [34 C.F.R. § 99.3](#)) and refers to certain education data available to the public. Common examples of directory information include a student's name, address, and telephone number. Schools must tell parents and students that they have the right to refuse to let the school designate information about the student as directory information. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.32](#), subd. 5) See [Access to Student Records](#), House Research Department, December 2015.

Student Surveys

Districts must notify parents and students over 18 that their prior written consent is required before a student participates in a survey that concerns one or more of eight protected areas if the survey is partially or wholly federally funded. Other surveys require an annual notice to parents. ([20 U.S.C. § 1232h](#); [34 C.F.R. Part 99](#))

Parents may opt their students out of surveys conducted to collect personal information on students. Districts and charter schools must not penalize students who opt out of participating in a survey. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.065](#))

Juvenile Justice System

School districts may disclose private educational data to appropriate juvenile justice authorities if: (1) the data concern the ability of the juvenile justice system to effectively serve the student before adjudication, and the authorities' written request for the data certifies that the data will not be disclosed without the parent's written consent except as authorized by law; or (2) the information about the behavior of the student who poses a risk of harm is reasonably necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals. The district must keep the request and a record of the release in the student's file. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.32](#), subd. 3, paras. (i), (l))

Military Recruiters

Secondary schools must release to military recruiting officers the names, addresses, and home telephone numbers of 11th and 12th grade students within 60 days of receiving a request for the information unless parents or students refuse to consent to release the information. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.32](#), subd. 5a)

Student Employee; Criminal History Background Check

A school hiring authority may request a Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) criminal history background check on a person who seeks to work as a student employee. ([Minn. Stat. § 123B.03](#), subd. 1, para. (c))

Welfare System

With the informed consent of a parent or legal guardian, and upon request to the chief administrative officer of the school, county personnel in the welfare system may access

education data in order to coordinate services for a student or family. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.32](#), subd. 12.)

Law Enforcement and Court Records on Students

Controlled Substances

A law enforcement agency must notify the chemical preassessment team in a school within two weeks of a drug incident in which the agency has probable cause to believe that an enrolled student committed a controlled substance crime. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.28](#))

Court Disposition Order

Principals receive the court disposition order on any public or private elementary or secondary school student who is adjudicated delinquent for (1) an act committed on school property, or (2) an act that would be one of a list of specified felonies if committed by an adult.

The order must be kept in the student's record, may not be released outside the school district other than to another school district to which the student is transferring, and must be destroyed when the juvenile graduates or at the end of the school year after she or he turns 23, whichever is earlier. The school may obtain additional information from the probation officer with parental consent. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.75; 260B.171](#))

Law Enforcement Records

A law enforcement agency may notify the principal or chief administrative officer of a juvenile's school if there is probable cause to believe the juvenile has committed an offense, the victim is a student or staff member of the school, and notice is reasonably necessary to protect the victim. Notice is not given if it would jeopardize an investigation.

Data from this notice must be destroyed when the juvenile graduates or reaches the age of 23, whichever is earlier. In a county where the county attorney operates a diversion program, a law enforcement agency or county attorney may provide information on participants or juveniles being considered as participants, to school officials and to public or private social service agencies participating in the program. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.171](#))

In-School Interviews

Law enforcement and child protective services personnel may need a warrant, court order, or parent consent to interview a student on school grounds about suspected child abuse. *Camreta v. Greene*, [563 U.S. 692](#), 131 S. Ct. 2020 (2011). Police must factor the age of the student they intend to question into their decision about giving Miranda warnings. *J.D.B. v. North Carolina*, [564 U.S. 261](#), 131 S. Ct. 2394 (2011).

School Resource Officers (SROs)

SROs who help school officials investigate serious forms of student misconduct may affect applicable legal standards. A "reasonable suspicion" standard applies when school officials

search a student on school grounds. A higher “probable cause” standard applies when a law enforcement search occurs on school grounds. See *Fourth Amendment section on page 51*. SROs must give students a Miranda warning if they are collecting criminal investigative data on part of a custodial interrogation.

Rights of Nonpublic School Students

Educational Materials and Student Support Services

School districts must provide all students not attending public schools, including those in homeschools, with textbooks, individualized instructional or cooperative learning materials, and standardized tests. All material must be secular in nature and cannot be used for religious instruction or worship. A district must provide the same health services to students of nonpublic schools as it provides to public school students. Public secondary schools must offer nonpublic secondary students guidance and counseling services. Allotments for nonpublic school costs must not exceed average expenditures for the same public school services. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 123B.40 to 123B.48](#))

Public school teachers may provide Title I instructional services to eligible nonpublic school students on nonpublic school premises when the program contains adequate safeguards to prevent violating the First Amendment ban on establishing a state religion (Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides federal financial assistance to state and local education agencies to help at-risk students meet state academic requirements). *Agostini v. Felton*, [521 U.S. 203](#), 117 S. Ct. 1997 (1997).

A school district may provide an interpreter to a deaf student attending a parochial school without violating First Amendment limits on government support for religion. *Zobrest v. Catalina Foothills Sch. Dist.*, [509 U.S. 1](#), 113 S. Ct. 2462 (1993). The U.S. Supreme Court did not say whether the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires public schools to pay for such assistance.

Nonpublic schools may use federal funds for computer equipment and other instructional materials. *Mitchell v. Helms*, [530 U.S. 793](#), 120 S. Ct. 2530 (2000).

Children with Disabilities

A child with a disability may enroll in a nonpublic school when either the child’s parents place the child there, or both the child’s parents and the child’s resident district agree to place the child in the nonpublic school. If the district agrees to place the child in a nonpublic school, the district pays the cost of the placement.

A parent may unilaterally place a child in a nonpublic school and seek tuition reimbursement from the school district. School districts may be required to reimburse parents for the cost of private special education services if the district fails to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and the private school placement is appropriate, regardless of whether the child previously received special education or related services through the public school. *Forest Grove Sch. Dist. v. T.A.*, [557 U.S. 230](#), 129 S. Ct. 2484 (2009). The IDEA does not require public

schools to pay for special education services at nonpublic schools where parents place the student at the nonpublic school and timely appropriate services are available to the student at the public schools. These students also do not have a right to receive some or all of the special education and related services they would receive if enrolled in the public schools. However, the district may provide special education services, known as “equitable services” at the nonpublic school under a services plan. ([34 C.F.R. §§ 300.137, 300.138.](#))

A school district may provide special instruction and services to a unilaterally placed child with disabilities at the nonpublic school building, a public school, or other neutral site. A school district must provide instruction in core curriculum at a public school site. ([Minn. Stat. § 126C.19](#), subd. 4, para. (b))

Separate School District

Having the state create a separate school district to serve a religious enclave is tantamount to allocating political power on a religious criterion and violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. *Bd. of Educ. of Kiryas Joel Village Sch. Dist. v. Grumet*, [512 U.S. 687](#), 114 S. Ct. 2481 (1994). However, opening a school primarily attended by religious students and granting parents’ request to forego using technology in the classroom is permitted where the school is open to all students, the curriculum is the same curriculum used in other schools, the district ordinarily grants parents’ requests for an accommodation, and the decision to open the school is based on financial concerns. *Stark v. Indep. Sch. Dist. No. 640*, 123 F.3d 1068 (8th Cir. 1997).

Transportation

School districts are required to provide “equal transportation” for nonpublic school students within the district’s boundaries to the same extent they are required to provide transportation for public school students. A district may provide transportation to a nonpublic school located in another district, but the nonpublic school must pay the cost of the transportation. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 123B.84; 123B.86](#))

Education Tax Deduction and Credit

A taxpayer may deduct up to \$1,625 for the costs of tuition, textbooks, transportation, and other education expenses, for each qualifying child in kindergarten to grade six and \$2,500 for each qualifying child in grades seven to 12. The costs of religious books and materials and the expenses of participating in extracurricular activities at nonpublic schools may not be deducted. ([Minn. Stat. § 290.0132](#), subd. 4)

If the family’s income is under \$33,500, a taxpayer may claim a credit of \$1,000 per qualifying child for 75 percent of all education expenses allowed under the deduction except nonpublic school tuition. The credit phases out for families with income over \$33,500, depending on the number of qualifying children. ([Minn. Stat. § 290.0674](#)) See House Research Department [Income Tax Deductions and Credits for Public and Nonpublic Education in Minnesota](#), June 2017, and [The K-12 Education Deduction and Credit: An Overview](#), January 2017.

Extracurricular Activities

School districts must charge public school students and homeschool students the same admission fees for extracurricular activities. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 123B.36](#), subd. 1, para. (b), cl. (2); [123B.49](#), subd. 4)

Education Records

A nonpublic school that receives state aid must transmit the education records of a transferring student within ten business days, upon request, to the school enrolling the student. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.22](#), subd. 7, para. (a))

Health-Related Education

Nonpublic schools may participate in a district program to prevent and reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections and diseases. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.23](#))

First Amendment Rights

Freedom of Speech

Students retain their First Amendment right to freedom of speech in school if their speech does not result in “material disruption” of the education process. The test for determining the degree of disruption is “whether the manner of expression is basically incompatible with the normal activity of a particular place at a particular time.” *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, [393 U.S. 503](#), 509, 89 S. Ct. 733 (1969). A school may regulate speech that interferes with or disrupts the work and discipline of the school, and discipline for student harassment and bullying. *Kowalski v. Berkeley County Sch.*, 652 F.3d 565 (4th Cir. 2011); (high school senior given ten-day suspension for ridiculing another student on MySpace).

School officials may discipline students for offensively lewd or indecent speech. A student’s speech containing “explicit sexual metaphors” is not protected by the First Amendment. *Bethel Sch. Dist. No. 403 v. Fraser*, [478 U.S. 675](#), 106 S. Ct. 3159 (1986). The U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals decided school officials may not ban speech “plausibly” containing “social or political” commentary unless the speech is “plainly lewd.” *B.H. ex rel. Hawk v. Easton Area Sch. Dist.*, 725 F.3d 293 (3d Cir. 2013) (middle school students wearing “I Heart Boobies” breast cancer awareness bracelets protected under the First Amendment). However, a federal trial court in Indiana concluded the opposite in *J.A. v. Fort Wayne Cmty. Schs.*, No. 1:12-CV-155, 2013 WL #4479229 (N.D. Ind. Aug. 20, 2013) (“I ♥ Boobies” bracelet contained sexual innuendo that was vulgar within the school context).

School officials may restrict student speech at a school-sponsored event when they reasonably believe the speech promotes illegal drug use. *Morse v. Frederick*, [551 U.S. 393](#), 127 S. Ct. 2618 (2007).

School officials have the right to impose reasonable restrictions on student speech in school-sponsored student papers as long as their action is reasonably related to an educational purpose. *Hazelwood Sch. Dist. v. Kuhlmeier*, [484 U.S. 260](#), 108 S. Ct. 562 (1988). The U.S.

Supreme Court declined to review the application of *Hazelwood* to a student council election in which school officials disqualified a student from the election for making “discourteous” and “rude” remarks about the assistant principal during a speech at a school-sponsored assembly. *Poling v. Murphy*, 872 F.2d 757 (6th Cir. 1989), cert. denied, 493 U.S. 1021, 110 S. Ct. 723 (1990). School officials disqualified a student from serving as junior class president after he handed out condoms bearing his election slogan “Adam Henerey, the Safe Choice” on election morning. *Henerey ex rel. v. City of St. Charles Sch. Dist.*, 200 F.3d 1128 (8th Cir. 1999).

Federal appellate courts disagree about whether school officials can require students to get permission from the principal before distributing noneducation materials. *Burch v. Barker*, 861 F.2d 1149 (9th Cir. 1988) (policy curtailing communication among students violates First Amendment); *Taylor v. Roswell Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 713 F.3d 25 (10th Cir. 2013) (students banned from distributing rubber “fetus” dolls as part of anti-abortion activities).

A school district violated a lesbian student’s First Amendment free expression rights when it refused to allow her to attend prom with a same-sex date and wear a tuxedo instead of a dress. *McMillen v. Itawamba Cnty. Sch. Dist.*, 702 F. Supp. 2d 699 (N.D. Miss., 2010).

Pledge of Allegiance

All public school students must recite the pledge of allegiance at least once per week; a student may decline to participate in the recitation. A school board may annually vote to waive this requirement. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.11](#), subd. 3)

Internet Access and Use

To regulate students’ access to and use of the Internet, school districts must show that they have the authority to regulate students’ Internet use and that district actions satisfy constitutional standards for free speech. See *Tinker*, [393 U.S. 503](#) (1969); *Fraser* [478 U.S. 675](#) (1986); *Hazelwood*, [484 U.S. 260](#) (1988).

Public schools that receive federal technology aid must adopt Internet safety policies that include using filters to protect children against obscene, pornographic, or harmful material. (Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) Pub. L. No. 106-554 (2000))

Student Speech off School Grounds

Courts of appeals have reached different conclusions about schools’ authority to discipline students for off-campus speech. The Eighth Circuit has applied a “reasonable foreseeability” test, holding that *Tinker* applies if it is reasonably foreseeable that the student’s speech will reach the school community and cause a substantial disruption to the educational setting. *S.J.W. ex rel. Wilson v. Lee’s Summit R-7 Sch. Dist.*, 696 F.3d 771 (8th Cir. 2012) (students disciplined for blog posts containing offensive and racist comments, as well as sexually explicit and degrading comments about particular female classmates). In contrast, the Third Circuit has held that *Tinker* does not apply to off-campus speech, which is therefore protected by the First Amendment. *B.L. v. Mahanoy Area Sch. Dist.*, 964 F.3d 170 (3rd Cir. 2020) (student disciplined for crude Snapchat post that upset other students and was about an extracurricular activity).

The school district in the Third Circuit case has asked the Supreme Court to resolve the split among the courts of appeals.

Speech Regarding Sexual Orientation

School administrators have the discretion to limit student speech on controversial topics that crosses the line between hurt feelings and bullying, intimidation, and provocation that substantially disrupts the educational environment. The circuit courts are divided on what type of anti-gay speech schools can prohibit as bullying.

The U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in *Harper v. Poway Unified Sch. Dist.*, 445 F.3d 1166 (9th Cir. 2006), vacated on other grounds as moot, [549 U.S. 1262](#) (2007), held that a school could likely prohibit a student under the First Amendment from wearing a shirt that read “Homosexuality is Shameful ‘Romans 1:27’.”

The U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in *Zamecnik v. Indian Prairie Sch. Dist. No. 204*, 636 F.3d 874 (7th Cir. 2011) held that a school district could not enforce a ban on anti-gay T-shirts that read “Be Happy, Not Gay” because the message was “tepidly negative,” not truly “derogatory,” and did not satisfy the *Tinker* substantial disruption standard.

True Threat Speech

True threat speech is not protected by the First Amendment. A “true threat” is a “statement that a reasonable recipient would have interpreted as a serious expression of an intent to harm or cause injury to another.” *Riehm v. Engelking*, 538 F.3d 952 (8th Cir. 2008) To determine what constitutes a true threat, school officials may consider, among other things, the listener’s reaction to the threat, whether the threat was conditional, whether the speaker made the threat directly to the victim, whether the speaker had previously threatened the victim, and whether the recipient reasonably believed the speaker to be violent. In *Riehm*, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a student essay describing a student’s murder of a teacher and a suicide was a “true threat” and not protected speech. A student who sent an instant message on his home computer to a classmate on her home computer saying he was going to get a gun and kill certain students made a true threat. *D.J.M. v. Hannibal Pub. Sch. Dist. No. 60*, 647 F.3d 754 (8th Cir. 2011).

Prayer in the Schools

The U.S. Supreme Court declared that a district-sanctioned recitation of a nondenominational prayer at the beginning of each school day violated the First Amendment prohibition against establishment of religion. *Engel v. Vitale*, [370 U.S. 421](#), 82 S. Ct. 1261 (1962). The Court ruled that a law authorizing a short period for “voluntary or silent prayer” is also unconstitutional, but indicated that allowing a moment of silence probably would not violate the U.S. Constitution. *Wallace v. Jaffree*, [472 U.S. 38](#), 105 S. Ct. 2479 (1985). The Court held that an invocation and a benediction at public school graduation ceremonies violate the Establishment Clause. *Lee v. Weisman*, [505 U.S. 577](#), 112 S. Ct. 2649 (1992). Lower courts have permitted a student-led graduation prayer where students decide on the type of graduation speech without faculty participation or review. *Adler v. Duval Cnty. Sch. Bd.*, 250 F.3d 1330 (11th Cir. 2001). Student-

led, student-initiated prayers at school-sponsored athletic events are prohibited. *Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe*, [530 U.S. 290](#), 120 S. Ct. 2266 (2000).

A moment of silence may be observed in school. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.10](#))

Religious Observances

A school may observe holidays that have both a religious and secular basis without violating the First Amendment’s ban on establishing a state religion. The Eighth Circuit found permissible those music, art, literature, and drama programs having religious themes, and the temporary display of religious symbols associated with religious holidays. *Florey v. Sioux Falls Sch. Dist.* 49-5, 619 F.2d 1311 (8th Cir. 1980).

A fifth grade student distributed flyers inviting her classmates to a Christmas party at her church. The court did not find evidence that distributing the invitations would substantially disrupt the school environment or interfere with the rights of others. *K.A. v. Pocono Mountain Sch. Dist.*, 710 F.3d 99 (3rd Cir. 2013)

A district must make reasonable efforts to accommodate a student who wishes to be absent from school for a religious observance. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.35](#))

Release Time

In *Zorach v. Clauston*, [343 U.S. 306](#), 72 S. Ct. 679 (1952), the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a “release-time” program in which public school students were allowed to leave school for religious purposes. The court found that no religious instruction occurred on school property, no public funds were expended to support the program, and students had parental permission to attend the program.

A school board may approve a parent’s request that a student be released from school for up to three hours per week for purposes of receiving religious instruction. ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.22](#), subd. 12, para. (a), cl. (3))

Student Dress Code

The Supreme Court held in *Tinker* that a school’s regulation prohibiting wearing armbands to school and suspending students for refusing to remove the armbands violated the First Amendment. To impose such a restriction, a school would have to show that the speech would materially and substantially interfere with the operation of the school. *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, [393 U.S. 503](#) (1969). Since *Tinker*, courts have found that a dress code that is viewpoint- and content-neutral does not violate the First Amendment. *Jacobs v. Clark Cty. Sch. Dist.*, 526 F.3d 419 (9th Cir. 2008). The Eighth Circuit has upheld a school ban on clothes depicting the Confederate flag, based on evidence of racially motivated violence, racial tension, and other altercations related to adverse race relations in the community. *B.W.A. v. Farmington R-7 Sch. Dist.*, 554 F.3d 734 (8th Cir. 2009).

A student may also challenge a dress code as discriminatory under the Fourteenth Amendment. *Arnold v. Barbers Hill Indep. Sch. Dist.*, -- F. Supp. 3d --, 2020 WL 4805038 (S.D. Tex. 2020) (student wearing locs as part of Black culture and heritage punished for violating school's hair-length policy that applied only to male students).

The U.S. Supreme Court has not addressed the constitutionality of banning religious attire in public schools.

State law allows school districts to require students to wear a school uniform. ([Minn. Stat. § 123B.36](#), subd. 4.)

Science Course Requirements

The U.S. Supreme Court held that a statute forbidding the teaching of evolution unless "creation science" is also taught violated the constitutional ban on state establishment of religion. *Edwards v. Aguillard*, [482 U.S. 578](#), 107 S. Ct. 2573 (1987).

Equal Access to School Facilities for Religious and other Purposes

The Equal Access Act forbids secondary schools receiving federal funds from barring student religious groups from meeting at school if the school has a general policy of allowing student meetings. ([20 U.S.C. § 4071](#)) The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a school district that allows "noncurriculum-related" student groups access to school facilities must give access on equal terms to all student groups, regardless of the religious or other content of members' speech. *Bd. of Educ. of the Westside Cmty. Sch. v. Mergens*, [496 U.S. 226](#), 110 S. Ct. 2356 (1990); *Good News Club v. Milford Central Sch.*, 533 U.S. 98, 121 S. Ct. 2093 (2001) (district must provide space for after-school Bible club for elementary students). A Minnesota federal district court ruled that a school district violated a gay student club's rights when it denied the club access to school facilities on the same basis as other noncurricular student groups. *SAGE v. Osseo Area Sch. Dist. No. 279*, 2007 WL 2885810 (D. Minn. 2007), *aff'd*, 540 F.3d 911 (8th Cir. 2008).

Exemption from Compulsory Attendance

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that certain pupils may be exempt from the state compulsory attendance law if they can show the law imposes an unnecessary burden on the right to free exercise of religion under the First Amendment. *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, [406 U.S. 205](#), 92 S. Ct. 1526 (1972).

Fourth Amendment Rights

Expectation of Privacy

Students have a legitimate expectation of privacy at school but their privacy interests are balanced with the substantial need of teachers and administrators to maintain order in the schools. *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, [469 U.S. 325](#) (1985).

The Fourth Amendment protects individuals' privacy and security from arbitrary invasion by government officials. Outside of the school context, the Fourth Amendment requires a

government official to have a warrant or probable cause to believe the subject of the search has violated or is violating the law. In the school context, school officials do not need a warrant or probable cause to conduct a search. Instead, the Fourth Amendment permits school officials to search students if there are “reasonable grounds” for suspecting that a student has violated the law or school rules.

When a search or seizure takes place at school, originated by law enforcement officials rather than school officials, students are entitled to the full protection of the Fourth Amendment, rather than the relaxed standard under *TLO*. Law enforcement officials working as liaison officers or School Resource Officers, have not been treated as school officials for purposes of the Fourth Amendment. *Thomas v. Barze*, 57 F. Supp. 3d 1040 (D. Minn. 2014).

A government official, including a public school employee, who peeks, pokes, or pries into a place or item shielded from public view, including a locker, desk, purse, knapsack, backpack, briefcase, folder, book, or article of clothing, is conducting a search.

Reasonable Search and Seizure

For a search to be constitutional, it must be both “justified at its inception” and reasonable in scope. A search is initially justified if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting “the search will turn up evidence that the student has violated or is violating either the law or the rules of the school.” The scope of the search is permissible if search measures are “reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction.” *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, 469 U.S. 325, 105 S. Ct. 733 (1985); *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1, 88 S. Ct. 1868 (1968).

A strip search of a middle school student by school officials looking for ibuprofen tablets was excessive and violated the student’s right to be free from unreasonable search and seizure. *Safford Unified Sch. Dist. No. 1 v. Redding*, 557 U.S. 364, 129 S. Ct. 2633 (2009). A strip search of a seventh grade student was justified at its inception by reasonable suspicion that the student had hidden marijuana in his underwear waistband, but forcing the student to strip until he was fully naked in front of his classmates was excessive in scope. *D.H. v. Clayton Cnty. Sch. Dist.*, 830 F.3d 1306 (11th Cir. 2016).

A school policy that subjects students to random, suspicionless searches of their persons and personal belongings violates students’ Fourth Amendment rights, unreasonably violating their legitimate expectations of privacy. *Doe v. Little Rock Sch. Dist.*, 38 F.3d 349 (8th Cir. 2004).

Locker Searches

The *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* decision did not address whether students have a legitimate expectation of privacy in their lockers. Under state law, school lockers belong to the school district, and school authorities may inspect the inside of the lockers. School authorities may search students’ personal possessions in a school locker only if the school authorities have a reasonable suspicion that the search will uncover evidence of a violation of law or school rules. School districts must give parents and students a copy of the locker policy. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.72](#), subd. 1)

Drug Testing

A drug test is considered a “search” under the Fourth Amendment. The Supreme Court held that a policy requiring student athletes to provide a urine sample for drug testing was a reasonable means furthering the district’s important interest in preventing and deterring drug use given the history of drug abuse by athletes in the school. *Vernonia Sch. Dist. 47J v. Acton*, 515 U.S. 646, 115 S. Ct. 2386 (1995). The Court later held that schools may test students, including nonathletes, who participate in extracurricular activities in order to prevent, deter, and detect drug use; the school did not need to show a pervasive drug problem existed to conduct suspicionless drug testing. *Board of Educ. of Indep. Sch. Dist. No. 92 of Pottawatomie Cnty. v. Earls*, 536 U.S. 822, 122 S. Ct. 2559 (2002).

Cell Phones

Police must obtain a warrant before searching the cell phone of a person placed under arrest unless “exigent circumstances” exist. *Riley v. California*, 134 S. Ct. 2473 (2014). In *Riley*, the Supreme Court considered the differences between a cell phone and physical items, where no warrant is required.

It is unclear whether the Fourth Amendment requires a school to have a more compelling justification to search the student’s cell phone than other personal belongings. *Jackson v. McCurry*, 762 Fed. Appx. 919 (11th Cir. 2019). Like other searches, a cell phone search must be justified at the inception, and must be reasonable in scope. *G.C. v. Owensboro Publ. Schs.*, 711 F.3d 623 (11th Cir. 2019) (student’s documented drug abuse and suicidal thoughts did not justify search of student’s cell phone for evidence of criminal activity or evidence he might hurt himself); *Klump v. Nazareth Area Sch. Dist.*, 425 F. Supp. 2d 622 (E.D. Pa. 2006) (confiscation of cell phone was justified but search of phone violated student’s Fourth Amendment rights).

Car Searches

Searches of student cars on school grounds are subject to a reasonable suspicion standard. *State v. Best*, 987 A.2d 605 (N.J. 2010) (student car on school grounds). A student search connected with an off-campus school-sponsored event may also be permissible under the reasonable suspicion standard. *Kissinger v. Fort Wayne Cmty. Schs.*, 293 F.Supp.3d 796 (N.D. Ind. 2018). School officials may not search a student’s car parked off-campus where the off-campus parking is unrelated to a school-sponsored event or activity. If school officials suspect a student’s off-campus conduct violates the state’s criminal code, they must notify the appropriate law enforcement authorities. *J.P. v. Millard Pub. Sch.*, 830 N.W. 2d 453 (Neb. 2013).

Electronic Surveillance

Electronic surveillance using a video camera, audio recording, wiretapping, or computer monitoring may constitute a search. Students’ greater expectation of privacy in a locker room or restroom may affect where a school district may place such a device. *Brannum v. Overton Cnty. Sch. Bd.*, 516 F.3d 489 (6th Cir. 2008) (cameras recording students in locker rooms were not justified by concerns about student safety).

School districts may conduct video or audio surveillance on school buses if students are given appropriate notice. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.585](#))

Students with Disabilities

A student with a disability must disclose information about the disability, but does not thereby forfeit all expectations of privacy. Participation in special education services is not a waiver of privacy akin to participation in extracurricular activities. *Hough v. Shakopee Publ. Schs.*, 608 F. Supp. 2d 1087 (D. Minn. 2009).

Fourteenth Amendment Rights

Right to an Education

The U.S. Supreme Court has held that education is not a fundamental right or liberty under the Fourteenth Amendment. *San Antonio Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Rodriguez*, [411 U.S. 1](#) (1973).

However, in 2020, students in Detroit sued the state of Michigan, alleging that the state violated their Fourteenth Amendment rights by maintaining conditions in the schools that failed to provide access to literacy. The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in the students' favor, recognizing the access to literacy as a right protected under the Fourteenth Amendment. The Sixth Circuit then decided to rehear the case and have it be decided by all the members of the court, rather than a panel of them. By then, the parties had settled the case, and the previous decision was vacated. *Gary v. Whitmer*, 957 F.3d 616 (6th Cir. 2020).

School Desegregation/ Integration

Racial segregation or other race-based discrimination in public schools and other educational institutions denies minority students the “equal protection” of the laws and is prohibited under the 14th Amendment. *Brown v. Bd. of Educ.*, [347 U.S. 483](#), 74 S. Ct. 686 (1954). In order to use racial classifications, the government must show that it is using narrowly tailored means to achieve a compelling government interest.

Schools may use racial classifications to remedy past intentional discrimination but not to achieve diversity (higher education institutions, in contrast, may use racial classifications to achieve diversity). The Supreme Court struck down school district plans that used race to assign children to schools to achieve diversity. Educational diversity is a compelling government interest that school boards can instead pursue through careful race-conscious policies, including site selection, targeted recruiting, and attendance zones. *Parents Involved in Cmty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1*, [551 U.S. 701](#), 127 S. Ct. 2738 (2007).

Due Process

The U.S. Supreme Court has held that suspending a student from a public school requires procedural due process, including oral or written notice of the charges, an explanation of the evidence the authorities have, and an opportunity for the student to present his or her side of the story. These rights do not include the right to counsel, a right to confront and cross-examine witnesses, or a right to call the student's own witnesses. *Goss v. Lopez*, [419 U.S. 565](#) (1975). See Discipline section on page 28.

Other Civil Rights and English Learner Laws

Civil Rights; Student Discipline

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act bars discrimination based on race, sex, national origin, or disability by educational institutions that receive federal funds for academic, athletic, or extracurricular activities. The U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), enforces Title VI. It investigates and resolves complaints, and conducts compliance review for selected recipients of federal funds. Most complaints filed with OCR relate to disparate treatment, retaliation, or harassment.

When administering student discipline, school officials must not subject students to different or disparate treatment based on the students' race, color, or national origin. In 2014, OCR issued guidance outlining data collected by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education showing racial disparities in student discipline. Joint U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, and U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, "*Dear Colleague*" letter, January 8, 2014. The letter provided guidance to districts to avoid and redress racial discrimination in the administration of student discipline. The Department of Education rescinded the guidance in 2018.

Minnesota Human Rights Act

The Minnesota Human Rights Act prohibits an educational institution from discriminating in the "full utilization of or benefit from any educational institution or the services rendered thereby to any person" on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or disability, or to fail to ensure access for persons with disabilities. ([Minn. Stat. § 363A.13](#)) Each school district must adopt a written sexual, religious, and racial harassment and sexual, religious, and racial violence policy that conforms to the Minnesota Human Rights Act. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.03](#))

English Language Learners

Title VI requires public schools to take affirmative steps to ensure that students with limited English language proficiency can meaningfully participate in the school's educational program. *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974); [42 U.S.C. § 2000d](#) et seq. In addition, Title VI requires that English language learners be included in school and district assessment programs unless an educational or psychometric reason justifies excluding the students.

A separate federal law, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act, prohibits deliberate segregation based on national origin and requires schools to take "appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs." ([20 U.S.C. § 1703](#) (a), (f)) School officials should consider whether programs for English language learners are based on a sound educational philosophy, whether there are sufficient resources to ensure programs can be properly implemented, and whether the programs actually enable students to overcome language barriers that impede their educational progress. Equal Educational Opportunities Act, [20 U.S.C. § 1701](#), et seq. (1974); *Castaneda v. Pickard*, 648 F.2d 989 (5th Cir. 1989); Joint U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights

Division, and U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, “Dear Colleague” letter, January 7, 2015.

In Minnesota, the Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act established a number of reporting, teacher training, and family engagement requirements relating to English learners. See [Laws of Minnesota 2014, chapter 272](#), article 1. It included students with limited and interrupted formal education (SLIFE) within the definition of “English learners” and added district and state reporting requirements for SLIFE. ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.59](#), subd. 2a) The LEAPS Act also required districts to monitor the progress of English learners in learning to read and provide them with reading instruction appropriate to meet their specific needs. ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.12](#))

Family Relations

With a few exceptions noted in this section and elsewhere in the guidebook, the statutes do not regulate relations between married parents and their children who live together. Statutes exist primarily to deal with needs that arise when a new family is being created—for example, by marriage or adoption—or when a family is changing form—for example, due to events like divorce, death, or a minor’s marriage. For provisions regulating circumstances arising from neglect or abuse of children by family members see **Unlawful Acts against Youths**, page 91 in this part and the **Juvenile Court**, page 115 in Part 2.

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All Families

Child's Residence

Parents or a guardian or legal custodian choose the residence of an unmarried child under age 18. A child who leaves that residence without permission is considered a runaway and can be taken into custody. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.007](#), subd. 28; [260C.175](#))

Child's Surname

Neither parent has a superior right to choose a child's surname. There are five factors the court will consider to determine if a name change is in the child's best interest, including how long the child has had the name, potential for embarrassment by the change, the child's preference, the effect of the change on the relationship with the parents, and the degree of respect associated with the present and proposed names. ([Minn. Stat. § 259.11](#)) *Application of Saxton*, 309 N.W.2d 298 (Minn. 1981), cert. denied, *Saxton v. Dennis*, 455 U.S. 1034, 102 S. Ct. 1737 (1981).

Housing Discrimination Against Families with Children

The Human Rights Act prohibits (1) refusal to rent or sell real estate to persons with children, and (2) any unlawful restrictions against children in a real estate sale or rental advertisement. These protections also cover women who are pregnant and persons in the process of securing legal custody of a minor. Various exceptions exist for owner-occupied, cooperative, and elderly housing units, and other laws may still restrict the maximum number of individuals permitted to occupy any one dwelling unit. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 363A.03](#), subd. 18; [363A.09](#); [363A.21](#), subd. 2)

Emancipation of a Minor

Minnesota Statutes do not provide grounds or a procedure for emancipation. However, court cases in Minnesota have found that a minor can be emancipated by a legal marriage or by parental consent. *Lundstrom v. Mample*, 285 N.W. 83 (Minn. 1939) (marriage); *In re Fiihr*, 184 N.W.2d 22 (Minn. 1971) (parental consent or act). For a child age 16 or older who is the subject of a "child in need of protection" petition, the juvenile court may authorize an independent living situation for the child that is the equivalent of emancipation. ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.201](#), subd. 1, para. (a), cl. (5))

Based on these previous cases, emancipation could be expected to occur (1) by reaching the age of 18, (2) by lawful marriage, or (3) by court order.

Minnesota Statutes reflect an assumption that minors may be emancipated. Examples include the following:

- an emancipated minor may forego immunization because of conscientiously held belief ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.15](#), subd. 3, para. (d))
- an emancipated minor is allowed to own a passenger auto or truck ([Minn. Stat. § 168.101](#), subd. 1)

- a legally emancipated minor is eligible for General Assistance ([Minn. Stat. § 256D.05](#), subd. 1, para. (a), cl. (10))

“Emancipation” means that a minor has the same legal rights and obligations as an 18-year-old adult. It can also be “partial, conditional...or limited as to time or purpose.” *Sonnenberg v. County of Hennepin*, 99 N.W.2d 444, 447-448 (Minn. 1959). For example, an emancipation could be limited to allowing the minor to live independently, or to apply for and receive public assistance for themselves or their children, but not for other purposes.

Marriage by a Minor

Marriage by minors is prohibited in Minnesota. Any individual may marry at age 18, as long as the individual is otherwise legally competent. ([Minn. Stat. § 517.02](#))

Custody Consent Decree

A parent may transfer temporary or permanent legal and physical custody of a child to another person by a consent decree. The parent must pay support. The court will approve the transfer of custody if the transfer is in the child’s best interests and all parties agree. ([Minn. Stat. § 257C.07](#))

De Facto or Third Party Custody

If a child has resided with an individual without a parent present for at least 12 months of the preceding 24 months if age three or older, or at least six months of the preceding 24 months if under age three, and a parent during that time has lacked consistent participation in the child’s life, the individual may initiate a custody proceeding. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 257C.01 to 257C.06](#))

Visitation

If an unmarried minor has lived with (1) a grandparent or great-grandparent for at least 12 months, or (2) an individual other than a foster parent for at least two years, the grandparent, great-grandparent, or other individual may obtain a visitation order if statutory requirements are met. ([Minn. Stat. § 257C.08](#))

Standby or Temporary Custodian

A parent who has legal and physical custody of a minor child may designate another adult as a standby or temporary custodian to care for the child upon the occurrence of a specified triggering event (such as the incapacity or death of the parent) if statutory requirements are met. ([Minn. Stat. ch. 257B](#))

Effect of Certain Convictions

An individual convicted of specified crimes faces a higher standard for gaining legal custody or parenting time with a child. An individual who exercises custody or parenting time with a child and resides with someone convicted of any of those crimes must so notify the child’s other

parent, the county social services agency, and the court that granted custody or parenting time. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 257.026; 518.179](#))

Divorced Parents

Child Custody

After an annulment, dissolution, or legal separation, the court must order either sole or joint legal and physical custody of minor children. In deciding custody, the court must consider the child's best interests and not prefer one parent over the other on the basis of the parent's sex. There is a presumption that joint legal custody is in the child's best interests. ([Minn. Stat. § 518.17](#))

Changing Child's Residence

The child resides with each parent based on the parenting time agreed to by the parties or ordered by the court. If a parent has parenting time rights, the parent with whom the child resides may move the child out of state only with a court order or the other parent's consent. The court must apply a specified best interest test to a request to move a child out of state. The burden of proof is on the parent requesting a move, unless there is a history of domestic abuse. ([Minn. Stat. § 518.175](#), subd. 3)

Parenting Time

In dissolution or legal separation proceedings, on request of either parent, the court must grant parenting time rights in the child's best interests. There is a presumption that a parent gets at least 25 percent of the time with the child. The court may restrict parenting time or deny it entirely if it would endanger or impair the child. A parent's failure to pay support because of inability to do so is not sufficient cause to deny parenting time. If one parent wrongfully denies the other's parenting time rights, various remedies are available. The court may also refer a parenting time dispute to a parenting time expeditor or mediation. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 518.175; 518.1751; 518.612; 518.619](#))

Parenting Plans

Upon the request of both parents or a court's own motion, a parenting plan must be created, unless the court finds that the plan is not in the child's best interests. A parenting plan must include: (1) a schedule for the time each parent spends with the child; (2) a designation of decision-making responsibilities; and (3) a method to resolve disputes. A plan may also include other issues and matters that the parents agree to regarding the child. ([Minn. Stat. § 518.1705](#))

Other Parental Rights

Notice must be given to both parents of various rights they retain after divorce, especially that they have the right to (1) obtain certain education, health, police, and religious records of the child, and (2) attend school conferences and be notified of an illness or if the child is a victim of a crime. The court may waive these rights in order to protect the parent's or child's welfare. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 120A.22](#), subd. 1a; [518.17](#), subds. 3, 3a)

Grandparent's Visitation Rights

A child's grandparent or great-grandparent may ask the court for reasonable visitation rights to an unmarried minor child in the following circumstances:

- during or after a proceeding for a dissolution, separation, custody, annulment, adoption, or parentage determination
- after the death of a parent
- when a child has resided with the grandparent for 12 months or more

The rights may be granted if they (1) are in the child's best interests, and (2) do not interfere with the parent and child relationship. Visitation rights end if the child is adopted by someone other than a stepparent or grandparent. ([Minn. Stat. § 257C.08](#))

Deceased Parents

Appointing a Guardian for an Orphan

The parent of an unmarried minor may appoint a guardian by will, by designating a standby guardian under [chapter 257B](#), or by a signed, executed writing like a health care directive under [chapter 145C](#). A minor 14 years or older or certain other adults interested in the minor's welfare may object to the choice. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 524.5-202; 524.5-203](#))

If parents do not name a guardian by will, the court may put the child under the guardianship of the Commissioner of Human Services, a licensed child-placing agency, or an individual willing and able to take responsibility. ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.325](#), subd. 3)

Guardianship ends when the child dies, is adopted, legally marries, turns 18, or as otherwise ordered by a court. ([Minn. Stat. § 524.5-210](#))

Grandparent's Visitation Rights

If a parent dies while a child is a minor, a grandparent or great-grandparent may obtain a court order for visitation if visitation would not interfere with the parent and child relationship. Rights end if the child marries or is adopted by anyone other than a step-parent or grandparent. ([Minn. Stat. § 257C.08](#))

Unmarried Parents

Child Custody and Visitation

The mother has sole custody until paternity is established, either by the father's legally effective admission or by court action. Once paternity is established, the father may petition the court for custody or parenting time. ([Minn. Stat. § 257.541](#))

Establishing Parentage

The child, parent, or welfare agency may bring an action to establish the child's parentage. The parties may be required to have blood or genetic tests. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 257.51 to 257.74](#))

An alternative to legal action: A man is legally presumed to be the biological father of the child if he and the child's mother acknowledge his paternity in writing signed by both of them and filed with the state registrar of vital statistics. The form, which is prepared by the Commissioner of Human Services, is called a Recognition of Parentage form and is available on the state Department of Human Services website. ([Minn. Stat. § 257.75](#))

Adoption

Required Consents

An individual over 14 years of age may be adopted only if she or he consents. ([Minn. Stat. § 259.24](#), subd. 3)

If an unmarried parent under age 18 wants to place a child for adoption, he or she must be offered consultation with an attorney, clergy, physician, or advanced practice registered nurse before consenting to the adoption. The consent of the minor's parents or guardian, if any, is also required. If the minor has no parent or guardian to give consent, the Commissioner of Human Services may do so. ([Minn. Stat. § 259.24](#), subd. 2)

Order of Preference

Child-placing agencies and courts involved in adoption or foster placement proceedings must consider placing a child according to the following order of preference: (1) with relatives or (2) with an important friend with whom the child has resided or had significant contact. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 259.57](#), subd. 2; [260C.212](#), subd. 2)

Communication or Contact Agreements

At the time of an adoption, the birth parents and adoptive parents may make a legal agreement that while the child is growing up they will share information or have contact. Adoptive parents may also make agreements with other birth relatives or foster parents with whom the child resided prior to adoption, or with any other birth relative, if both birth parents are deceased. This agreement must be incorporated in a court order to be enforceable. ([Minn. Stat. § 259.58](#); [260C.619](#))

Adoptee's Access to Other Information

Adopted persons age 19 and older may ask an adoption agency to help determine whether a biological parent or adult sibling wants to have contact or share information. The agency also will transmit nonidentifying health information relevant to any genetically related parties to an adoption. A reimbursement fee may be charged for these services. ([Minn. Stat. § 259.83](#))

Adoptee's Access to Original Birth Certificate

An adopted person age 19 or older may request the information on his or her original birth certificate. The agent of the Commissioner of Human Services or a licensed child-placement agency must try to notify each parent identified on the certificate of the request. If the birth parents agree, the information is disclosed.

If the agent of the commissioner or the licensed child-placement agency cannot notify a birth parent and if the parent has not filed a consent to disclosure, the Commissioner of Health may disclose information as follows:

- If the person was adopted before August 1, 1977, he or she may petition a court for disclosure, which will be granted if the court determines that disclosure is more beneficial than nondisclosure
- If the person was adopted on or after August 1, 1977, the information must be released

If a parent has filed an unrevoked affidavit of nondisclosure, the information shall not be disclosed until the affidavit is revoked.

If a birth parent dies without revoking a nondisclosure request, the adopted person may petition the court for disclosure. The petition will be granted if the court determines that disclosure would be more beneficial than nondisclosure. ([Minn. Stat. § 259.89](#); [260C.637](#))

Adoption Assistance

See Adoption Assistance Program on page 75.

Adoption of Indian Children

For information, see [American Indians, Indian Tribes, and State Government](#), House Research Department, February 2020.

Health and Social Services

Minors' access to health care services is dependent upon the parents or guardians, who are expected to act in the best interest of the child. Exceptions are made for older children who are financially independent, who have married or who have borne children themselves, and for certain specific health services. Minors' access to social services is specifically authorized by a number of state laws that require counties to provide day care subsidies for currently eligible children, and child welfare and protective services for children at risk.

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Health Programs and Access to Health Services

Medical Assistance

Medical Assistance (MA), Minnesota's Medicaid program, is a joint federal/state program providing certain health care services to low-income adults and children who meet the eligibility requirements. MA has higher income limits for children and pregnant women. Children under age 21, pregnant women, and certain other groups do not need to meet MA asset standards.

To qualify for MA, infants up to age two can have family incomes up to 283 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.¹ Children two through 18 years of age are eligible for MA if family income does not exceed 275 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Children ages 19 through 20 are eligible if family income does not exceed 133 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. ([Minn. Stat. § 256B.057](#))

For certain children with disabilities, special eligibility criteria exist. First, under the TEFRA (Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982) option a child under age 19 who is disabled and who requires the level of care provided in a hospital, nursing facility, or intermediate care facility, is eligible for MA without regard to parental income if it is cost-effective for the child to remain at home. Second, the early intensive developmental and behavioral intervention (EIDBI) benefit is available to a child who is under age 21 and enrolled in MA, has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder or a related condition, and meets the criteria for medical necessity for this benefit. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 252.27; 256B.055](#), subd. 12; [256B.0949](#))

Children's Health Insurance Program

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provides federal funding, at an enhanced matching rate, for state initiatives to expand insurance coverage for children. CHIP dollars are being used to pay for: (1) the cost of raising the MA income limit for children under age two from 275 percent to 283 percent of the federal poverty guidelines; (2) health care services provided to MA enrollees who are children with family incomes greater than or equal to 133 percent but not exceeding 275 percent of the federal poverty guidelines; and (3) for prenatal care, labor and delivery, postpartum care, and other services provided to pregnant women with incomes not exceeding 278 percent of the federal poverty guidelines who are uninsured and ineligible for MA with federal funding due to immigration status. The CHIP federal match for Minnesota will be 76.5 percent for federal fiscal year 2020 and will revert to the regular CHIP federal match of 65 percent beginning in federal fiscal year 2021. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 256B.057](#), subd. 8; [256B.06](#), subd. 4, para. (i); [Laws 1998, ch. 407](#), art. 5, § 46)

¹ The federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) publishes federal poverty guidelines annually, and adjusts them based on the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). The federal poverty guidelines are used in establishing eligibility for a number of health and social services programs, and each update is published in the Federal Register.

MinnesotaCare

The MinnesotaCare program provides subsidized health coverage to persons not eligible for MA, if their household income is greater than 133 percent but does not exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, and other eligibility requirements are met. Certain children who normally would not be eligible for either MA or MinnesotaCare, due to differences in how those programs calculate income, may, depending on their income as calculated under MinnesotaCare, be eligible for MA, or be eligible for MinnesotaCare even if their income is below the MinnesotaCare income floor. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 256L.01 to 256L.18](#))

MNSure

Children with household incomes over the MA and MinnesotaCare income limits, but not exceeding 400 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, may be eligible for premium tax credits and cost-sharing subsidies for health coverage offered through MNSure, the state's health insurance exchange established under the federal Affordable Care Act.

Insurance

Minors' rights to private health insurance benefits usually depend upon the purchase of family coverage by a parent or guardian, or in some cases by a grandparent. Family coverage usually insures unmarried children under age 26 and dependent children of any age with disabilities. Insurers are required to cover adopted children, children placed for adoption, and children who do not reside with the health plan participant, on the same basis as they cover other children. Coverage for newborns must be available from the moment of birth. Checkups, immunizations, screenings, and certain other preventive services are required to be covered for adults and children without deductibles, copayments, or coinsurance. Federal law preempts the power of a state to regulate the self-insured health plans often offered by large employers or by multiple-employer union plans, so these plans may, but do not have to, comply with any of these state insurance laws. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 62A.03; 62A.042; 62A.047; 62A.048; 62A.14; 62A.141; 62A.151; 62A.20; 62A.21; 62A.27; 62A.302; 62A.3021; 62C.14, subd. 14; 62C.142; 62D.101; 62D.102; 62D.105; 62K.14; 62L.02, subd. 11; 62Q.675](#))

The WIC Program

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC program) is a federally funded nutrition and education program administered by the Department of Health (MDH) through local public and private nonprofit health or human service agencies. WIC provides supplemental food vouchers, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and health assessments and referrals to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, or post-partum women; infants; and children up to age five. To be eligible for food and services, a person or family must have a family income at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines or receive public assistance; be at nutritional risk; and live in Minnesota. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 145.891 to 145.897; 145.899](#))

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Prevention and Intervention

MDH, in cooperation with the other relevant agencies, coordinates several initiatives designed to prevent future alcohol-related birth defects and treat children with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) or fetal alcohol effects (FAE). These programs include developing professional training materials, providing grants to a community organization for prevention and intervention activities, and conducting a statewide public information and media campaign. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 145.9265; 145.9266](#))

Home Visiting Programs

MDH distributes state and federal funds to community health boards and tribal governments to support family home visiting programs. A home visiting program is a voluntary program in which trained home visitors visit pregnant women and families with young children in their homes and provide social, emotional, and health-related services, parenting support and information, and referrals to other services. Community health boards and tribal governments use these funds for programs that employ one or more service models, chosen to address community needs. The program model used determines program eligibility, the length of time in which families receive home visits, qualifications of home visitors, and specific services provided.

The family home visiting program in [Minnesota Statutes, section 145A.17](#), is funded with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, is distributed based on a formula, and provides preventive and early intervention services to families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines and to other families with specific risk factors. MDH also distributes state-funded grants to create or expand Nurse-Family Partnership programs, and to start up or expand programs that employ an evidence-based home visiting model. ([Minn. Stat. § 145A.17](#); [Laws 2015, ch. 71](#), art. 14, § 3, subd. 2; [Laws 2017 First Special Session, ch. 6](#), art. 18, § 3, subd. 2)

A school district with an early childhood family education program (ECFE) may offer a home visiting program to support the healthy growth and development of children. ECFE home visiting programs prioritize visits to isolated or at-risk families with highest needs. Programs are encouraged to employ licensed parenting educators, certified family life educators, or other professionals with an equivalent license. The trained home visitor assesses the family's risk factors, addresses parenting skills and child development, and identifies community-based programs and services that may benefit the child's development. ECFE programs are funded through state aid and local property taxes. In addition to a small property tax levy specifically earmarked for home visiting programs, many school districts use regular ECFE revenue and other district revenue to supplement funding for their home visiting programs. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 124D.13; 124D.135](#))

Lead Poisoning Prevention

Minnesota's Lead Poisoning Prevention Act addresses a potentially serious health hazard affecting children caused by exposure to lead from soil, dust, water, or paint. The act does not require testing of children for elevated blood lead levels. Many children, however, are tested

voluntarily for lead as part of routine well-child care. The act requires facilities performing blood lead analyses to report findings of these analyses to MDH. Using this information, MDH operates a lead surveillance system to identify trends and populations at risk and to ensure that services are provided to children with elevated blood lead levels. The act details how to prevent elevated blood lead levels in children, ways to mitigate the health effects on children with elevated blood lead levels, and standards for lead hazard reduction activities. MDH also distributes grants to community health boards and nonprofit organizations for lead abatement and healthy housing activities. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 144.9501](#) to 144.9513)

Mental Health Services

Under the Children's Mental Health Act, county social service agencies must plan for and coordinate the development and delivery of local children's mental health services. Counties coordinate a variety of mental health services for children under age 18, including education and prevention services, early identification and intervention services, screening and assessment, case management and family community support services, emergency services, outpatient treatment services, day treatment services, residential treatment services, transition services, and therapeutic support of foster care. Counties may apply for state grant funds to help them carry out some of their duties. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 245.487](#) to 245.4889)

Tobacco Use Prevention

The Commissioner of Health administers tobacco use prevention and other public health activities to reduce the prevalence of tobacco use by youth, using general fund dollars. ([Minn. Stat. § 144.396](#))

Newborn Screening Programs

Minnesota's Newborn Screening Programs are public health programs through which all infants born in the state may be screened for a variety of disorders. Through the Newborn Screening Program, MDH tests blood spots from each infant born in the state to screen for 60 heritable and congenital disorders. Parents must be informed they have the right to elect not to have the screening performed and a right to obtain private testing, or elect to have the screening performed but not have the blood samples and test results stored. A critical congenital heart disease screening program screens newborns using pulse oximetry. Also, through Early Hearing Detection and Intervention programs, hospitals screen infants for hearing loss. These programs allow for early intervention or treatment of conditions for which the infants are screened. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 144.125-144.128](#); [144.966](#))

Statewide Health Improvement Program

The Commissioner of Health awards competitive grants to community health boards and tribal governments to implement strategies in certain settings, including local communities and schools, targeted at addressing the leading preventable causes of illness and death in the state, creating healthy communities, and reducing health care costs. Grants under this program are limited by available funding. ([Minn. Stat. § 145.986](#))

Consent for Health Services

Abortion

A minor seeking an abortion in Minnesota must either notify both parents of the intended abortion and wait 48 hours, or seek judicial approval for the procedure. A court may authorize an abortion if it finds either (1) that the pregnant minor is mature and capable of giving informed consent, or (2) that authorizing the abortion without notification would be in her best interest.

An expedited confidential appeal is available to any minor for whom the court denies an order authorizing an abortion without notification. An order authorizing an abortion without notification is not subject to appeal. ([Minn. Stat. § 144.343](#))

Note: Subdivision 2 of the above statute, which required a physician to notify both parents of an unemancipated minor at least 48 hours before the minor could receive an abortion and which did not include a judicial bypass provision, was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court on June 25, 1990. *Hodgson v. Minnesota*, [497 U.S. 417](#), 110 S. Ct. 2926 (1990). The remainder of the statute now operates as described above.

Anatomical Gifts

Emancipated minors and minors who are at least 16 years of age, as well as the minor's parent if the minor is unemancipated, may make an anatomical gift during the life of the donor. However, upon the death of an unemancipated minor, the minor's parent may revoke or amend an anatomical gift. Also, upon the death of an unemancipated minor who signed a refusal to donate, a parent of the minor may revoke the minor's refusal. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 525A.04](#) and [525A.08](#))

Upon the death of an unemancipated minor donor or an unemancipated minor who had signed a refusal, the procurement organization must conduct a reasonable search for the minor's parents and provide the parents with an opportunity to revoke or amend the anatomical gift or revoke the refusal. ([Minn. Stat. § 525A.14](#))

Blood Donations

Any person age 17 or older may donate blood in a voluntary noncompensatory blood program without obtaining parental consent. Any person age 16 may donate blood with written permission from the person's parent or guardian. ([Minn. Stat. § 145.41](#))

Emergency Treatment

Medical, dental, mental, and other health services may be provided to a minor without the consent of a parent or legal guardian when, in a professional's judgment, treatment should be given without delay. ([Minn. Stat. § 144.344](#))

Financial Responsibility

A minor who gives legally effective consent for health services is financially responsible for the health services rendered. ([Minn. Stat. § 144.347](#))

Hepatitis B Vaccination

A minor may give effective consent for a hepatitis B vaccination. ([Minn. Stat. § 144.3441](#))

Living Apart from Parents and Managing Financial Affairs

Any minor (1) who is living apart from his or her parents or legal guardian, with or without consent to do so and regardless of the duration of the separate residence, and (2) who is managing personal financial affairs, regardless of the source or extent of the minor's income, may give effective consent for medical, dental, mental, or other health services for himself or herself. ([Minn. Stat. § 144.341](#))

Marriage or Giving Birth

Any minor who has been married or has borne a child may give effective consent for personal medical, mental, dental, or other health services, and for services for the minor's child. ([Minn. Stat. § 144.342](#))

Parental Information and Access to Health Records

A professional may inform a minor's parent or legal guardian of any medical treatment given to or needed by the minor where, in the professional's judgment, failure to inform the parent or guardian would seriously jeopardize the minor's health. ([Minn. Stat. § 144.346](#))

For purposes of access to health records of a minor, the term "patient" includes a parent or guardian, or a person acting as a parent or guardian in the absence of a parent or guardian. The parent, guardian, or other person may access the minor's health records except where the minor:

- has received treatment related to pregnancy, venereal disease, or alcohol or drug abuse;
- has received emergency treatment or a hepatitis B vaccination;
- is living apart from his or her parents and is financially independent; or
- has been married or has given birth. ([Minn. Stat. § 144.291](#), subd. 2, para. (g))

Pregnancy, Venereal Disease, Alcohol or Drug Abuse

Any minor may give effective consent for medical, mental, or other health services to determine the presence of or to treat pregnancy, venereal disease, and alcohol and other drug abuse. ([Minn. Stat. § 144.343](#), subd. 1)

Representation to Persons Rendering Service

If a minor represents that he or she is able to give effective consent for health services but in fact is not able to do so, the minor's consent is effective if relied upon in good faith by the person rendering the health service. ([Minn. Stat. § 144.345](#))

Voluntary Institutional Treatment

Any person 16 years of age or older may consent to hospitalization for observation or treatment of mental illness, chemical dependency, or developmental disability and may give valid consent for hospitalization, routine diagnostic evaluation, and emergency or short-term acute care. For chemical dependency or mental illness treatment, a 16- or 17-year-old who refuses to consent to admission as a patient may be admitted with the consent of a parent or guardian, provided it is determined in an independent examination that the proposed patient is chemically dependent or has a mental illness, and is suitable for treatment. Any person under age 16 may be admitted as a patient with the consent of a parent or guardian, so long as there is some independent review of the placement in accordance with *Parham v. J.R.*, 442 U.S. 584, 99 S. Ct. 2493 (1979). ([Minn. Stat. §§ 253B.03](#), subd. 6, para. (d); [253B.04](#), subd. 1)

Social Services

Child Welfare

Counties are required to provide child welfare services to assure protection and financial assistance for children confronted with social, physical, or emotional problems requiring assistance. Counties must make child welfare services available as required by law, by the Commissioner of Human Services, or by the courts. ([Minn. Stat. § 393.07](#)) Child welfare services are primarily funded through county property tax revenues. Counties also receive federal and state funds through the Vulnerable Children and Adults Act. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 256M.01 to 256M.80](#))

County of Financial Responsibility

Under the state's unitary residence and financial responsibility statute for public assistance and social services, the county of financial responsibility for a minor is generally the county in which her or his parents reside at the time of application for services. ([Minn. Stat. § 256G.02](#), subd. 4; [256G.07](#); [256G.10](#)) *In re Matter of the Financial Responsibility for the Out-of-Home Placement Costs for S.M.*, 812 N.W.2d 826 (Minn. 2012)

Vulnerable Children and Adults Act

The Vulnerable Children and Adults Act consolidates various state and federal social services grants to counties into a single consolidated grant that counties must use to address the needs of vulnerable children and adults. It specifies how children and community services grants will be allocated to the counties, and the various duties of the Commissioner of Human Services and the counties with regard to the administration of the consolidated grant. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 256M.01 to 256M.80](#))

Children’s Trust Fund for the Prevention of Child Abuse

Private and public organizations at the local level may develop and offer services and education programs designed to help prevent child abuse before it occurs. Many such offerings are financed through grants obtained from the state Children’s Trust Fund for the Prevention of Child Abuse. The trust fund, which is administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS), is supported primarily by a surcharge on birth certificate filings. It is also supported by federal, state, and private contributions. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 256E.20 to 256E.27](#))

Maltreatment of Minors Act

Any person may report maltreatment of a child, but state law requires certain professionals to report information if they know or have reason to believe a child is being maltreated, or has been maltreated within the preceding three years. The term “maltreatment” includes neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse, threatened injury, mental injury, egregious harm, and substantial child endangerment. Reports are made to the local welfare agency, applicable state agency, or law enforcement personnel. A failure to report is prosecuted by the county attorney.

Local county welfare agencies are required to investigate or assess all reports, unless the report alleges maltreatment in a child care, residential, or medical facility licensed by MDH or DHS, or in a school. Reports of maltreatment in a facility licensed by DHS or MDH are investigated by those agencies. Reports of maltreatment in a school are investigated by the Department of Education.

The act sets out special procedures that local welfare, state, and law enforcement agencies must follow in regard to conducting an investigation or a family assessment to determine if maltreatment has occurred. Welfare agencies must also provide protective services where necessary. “Protective services” can range from maintaining the child at home while providing services to the family to removing the child from the home and placing him or her in an out-of-home foster care placement. ([Minn. Stat. ch. 260E](#)) See [Reporting Maltreatment of Minors](#), House Research Department, December 2020.

Medical Neglect

State law defines withholding medically indicated treatment from a disabled infant with a life-threatening condition as a form of neglect that must be reported under the Maltreatment of Minors Act. It also specifies what types of treatment are medically indicated and lists circumstances in which the infant’s treatment can be limited. ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.007](#), subd. 6)

If a local welfare agency receives a report of medical neglect, the agency must consult the hospital staff and parents and, if necessary, obtain a court order for an independent medical examination and to prevent the withholding of the indicated treatment from the child. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260E.20](#), subd. 4; [260E.25](#))

Voluntary Foster Care for Treatment, Reviews, and Permanency Plans

The social service or child-placing agency may enter into a voluntary foster care agreement with a child's parent when the child requires treatment due to emotional disturbance, developmental disability, or related condition. ([Minn. Stat. § 260D.03](#))

The social service or child-placing agency must obtain a judicial review within 165 days of a child's placement in voluntary foster care for treatment due to emotional disturbance or developmental disability. An administrative review must be conducted prior to the judicial review. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260D.05; 260D.06](#), subd. 1)

If a child remains in care for 13 months from the date of the voluntary placement agreement or has been in placement for 15 of the last 22 months, and the agency determines there are compelling reasons to continue the placement, the agency must seek judicial approval in order to continue the placement. At the hearing, the court must review the permanency plan with the family and the child, if the child is age 12 or older. ([Minn. Stat. § 260D.07](#))

The matter must be reviewed by the court at least every 12 months if the child continues in voluntary foster care for treatment. ([Minn. Stat. § 260D.08](#))

Out-of-Home Placement Plans, Reviews, and Permanency Plans

Social service agencies must prepare an out-of-home placement plan within 30 days after a child enters an out-of-home placement, file the out-of-home placement plan with the court, and update out-of-home placement plans when a child moves to a different foster care setting. Agencies are also required to conduct administrative reviews of out-of-home placements no later than 180 days after initial placement and at least every six months thereafter to monitor and update the out-of-home placement plan. As an alternative to the administrative review, the social service agency may seek court review, where applicable, in order to assure that children have been appropriately placed and that their out-of-home placement plans are being implemented. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.203; 260C.212](#))

Social service agencies must file pleadings with the juvenile court to establish the basis for the permanent placement determination of a child in an out-of-home placement. For more detail, see sections on juvenile court procedures, beginning on page 115. The court must conduct a permanency progress review hearing to determine the child's permanent status. Generally, this hearing must occur no later than six months after the child has entered the out-of-home placement. ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.204](#))

Adoption Assistance Program

Using a combination of state and federal monies, DHS makes adoption subsidies available to eligible families desiring to adopt a child determined to have a special need. Prospective adoptive parents of a child with special needs must, if adoption assistance is desired, negotiate an adoption assistance agreement with the financially responsible agency or agency designated by the Commissioner of Human Services, before the adoption is finalized. An adoption assistance agreement may provide the family with monthly financial assistance, assistance with

onetime or periodic supplemental maintenance expenses, MA eligibility for the child, or some combination of these. Adoption assistance agreements are revised as appropriate. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 256N.23](#) to 256N.26; [ch. 259A](#))

Kinship Assistance (Formerly Known as Relative Custody Assistance)

If a court order transfers permanent legal and physical custody of a child to a relative, the local agency must determine whether the relative is eligible for a monthly cash grant, called “kinship assistance,” to assist the relative in caring for the child. In order to be eligible, the child must have been placed with the relative custodian for at least six consecutive months prior to the transfer of custody, while the relative custodian was a licensed foster parent. The amount of the kinship assistance payment varies with the needs of the child. ([Minn. Stat. § 256N.22](#))

Social Services Plan for Minor Mother and Child

Counties are required to determine whether, after the birth of her child, a minor mother has a plan to care for herself and her child. If one is needed, the county must work with the minor mother to develop the plan, and the county must provide case management services as needed. ([Minn. Stat. § 257.33](#), subd. 2)

Public Assistance

A child’s eligibility for MFIP and the other major publicly funded assistance programs is generally tied to his or her family’s eligibility for the program. However, a child with disabilities who meets certain income and asset criteria may be eligible in his or her own right for MA or MinnesotaCare. (See page 67.)

For a full description of the special eligibility requirements and benefits of the major public programs providing assistance to families, see [Minnesota Family Assistance](#), House Research Department, December 2018.

Child Care Assistance

Counties provide child care subsidies on a sliding fee scale to eligible low-income families through the Basic Sliding Fee child care program, and to families receiving assistance under the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) and the transition year child care programs. Participating families may choose any legal child care provider to care for children under the age of 13 or 15 if the child has disabilities (see Health and Safety Regulation of Child Care Settings, page 80). A family’s copayment for the child’s care depends upon the family’s total income and the size of the family. The minimum required copayment is \$5.00 per month for families with incomes between 75 percent and 100 percent of the federal poverty level. The copayment amount increases as a family’s income increases. Counties use federal, state, and county funds to pay for child care assistance. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 119B.011](#) to 119B.16)

Early Childhood Programs

Early Childhood Family Education

All Minnesota families with young children are eligible to enroll in early childhood family education (ECFE) programs operated by school districts. ECFE programs serve children from birth to the start of kindergarten and their families. An ECFE program with budget constraints may focus on those families with the youngest children. A typical ECFE model provides two-hour classes twice a week to parents and children. Larger school districts may offer ECFE classes to families with specific demographics (English language learners, dad's classes, etc.).

ECFE activities require parent involvement and are designed to improve parents' skills and the health, development, and learning readiness of children. ECFE funds may not be used for traditional child care, nursery, or preschool programs. Many ECFE programs include a home visiting component for at-risk or isolated families.

ECFE programs are funded through state aid, local property taxes, and in many school districts, parent-paid sliding fees. For the 2020-2021 school year, state aid and local property tax levies totaled approximately \$55.7 million for ECFE activities. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 124D.13; 124D.135](#))

School Readiness

Parents with prekindergarten-aged children may apply to school districts operating school readiness programs. A school readiness program is often combined with other prekindergarten initiatives and funding streams and the program may operate under a locally chosen name. Not all children who seek to enroll in school readiness programs are accepted. School districts give priority to children who are developmentally disadvantaged or have risk factors that could impede their learning. A child's participation in a school readiness program is voluntary, and services are free or available on a sliding fee schedule that may be waived.

A school readiness program includes developmental and learning components, health referral services, nutrition, parental involvement, and outreach. Services may be site- or home-based. State law requires coordination with social service providers and other agencies. Many school readiness programs are half-day programs.

Approximately 28,000 children participated in school readiness programs during fiscal year 2019. This program is funded with an annual appropriation of \$33.7 million. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 124D.15; 124D.16](#))

Head Start

Low-income parents may apply to local Head Start programs (grantees) to enroll their children in Head Start programs. Federal regulations require that at least 90 percent of students enrolled in a Head Start program have family incomes at or below the federal poverty guidelines (\$25,750 for a family of four in 2020) or receive welfare assistance. Local grantees must reserve 10 percent of program slots for children with disabilities.

Head Start programs provide an array of services, including preschool education, parenting classes, jobs programs, nutrition and health-related services, and other assistance to preschool children and their families.

In 2019, the federal Department of Health and Human Services awarded \$10 billion in Head Start funds that flow directly to local Head Start grantees serving 1,047,000 low-income children. In Minnesota, for 2019, 33 local Head Start grantees served about 14,500 families using \$123.5 million in federal funds and \$25.1 million in state funds.

Grantees must coordinate the Head Start program with other community child care providers and preschool programs to increase the availability of full-day, full-year child care services. Head Start programs generally serve students aged three to five in four half-day, center-based programs per week. Early Head Start programs serve infants and toddlers. All Head Start programs must meet federal performance standards, and all center-based programs must meet Minnesota Department of Human Service rules for licensed child care centers. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 119A.50 to 119A.53](#); [45 C.F.R. parts 1301-1311](#))

Early Learning Scholarship Program

Parents of children who are age 5 and younger, may apply for an early learning scholarship of not more than \$10,000 per child per year. A parent may apply for a Pathway I scholarship through a regional administrator. A parent receiving a Pathway I scholarship may choose to enroll the child in a qualifying Parent Aware-rated public or private prekindergarten program (e.g., private child care provider, school district early childhood program, or Head Start program) selected by the parent. For 2019, 7,830 Pathway I scholarships were awarded to eligible families.

A parent may also apply directly to a qualifying program with a 4-star Parent Aware rating for a Pathway II early learning scholarship. For 2019, school districts, Head Start grantees, and certain private child care providers received funding to provide 7,221 Pathway II scholarship seats in their prekindergarten programs.

For fiscal year 2019, the legislature appropriated \$65.7 million for early learning scholarships. An early learning scholarship may be used in combination with other publicly funded programs (e.g., child care assistance, school readiness, Head Start). ([Minn. Stat. §§ 124D.142 and 124D.165](#))

Voluntary Prekindergarten Program

A parent may apply to a qualifying school district or charter school to enroll a child in the school's voluntary prekindergarten (VPK) program. VPK programs may be offered in conjunction with other early learning programs; however, students in a VPK program do not qualify for other funding during the period of time that the student is enrolled in a VPK program.

A VPK program must provide at least 350 hours of annual service to each qualifying four-year-old. VPK programs must employ qualified instructors, but the instructors need not be licensed

teachers. VPK class sizes must be no larger than ten students to each adult, and no more than 20 students for each qualified instructor.

Beginning in fiscal year 2017, about \$25 million per year in ongoing appropriations to Minnesota's school districts and charter schools provides VPK programming for 3,160 students. VPK is proportionately distributed among public schools divided into four regions: (1) Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts; (2) suburban school districts; (3) Greater Minnesota school districts; and (4) charter schools. Within each region, each school site is prioritized for funding based on that school's free and reduced-price lunch count of kindergarten students. Sites in Greater Minnesota are also prioritized by the distance from qualifying early learning scholarship sites. ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.151](#))

For fiscal years 2018 through 2021, the school readiness plus program is in effect. Under the school readiness plus program, about \$25 million per year in appropriations is provided to school districts and charter schools. The schools can choose to use the money for additional funding for VPK or for enhanced school readiness programs. No funding for school readiness plus exists for fiscal year 2022 and later. ([Laws 2017, 1st Spec. Sess. ch. 5](#), art. 8, § 9)

Early Childhood Developmental Screening

A parent who intends to enroll a student in a public school is required to have the child screened. The early childhood screening may be done by a school district or charter school, a public or private health organization, or an individual health care provider. An exception to the screening requirement is made for a child whose parent provides the school with a signed statement that screening is precluded by conscientiously held beliefs.

Every school district must provide early childhood developmental screening targeting three- and four-year-old children. Public schools are reimbursed for a portion of the costs associated with each child screened. A student must provide proof of screening to the public school within 30 days of enrolling in a kindergarten or prekindergarten program or the child may not continue to attend the school. A record of the screening is kept by the school district and must also be sent to the parent or guardian of each child who has been screened. All data collected on the child in the screening process are private data. Data on an identifiable child may only be disclosed with parental consent.

Early childhood screening must include developmental assessments, hearing and vision screening, immunization review and referral, measures of height and weight, assessment of risk factors that could influence learning, a parent interview, and referrals for identified needs. A school may offer additional components, including nutritional, physical, and dental assessments. Mandatory screening components must be consistent with standards established by the Commissioner of Health. Parents must be notified of any condition that requires diagnosis and treatment, and the school district must ensure appropriate follow-up. ([Minn. Stat. § 121A.17](#))

Part C – Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities

Minnesota provides special education services to infants and toddlers under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and state law. Minnesota also participates in the Federal Part C program. Federal funds, in combination with state special education aid, are used for services for eligible young children with disabilities from birth to age two and their families. A child with a hearing impairment, visual disability, speech impairment, or other disability is eligible for services. An individualized family service plan (IFSP) sets out the necessary interagency services for an eligible child. The interagency early childhood intervention project is an effort of the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services, funded by a federal grant through Part C (formerly known as Part H) of the IDEA. An initial evaluation and assessment determines a child's eligibility and developmental needs. An IFSP is developed to meet the eligible child's needs and skills. Core intervention services are free to participants. Core services include identification and referral, screening, evaluation, assessment, service coordination, and age-appropriate special instruction and services. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 125A.26-125A.48](#))

A child under age three who is involved in a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect is eligible for referral to early intervention services funded under Part C of IDEA. ([Pub. L. No. 105-17](#), IDEA (Part C))

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

The Commissioner of Education supports a voluntary kindergarten entry profile. To that end, the commissioner has approved several assessments for schools to use to determine a child's readiness for kindergarten. ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.162](#))

Health and Safety Regulation of Child Care Settings

License Required

To protect the health, safety, and welfare of children in child care settings, the Human Services Licensing Act prohibits an individual, corporation, partnership, voluntary association, other organization or controlling individual from providing child care services without a state license. The licensing process ensures that child care services meet certain minimum standards. Operating a child care program without a license is a misdemeanor. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 245A.03; 245A.04](#); [Minn. Rules, parts 9502.0315 to 9502.0445](#) (family day care) and [9503.0005 to 9503.0170](#) (child care centers))

Permitted Exceptions to Licensure Requirement

Minnesota statute specifies certain exceptions to the general requirement that child care providers must be licensed. Under these exceptions, some types of child care may be provided without a license. ([Minn. Stat. § 245A.03](#), subd. 2)

In order for certain types of license-exempt providers to receive child care assistance payments, the providers must meet the state's requirements to be certified, license-exempt providers. ([Minn. Stat. ch. 245H](#))

Mandated Reporters

All licensed and certified, license-exempt child care providers are mandated reporters under the state's Maltreatment of Minors Act. (See also page 74) ([Minn. Stat. § 260E.06](#), subd. 1)

Right of Access

The Commissioner of Human Services, or the commissioner's designated representative, must be given access to a licensed or certified, license-exempt child care program whenever the program is in operation. Child care centers must also permit parents of enrolled children to visit the center at any time during the center's hours of operation. ([Minn. Stat. § 245A.04](#), subd. 5; [Minn. Stat. § 245H.04](#); [Minn. Rules, part 9503.0095](#))

Motor Vehicles

Minnesota laws stipulate different provisions for operating motor vehicles for people under 18. Special provisions apply in order for youth to operate cars, motorized bicycles and scooters, motorcycles, snowmobiles, and personal watercraft.

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Instruction Permit

Minnesota has a graduated driver's license system in which driving privileges expand as new drivers gain experience. A minor who is at least 15 years old and is enrolled in a driver's education program can receive an instruction permit once specific conditions have been met. Conditions include parental approval, completing either the classroom portion of a driver's instruction program or at least 15 hours of classroom instruction in a program offering concurrent classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction, taking a vision test, and passing a knowledge test on traffic laws. The instruction permit is valid for two years. It authorizes the holder to drive only when accompanied by a driver's education instructor, parent, guardian, or other licensed driver over the age of 21.

The permit holder may not use a cellular phone or wireless communication device (both handheld and hands free) while the vehicle is in motion, except when calling for emergency assistance about a crime or if someone's life is in danger.

If a minor is convicted of a moving violation or of some violations related to alcohol, the permit can be revoked. If a minor has ever been convicted of driving while impaired, violated the open bottle law, refused to take a chemical test for intoxication, or had a crash-related moving violation, he or she won't be issued a permit. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 169.475; 171.05](#), subds. 2 and 2b)

Provisional Driver's License

A minor can apply for a provisional license if the person is at least 16 years old, has held an instruction permit for at least six months, provides a log of supervised driving, and has finished a driver's education program. The application must be approved by a parent or guardian, who must certify that the minor has completed at least 50 hours of supervised driving while holding the permit (or 40 hours if the main driving supervisor had completed supplemental curriculum), including at least 15 hours of driving at night.

A minor may use a provisional license in the same manner as a holder of a standard license except that: (1) the minor may not use a cellular phone while the vehicle is in motion (both handheld and hands free), except when calling for emergency assistance about a crime or if someone's life is in danger; (2) limitations are imposed on the allowed number of passengers;² and (3) for the first six months the provisional license holder may only drive between midnight and 5:00 a.m. under limited circumstances, including for work or school-related activities or if a licensed driver at least 25 years of age is present.

The minor won't be issued a provisional license if in the previous six months the person has been convicted of driving while impaired, violated the open bottle law, refused to take a chemical test for intoxication, or had a crash or noncrash-related moving violation. ([Minn. Stat. § 171.055](#))

² Outside of immediate family, the passenger limitations are no more than one passenger age 19 or younger during the first six months of provisional licensure, and no more than three passengers age 19 or younger during the next six months.

Full License

A minor can obtain a standard under-21 driver's license if, among other requirements, the person:

- has held a provisional license for 12 months without (1) incurring any moving violations in connection with a crash; (2) incurring more than one moving violation that is unrelated to a crash; or (3) a conviction for driving while impaired, an open bottle violation, or refusal to take a chemical test for intoxication;
- has parental approval; and
- has completed at least ten additional hours of driving under the supervision of a licensed driver age 21 or over.

([Minn. Stat. § 171.04](#), subd. 1)

Farm Work License

A minor who is at least 15 years old, holds an instruction permit, and is otherwise qualified to hold a driver's license may get a restricted license for farm work. A farm work license holder may operate a vehicle unaccompanied only if (1) performing farm-related work, (2) driving within 40 miles of the farmhouse, and (3) driving during daylight hours. Otherwise, the driver must be accompanied by a licensed driver age 21 or older. ([Minn. Stat. § 171.041](#))

Motorized Bicycle (Moped) Permits

A motorized bicycle (also known as a moped) can be operated by minors who hold a driver's license or a specialized permit. A youth who is at least 15 years old may obtain a motorized bicycle instruction permit upon completion of a safety course and the written portion of an exam, or a motorized bicycle operator's permit upon passage of an exam. An instruction permit holder may only operate the moped within one mile of the person's residence. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 169.223](#), subd. 2; [171.02](#), subd. 3; [171.05](#), subd. 3)

Motorized Foot Scooters

Motorized foot scooters may be operated by a minor who is at least 12 years old and wears a helmet. The operator generally has the same rights and responsibilities as a bicyclist. The motorized foot scooter may not be operated on the sidewalk, but it can be used on a bicycle lane or path unless (1) the pathway is reserved for nonmotorized use, or (2) operation is restricted by a local government. ([Minn. Stat. § 169.225](#))

Two-Wheeled Vehicle Instruction Permit

A two-wheeled instruction permit allows operation of motorcycles as well as motor scooters. A minor over the age of 16 may obtain the permit if the person holds a driver's license, is taking a two-wheeled vehicle safety course, passes a written test, and pays the permit fee. A permit holder faces some operation restrictions, including carrying no passengers and not driving at night. ([Minn. Stat. § 169.974](#), subd. 2)

Two-Wheeled Vehicle License Endorsement

To obtain a two-wheeled vehicle endorsement on a driver's license, a person under age 18 must have a two-wheeled vehicle instruction permit, pass a written exam, pass a road test, and complete a safety course. The license endorsement allows operation of motorcycles as well as motor scooters. ([Minn. Stat. § 169.974](#), subd. 2)

Mandatory Use of Protective Headgear

Persons under the age of 18 must wear protective headgear while operating or riding a motorcycle, motor scooter, motorized bicycle, or motorized foot scooter on public roadways. A violation is a petty misdemeanor. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 169.223; 169.225; 169.974](#))

Snowmobile Operation

No person under the age of 18 may operate or ride a snowmobile without wearing a helmet. Various other provisions apply, including adult accompaniment requirements and restrictions where the snowmobile may be operated. ([Minn. Stat. § 84.872](#))

Personal Watercraft Operation

Minors under age 13 are not permitted to operate personal watercraft, regardless of horsepower, except in an emergency. ([Minn. Stat. § 86B.313](#), subd. 2) A minor who is at least 13 but less than 18 years old may not operate a personal watercraft without an operator's permit unless someone at least 21 years old is on board the craft. If the minor is 13 years old, the minor must also be visually supervised by someone at least 21 years old, in addition to obtaining a permit. ([Minn. Stat. § 86B.313](#), subd. 3) In order to obtain a permit, a minor must pass an educational course and a test. ([Minn. Stat. § 86B.101](#), subd. 2)

Automobile Insurance

A minor may enter into a contract to purchase automobile insurance. The contract is binding on the minor as if the minor were an adult. An insurer is not required to issue insurance coverage to the minor, however. ([Minn. Stat. § 65B.136](#))

Driving While Using a Cell Phone or Wireless Device

A person under the age of 18 who has an instruction permit or a provisional license may not drive a vehicle while using (1) a cell phone (both handheld and hands free), or (2) a wireless communication device to make a call, engage in electronic messaging, or access various content on the device.³ A violation is a petty misdemeanor. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 169.475; 171.05](#), subd. 2b; [171.055](#), subd. 2)

³ The prohibition on texting or accessing a wireless device while driving applies to all persons operating a motor vehicle, whereas the prohibition on hands-free cell phone use to make a phone call applies only to drivers under the age of 18.

Unlawful Acts by Youths

Minnesota law prohibits young people from performing certain activities that adults are allowed to do and imposes penalties for such conduct. Minnesota law also requires young people to do certain things in order to protect their welfare. The rationale behind these laws is that, due to the harmful nature of the activity and the immature judgment of young people, it is necessary to place stricter controls on youths than adults.

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Purchase and Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages

(Misdemeanor; Gross Misdemeanor)

No person under 21 years of age may purchase alcoholic beverages or possess or consume alcoholic beverages at a place other than his or her parent's home. This prohibition does not apply if the underage person's activity is undertaken for training, education, or research purposes and is supervised by a responsible person who is over the age of 21. Increased penalties apply to underage purchasers who misrepresent that their age is 21 or older if they have been convicted previously of such an offense. For purposes of these provisions, a person is not 21 years of age until 8:00 a.m. on the day of the person's 21st birthday.

The law provides immunity from prosecution for underage possession or consumption if a person contacts 911 to seek medical assistance. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 340A.503; 340A.702; 340A.703](#))

Driving after Consuming Alcoholic Beverages

(Misdemeanor; Driver's License Suspension)

No person under 21 years of age may drive or operate a motor vehicle, including an off-road vehicle or motorboat, while consuming or after having consumed any amount of alcohol while there is physical evidence of the consumption in the person's body. In addition to criminal penalties, an underage person may lose his or her driver's license for between 30 and 180 days, the privilege to operate a snowmobile or ATV for one year, and the privilege to operate a motorboat for 90 days. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 84.91; 86B.331; 169A.33](#))

Use or Purchase of Tobacco, Tobacco-related Devices, or Nicotine Delivery Products

(Petty Misdemeanor; Misdemeanor)

No minor may possess, use, purchase, or attempt to purchase tobacco; tobacco-related devices, such as cigarette papers or pipes; or electronic delivery devices, such as e-cigarettes. Repeat violations are subject to increased penalties. Juvenile court can punish violations with a number of dispositions, including probation, fine, and loss of driver's license or driving privileges. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 609.685; 260B.235; 171.171](#))

It is also unlawful for a minor to possess, purchase, or attempt to purchase a nicotine delivery product. If the minor uses false identification to misrepresent his or her age, the penalty increases. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.6855](#))

Possession of Kratom

(Misdemeanor)

No minor may possess any amount of Kratom or a substance that contains Kratom's active ingredient. Violation of this provision is a misdemeanor. ([Minn. Stat. § 152.027](#), subd. 7)

Possession of Ammunition or a Pistol or Assault Weapon

(Felony)

No minor may possess ammunition, or a pistol or semiautomatic military-style assault weapon, unless the minor: (1) is in the actual presence or under the direct supervision of a parent or guardian; (2) is possessing it for military drill purposes; (3) is using it in an approved and supervised target practice range; or (4) has completed a state-approved marksmanship and safety course. ([Minn. Stat. § 624.713](#))

Possession of a Firearm

(Misdemeanor)

No child under 16 years of age may possess a firearm unless he or she is (1) accompanied by a parent or guardian; (2) on the parent or guardian's residential property; (3) participating in an organized target shooting or firearms safety program; or (4) is 14 or 15 and has obtained a firearms safety certificate from the Department of Natural Resources. ([Minn. Stat. § 97B.021](#))

Possession of an Assault Weapon in a Public Place

(Felony)

A person under the age of 21 who illegally carries a semiautomatic military-style assault weapon in a public place is subject to increased criminal penalties. ([Minn. Stat. § 624.7181](#))

Possession or Use of Tear Gas

(Misdemeanor)

No person under the age of 16 may use or possess tear gas except by written permission of a parent or guardian. ([Minn. Stat. § 624.731](#))

Possession or Use of Electronic Incapacitation Device ("Stun Gun")

(Gross Misdemeanor)

No person under the age of 18 may use or possess an electronic incapacitation device ("stun gun"). ([Minn. Stat. § 624.731](#))

Curfew Ordinances

Although there are no statewide curfew restrictions for minors, state law authorizes local governments to enact local curfew ordinances and specifically authorizes county boards to adopt countywide curfews applicable to all unmarried minors. Any countywide curfew ordinance adopted in the seven-county metropolitan area must contain an earlier curfew for children under age 12 than for older children. ([Minn. Stat. § 145A.05](#), subd. 7a)

Gambling

(Misdemeanor; Petty Misdemeanor)

A person under age 18 may not: (1) buy a lottery ticket; (2) make a bet or cash a winning ticket at a racetrack; or (3) participate in lawful gambling (except for certain bingo games). Violation of the lawful gambling and pari-mutuel betting prohibitions is a misdemeanor. Violation of the lottery ticket prohibition is a petty misdemeanor. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 240.25](#), subd. 8; [240.26](#); [349.181](#); [349A.12](#))

Violent Video Games

(Civil Penalty)

A person under age 17 may not knowingly rent or purchase a restricted video game. A restricted video game means a game rated AO (adults only) or M (mature). Violation of this provision results in a civil penalty of \$25. ([Minn. Stat. § 325I.06](#))

Note: On July 31, 2006, the federal district court prohibited the implementation and enforcement of this statute based on its finding that the statute violates the First and Fourteenth amendments of the U.S. Constitution. *Entm't Software Ass'n v. Hatch*, 443 F. Supp.2d 1065 (D. Minn. 2006), *aff'd*, 519 F.3d 768 (8th Cir. 2008).

Unlawful Acts Against Youths

There are a number of Minnesota laws that make it a crime or a petty misdemeanor to commit certain acts with or upon children. These criminal laws seek to protect young people in a variety of situations where, due to youth and immaturity, children are considered particularly vulnerable to physical or emotional harm.

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Pornography Laws

Child Pornography

(Felony)

It is a crime to employ, use, or permit a minor to pose or model for a sexual performance, or to disseminate or distribute for profit pictures or works depicting minors in a sexual performance. ([Minn. Stat. § 617.246](#))

(Felony)

It is a crime to disseminate or possess photographic representations of sexual conduct involving a minor. ([Minn. Stat. § 617.247](#))

Dissemination of Pornographic Works to Minors

(Gross Misdemeanor)

No person may knowingly sell or rent to a minor pornographic pictures or films containing material harmful to minors or show or admit minors, whether or not for monetary consideration, to see such films or other presentations in a place of public accommodation.

(Misdemeanor)

Places of public accommodation may not display pornographic materials containing material harmful to minors unless minors are physically segregated from the display or an opaque cover blocks from view those materials that may be harmful to minors. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 617.293 to 617.294](#))

Sexual Abuse Laws

Criminal Sexual Conduct

(Felony)

It is a crime for any person who is more than 36 months older than the victim to engage in sexual conduct with a minor who is under 13 years of age. It is also a crime to engage in sexual contact with a minor between the ages of 13 and 18 who is a certain number of years younger than the actor and/or is, or within the past 120 days was, under the actor's authority and control, or a minor who is under 18 and with whom the actor has a "significant relationship" as defined by law.

It is a crime for an adult to engage in sexual conduct with a minor when that person has a significant relationship to the minor, or is the minor's guardian. "Significant relationship" includes relationships by blood, marriage, and adoption but excludes relationships more distant than first cousins. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 609.341 to 609.345](#))

(Gross Misdemeanor; Felony)

It is a gross misdemeanor for a person to (1) engage in nonconsensual sexual contact with a minor, or (2) knowingly engage in masturbation or lewd exhibition of the genitals in the

presence of a minor under the age of 16. A violation of the conduct described in clause (2) is subject to felony penalties if the offender has previous criminal sexual conduct convictions. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.3451](#)) See also [Overview of Criminal Sexual Conduct Crimes](#), House Research Department, July 2010.

Interference with Privacy

(Gross Misdemeanor; Felony)

A person who surreptitiously interferes with the privacy of a minor under the age of 18 (i.e., commits a “peeping tom” offense) is subject to increased penalties. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.746](#))

Indecent Exposure

(Gross Misdemeanor)

It is a gross misdemeanor for a person to willfully and lewdly expose his or her body, to procure another to expose private parts, or to engage in any other open or gross lewdness or lascivious behavior, in the presence of a minor under the age of 16. ([Minn. Stat. § 617.23](#))

Prostitution

(Felony; Gross Misdemeanor)

It is a crime for any person to solicit, induce, promote, or receive profit from the practice of prostitution by a minor. It is also a crime to engage in prostitution or hire an individual to engage in prostitution with a minor, or someone believed to be a minor, with the penalty varying depending on the age of the minor.

It is also a gross misdemeanor for a nonrelative to permit a minor to reside with him or her without parental consent when the nonrelative knows or has reason to know that the minor is engaging in prostitution. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 609.321 to 609.324](#))

Prostitution Crimes Committed in School and Park Zones

(Felony; Gross Misdemeanor)

Enhanced penalties apply when a person commits certain prostitution offenses on or near a public park or school property (excluding postsecondary schools) or at a school bus stop while students are waiting for the bus. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.3242](#))

Sexual Solicitation and Communication

(Felony)

An adult who solicits (i.e., commands, entreats, or attempts to persuade by telephone, letter, or computerized or other electronic means) a child under the age of 16, or reasonably believed to be under age 16, to engage in sexual conduct commits a crime. It is also a crime for an adult to use the Internet or other electronic device or communication system to communicate or distribute sexually explicit material to a child under the age of 16 or reasonably believed to be under age 16. Mistake as to age is not a defense to these crimes. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.352](#))

Human and Sex Trafficking

(Felony)

Enhanced penalties apply to a person who knowingly engages in a trafficking crime involving an individual who is under 18. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 609.282; 609.283; 609.321](#), subd. 7a; [609.322](#))

Physical and Emotional Abuse Laws

Death Caused by Child Abuse

(Felony; Life Imprisonment)

A person who causes the death of a child while committing or attempting to commit child abuse is guilty of first-degree murder if (1) there is a past pattern of child abuse, and (2) death occurs under circumstances manifesting an extreme indifference to human life. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.185](#), para. (a), cl. (5))

Death Caused by Malicious Punishment of a Child

(Felony)

A person who causes the death of a child while committing or attempting to commit malicious punishment of a child is guilty of first-degree manslaughter. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.20](#), cl. (5))

Death Caused by Neglect or Endangerment of a Child

(Felony)

A person who causes the death of a child while committing or attempting to commit neglect or endangerment of a child is guilty of second-degree manslaughter. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.205](#), cl. (5))

Malicious Punishment

(Gross Misdemeanor)

No parent, guardian, or caretaker may, through an intentional act or series of acts against a minor, use unreasonable force or cruel discipline against the minor.

(Felony)

The offense becomes a felony if substantial or great bodily harm results from the person's actions or if the offender has been convicted of this crime previously within the past five years. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.377](#))

Assault; Past Pattern of Abuse

(Felony)

A person who assaults a minor and causes any amount of bodily harm is guilty of a felony if the person has engaged in a past pattern of child abuse against that minor. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.223](#), subd. 2)

Assault or Malicious Punishment of Child under the Age of Four

(Felony)

A person who assaults or maliciously punishes a child under the age of four is guilty of a felony if the act causes any physical harm to the child's head, eyes, or neck, or causes multiple bruises to any other part of the child's body. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 609.223](#), subd. 3; [609.377](#))

Neglect or Endangerment

(Gross Misdemeanor; Felony)

A parent, guardian, or caretaker may not: (1) willfully deprive a minor child of necessary food, clothing, shelter, or health care when reasonably able to provide these necessities, if the deprivation substantially harms or is likely to substantially harm the child's physical, mental, or emotional health; (2) knowingly permit the continuing physical or sexual abuse of the child; (3) endanger a child's health by intentionally causing or permitting the child to be placed in a dangerous situation or to be present where illegal drugs are possessed, sold, or manufactured; or (4) endanger a child under the age of 14 by intentionally or recklessly allowing the child to have access to a loaded firearm. The acts are punishable as gross misdemeanors; however, if the neglect or endangerment results in substantial harm to the child, the act is punishable as a felony. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.378](#))

Newborns Left at a Safe Place; Immunity

A mother may not be prosecuted for leaving an unharmed newborn (not more than seven days old) with an employee at a hospital, health care provider who provides urgent care services, or ambulance service. A person who is not the mother may leave the newborn with the mother's permission. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.3785](#))

Nonsupport

(Misdemeanor)

No person legally obligated to provide court-ordered support to a child may knowingly fail to do so without lawful excuse. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.375](#), subd. 1)

(Gross Misdemeanor)

The offense becomes a gross misdemeanor if (1) the nonsupport continues for more than 90 days, or (2) the arrears amount to more than six times the monthly obligation. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.375](#), subd. 2)

(Felony)

The offense becomes a felony if (1) the nonsupport continues for more than 180 days, or (2) the arrears amount to more than nine times the monthly obligation. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.375](#), subd. 2a)

Contempt proceedings must precede prosecution for nonpayment of child support. Procedures for discharge and dismissal may apply to persons who execute a written payment agreement and comply with it. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.375](#), subd. 2b)

False Imprisonment

(Felony)

No person who knowingly lacks legal authority may intentionally confine or restrain someone else's minor child without the consent of the minor's parent or legal custodian. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.255](#), subd. 2)

(Gross Misdemeanor)

No parent, guardian, or caretaker may subject a minor to unreasonable physical confinement or restraint, if done in a cruel manner and if excessive under the circumstances. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.255](#), subd. 3)

(Felony)

If demonstrable or substantial bodily harm results from the unreasonable confinement or restraint, the offense becomes a felony. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.255](#), subd. 3)

Kidnapping

(Felony)

No child under 16 years of age may be confined or taken from one place to another without the consent of the child's parents or legal custodial guardian. Unlike the situation with adult kidnapping victims, consent of the child victim to the kidnapping is not a defense. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.25](#))

Deprivation of Parental or Custodial Rights

(Gross Misdemeanor; Felony)

No person may conceal a minor child for the purpose of depriving a parent or other custodian of his or her parental, custodial, or parenting time rights to the child, nor may a person abduct a minor child for the purpose of depriving a parent of his or her parental rights, unless a person reasonably believes the action is necessary to prevent physical or sexual assault or substantial emotional harm. Additionally, no person who is at least 18 years old and more than two years older than a minor child may refuse to return the child to a parent or lawful custodian, and no adult may contribute to the child's truancy or running away, or reside with a child under the age of 16, without parental consent. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.26](#))

Safety Laws

DWI; Child Endangerment

(Gross Misdemeanor)

A person who violates “driving while intoxicated” laws is subject to increased criminal and administrative penalties if the person commits the offense with a child in the vehicle who is under the age of 16 and is more than three years younger than the driver. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 169A.03](#), subd. 3; [169A.25](#); [169A.26](#); [169A.60](#); [169A.63](#))

Child Restraint System

(Petty Misdemeanor)

When transporting a child who is both under the age of eight and shorter than four feet, nine inches in a motor vehicle, the vehicle operator must install and use a federally approved child restraint system. ([Minn. Stat. § 169.685](#), subd. 5)⁴

Alcoholic Beverage Sales

(Gross Misdemeanor or Felony)

No one may sell or give alcoholic beverages to a person under 21 years of age. If an unlicensed or unpermitted person furnishes alcohol to someone who is underage and that person becomes intoxicated and either suffers or causes great bodily harm or death, the furnisher is guilty of a felony. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 340A.503](#); [340A.701](#); [340A.702](#))

Tobacco Sales

(Misdemeanor or Gross Misdemeanor; Civil Penalty)

It is unlawful to sell or furnish tobacco; tobacco-related devices, such as cigarette papers or pipes; or electronic delivery devices, such as e-cigarettes to a person under 21 years of age. A violation of this prohibition is punishable by both criminal and civil penalties. Repeat violations are subject to increased penalties. The civil penalties may be assessed against the retailer employing the individual as well as the individual making the unlawful sale. It is also unlawful to sell nicotine delivery products to a person under 21 years of age. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 609.685](#); [609.6855](#); [461.12](#))

Tear Gas Sales

(Misdemeanor)

No one may knowingly sell or furnish tear gas to a child under 16 years of age without the written permission of the child’s parent or guardian. ([Minn. Stat. § 624.731](#))

⁴ All drivers and passengers must wear a seatbelt. ([Minn. Stat. § 169.686](#))

Firearms Sales

(Felony or Misdemeanor)

No one within any municipality may furnish a minor with a firearm, air gun, ammunition, or explosive without the prior consent of the minor's parent or the municipality's police department. Outside municipalities, no one may furnish such items to a minor under 14 years of age without parental consent nor may a parent or guardian permit such a minor to handle or use a firearm outside the parent or guardian's presence. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.66](#))

Ammunition Displays

(Petty Misdemeanor)

It is unlawful to display centerfire handgun ammunition for sale to the public in a manner that makes the ammunition accessible to minors unless the ammunition is in an enclosed display case, under observation by store employees, or otherwise inaccessible to minors. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.663](#))

Negligent Storage of a Firearm

(Gross Misdemeanor)

No person may negligently store or leave a loaded firearm in a location where the person knows or reasonably should know a child under the age of 18 is likely to gain access, unless reasonable action is taken to secure the firearm against access by the child. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.666](#))

Electronic Incapacitation Device ("Stun Gun") Sales

(Misdemeanor)

No one may knowingly sell or furnish an electronic incapacitation device ("stun gun") to a child under 18 years of age. ([Minn. Stat. § 624.731](#))

Unused Refrigerator or Container

(Misdemeanor)

It is unlawful to allow an unused refrigerator or other container to be exposed and accessible to children, if it is large enough to contain a child and has doors that fasten automatically when closed. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.675](#))

Controlled Substance (“Drug”) Laws

Drug Sale or Distribution to or by Means of a Minor

(Felony)

A person who unlawfully sells or distributes controlled substances to a minor, or uses a minor to unlawfully sell, import, or distribute controlled substances, is subject to increased criminal penalties. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 152.022 to 152.024](#); [152.0261](#))

Drug Crimes Committed in School Zones

(Felony)

Enhanced penalties apply to a person who commits certain controlled substance crimes on or near school property (excluding postsecondary schools) or on a school bus while it is transporting students. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 152.022 to 152.023](#))

Sale of Kratom

(Gross Misdemeanor)

No person may sell any amount of Kratom or a substance containing Kratom’s active ingredient to a minor. ([Minn. Stat. § 152.027](#), subd. 7)

Drug Paraphernalia Sales

(Gross Misdemeanor)

An adult may not knowingly deliver drug paraphernalia to a minor who is at least three years his or her junior. ([Minn. Stat. § 152.094](#))

Miscellaneous Criminal Laws

Junk or Secondhand Dealers

(Misdemeanor)

No junk dealer or secondhand dealer is allowed to purchase property from a minor without the written consent of the minor’s parent or guardian. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.815](#))

Pawnbrokers

(Misdemeanor)

No pawnbroker is allowed to accept a pledge or purchase property from a person under the age of 18. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 325J.08](#); [325J.11](#))

Abduction for Marriage

(Gross Misdemeanor)

No person may take a minor for the purpose of marriage without the consent of the minor's parents or legal custodian. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.265](#))

Female Genital Mutilation

(Felony)

No person may knowingly circumcise, excise, or infibulate, in whole or in part, the labia majora, labia minora, or clitoris of another, and consent to the procedure by a minor or the minor's parent is not a defense.

Solicitation of Juveniles to Commit Crime

(Misdemeanor; Gross Misdemeanor; or Felony)

It is a crime for any adult to solicit or conspire with a minor to commit a criminal or delinquent act. The penalty for this crime varies depending on the severity of the solicited criminal act. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.494](#))

Contributing to Delinquency

(Civil Sanctions; Gross Misdemeanor)

No person may encourage, cause, or contribute (1) to the need for protective services or delinquency of a minor, or (2) to the minor's status as a petty offender. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260B.335; 260B.425; 260C.425](#))

Gambling

(Misdemeanor)

It is illegal for racetracks, lottery ticket retailers, and organizations that conduct lawful gambling to allow persons under age 18 to gamble. It is also illegal for anyone to give a lottery ticket to a person under age 18. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 240.13](#), subd. 8; [240.26](#); [349.181](#))

There is no prohibition in state law against persons under age 18 entering casinos or gambling in them. However, tribal-state compacts prohibit Indian casinos from allowing a person under age 18 to play blackjack or video gambling machines. A casino that allows a person under age 18 to gamble is not violating state law but may be subject to tribal court action for violating the compact.

Providing a Tattoo or Body Piercing to a Minor

(Petty Misdemeanor or Gross Misdemeanor)

Except as noted below, a licensed technician may perform body piercings on a minor if a parent or guardian is present and has signed consent and authorization forms. Both the parent or

guardian and minor must have photo identification, and there must be documentation establishing parentage or guardianship.

No person may provide a tattoo or any of the following body piercings to a minor: a nipple or genital piercing, branding, scarification, suspension, subdermal implantation, microdermal, or tongue bifurcation. Tattooing is a gross misdemeanor. Violation of the piercing provisions is a petty misdemeanor. Any violation may result in disciplinary actions against the technician, including licensing actions and civil penalties. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 146B.07; 645.241](#))

Tanning

(Petty Misdemeanor)

A minor is prohibited from using any tanning equipment that uses lamps intended to tan skin with ultraviolet radiation, regardless of parental consent. The operator of the tanning facility is guilty of a petty misdemeanor for violation of this section. A minor is permitted to use nonultraviolet radiation tanning methods. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 325H.01 to 325H.10](#))

Miscellaneous Age Provisions

This section describes rights granted on the basis of age, in addition to those covered in other sections of the guidebook.

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Access to Government Records

A minor and his or her parent or guardian may examine private or public government data on the minor, with certain exceptions:

- Parental financial data filed with a school are not available to a minor. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.32](#), subd. 4)
- At the minor's request, data will be withheld from a parent or guardian if the government agency determines that withholding is in the minor's best interest. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.02](#), subd. 8)
- Copies of child abuse victim videotape interviews can only be obtained by court order. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 13.821; 611A.90](#))
- In investigations of abuse or neglect, interviews with a minor are not accessible to the minor's parent or guardian if the parent or guardian is the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect. ([Minn. Stat. §626.556](#), subd. 11a)

For information on access to a minor's educational records, see Access to Students' Educational Records under Educational Rights and Responsibilities.

For information on issues related to a minor's criminal court records, see Criminal Adult Court and Juvenile Court.

Fishing and Hunting Licenses

Residents under age 16 may fish without a license. ([Minn. Stat. § 97A.451](#), subd. 2)

Residents and nonresidents under age 16 may hunt small game, under certain conditions, without a small game license. If they are under age 13, they must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. If they are 13 years old, they must be accompanied by a parent or guardian and have a firearms safety certificate. Residents and nonresidents age 13, 14, or 15 also have the option to hunt small game if they possess an apprentice hunter validation, which requires hunting with a licensed adult. If they are age 14 or 15, they must have a firearms safety certificate. Residents under age 16 may also trap small game, excluding wolves, under certain conditions, without a small game license. Residents between 13 and 15 years old must have a trapping license to do so, but residents younger than that do not need a license. ([Minn. Stat. § 97A.451](#), subd. 3)

Residents and nonresidents age 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, or 15 may obtain a license to hunt big game under certain conditions. Residents and nonresidents age 12, 13, 14, or 15 must possess a firearms safety certificate or an apprentice hunter validation and nonresidents age 12 or 13 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Residents and nonresidents age 10 or 11 must be under the direct supervision of a parent or guardian where the parent or guardian is within immediate reach. ([Minn. Stat. § 97A.451](#), subd. 4)

Office Holding

An individual must be 21 years old in order to hold state or local office. ([Minn. Const. art. VII, § 6](#))

Voting

An individual may vote in a state or local primary, general, or special election at age 18, provided that other eligibility and registration requirements are met. ([Minn. Stat. § 201.014](#); [Minn. Const. art. VII, § 1](#); [U.S. Const. amend. XXVI](#))

An individual who is 17, but will be 18 by the time of the next state general election, may vote and be elected a delegate or officer at a political party's precinct caucus. ([Minn. Stat. § 202A.16](#))

An individual who is 16 or 17 and is enrolled in a Minnesota high school or is homeschooled may serve as a trainee election judge in the county where the individual resides, with certain conditions. ([Minn. Stat. § 204B.19](#), subd. 6)

Part 2: The Courts

Minnesota law makes distinctions between adults and minors not only with regard to substantive rights and responsibilities, as described in Part 1, but also with respect to the type of procedures under which courts decide these rights and responsibilities. Part 2 explains these court procedures in three sections.

Civil Adult Court describes procedures applicable to minors who are parties or witnesses to civil lawsuits in adult court.

Criminal Adult Court describes procedures applicable to minors who are involved in criminal cases in adult court as witnesses or parties. It also explains certain procedural protections pertaining to the care and custody of minors found to have committed criminal acts.

Juvenile Court describes the purposes and procedures of the juvenile court, which hears most cases involving unlawful acts committed by minors and cases involving children in need of protection or services from the state.

Civil Adult Court

This section describes the rights and restrictions affecting minors as parties or witnesses in civil lawsuits in adult court.

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Parental Liability for Children's Torts and Contracts

The parent or guardian of a minor who willfully or maliciously causes personal injury or property damage, including damage from graffiti, is jointly and severally liable for up to \$1,000 in damage if the child would be liable for damages if he or she had been an adult when the damage occurred. A parent or guardian may be liable for up to \$5,000 in a civil action for conduct that would be a bias crime if the parent or guardian did not make reasonable efforts to exercise control over the minor's behavior. In some cases, the minor or the minor's parent or guardian will also be responsible for the attorney's fees and costs of the injured party. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 540.18; 611A.79](#), subd. 4; [617.90](#))

The general rule is that minors are not bound by contracts that they enter if the minor disaffirms the contract's provisions within a reasonable time of reaching the age of majority. *Kelly, Jr. v. Furlong*, 261 N.W. 460 (Minn. 1935). Accordingly, unless a minor's parent cosigned the contract, a court generally cannot compel a parent to fulfill a minor's contractual obligations. A court may impose contractual liability on a parent if the child is not emancipated and the contract is for a "necessity" (e.g., food, clothing, shelter).

Parents' Liability to Children

Children may sue their parents for torts. Parents are judged by a "reasonable parent" standard in determining whether they are negligent. *Anderson v. Stream*, 295 N.W.2d 595 (Minn. 1980).

Injury to Minors

A parent or court-appointed guardian may sue to recover for injury done to a minor child. If a parent does not bring a suit, a guardian ad litem is eligible to do so. ([Minn. Stat. § 540.08](#))

Statute of Limitations

The statute of limitations does not run while a person is a minor. A statute of limitation does not begin to run on a minor's legal right of action until he or she is 18 unless parents file suit before then, with two exceptions. The suspension of the statute of limitations ceases in a medical malpractice case either seven years after the action arises or one year after the plaintiff turns 18. In cases of sexual abuse against a minor there is no statute of limitations, unless the offender was under 15 or the claim is against a school, church, or organization, in which case the claim against that defendant must be brought before the victim is 24 years old. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 541.073; 541.15](#))

Minors as Witnesses

A child under the age of ten is a competent witness unless he or she lacks the capacity to remember or to relate facts truthfully. When a child under the age of 12 is a victim of a crime, the child may be able to provide testimony in an alternative format. ([Minn. Stat. § 595.02](#), subd. 1, para. (n); [Minn. Stat. § 595.02](#), subd. 4)

Criminal Adult Court

This section describes procedures applicable to minors who are parties or witnesses in criminal cases in adult court, or who are confined in a correctional facility.

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Criminal Responsibility

Children under the age of 14 are considered legally incapable of committing crimes.

Children between the ages of 14 and 18 accused of criminal acts may be certified for adult criminal prosecution or designated as extended jurisdiction juveniles in the manner provided in the juvenile code and under the rules of juvenile procedure.

If a child 16 years old or older is certified to adult court and is convicted of a felony offense, he or she may be charged and tried in adult court for any subsequent felony without going through the juvenile court's certification process.

A child who is alleged to have committed first-degree murder after becoming 16 years old may be charged and convicted in adult court without going through the juvenile court's certification process, and without regard to the child's previous criminal or juvenile court record. ([Minn. Stat. § 609.055](#))

Admissibility of a Child's Hearsay Statements in Child Abuse Cases

Hearsay statements made by a child sex or physical abuse victim under ten years of age may be admitted into evidence in abuse cases if (1) the statement is shown to be reliable, and (2) the child either testifies in person or is unavailable as a witness and there is corroboration of the abuse. ([Minn. Stat. § 595.02](#), subd. 3)

Testimony by Closed Circuit TV or Videotape

A child under 12 years old who is a victim of physical or sexual abuse or another violent crime, or who is a witness to the physical or sexual abuse of another, may be allowed to give testimony over closed-circuit TV or on videotape, if the court decides that use of these devices is necessary to allow the child to testify without undue psychological trauma. ([Minn. Stat. § 595.02](#), subd. 4)

Minors as Witnesses

A child under the age of ten is a competent witness unless he or she lacks the capacity to remember or to relate facts truthfully. ([Minn. Stat. § 595.02](#), subd. 1, para. (n))

Child Sex Abuse or Trafficking Victim

No data in records or reports relating to criminal child sex abuse or sex trafficking petitions, complaints, or indictments that specifically identify the child are accessible to the public, except by court order. Furthermore, when the government interviews a child abuse victim, a record must be made of the time, place, duration, identity of persons present, and substance of the interview. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 609.3471; 626.561](#))

Exclusion of Public from Trials Involving Children

A judge may bar the public from the courtroom during all or part of a child sex abuse trial if necessary to ensure fairness or to protect the child. ([Minn. Stat. § 631.045](#))

Exclusion of Children from Criminal and Scandalous Trials

No person under age 17 may be present at a criminal prosecution unless involved or directly interested in the case. ([Minn. Stat. § 631.04](#))

Note: Section 631.04 was found unconstitutional as a violation of the separation of powers doctrine. *State v. Lindsey*, 632 N.W.2d 652 (Minn. 2001).

The court is permitted to exclude minors whose presence is not necessary if a trial involves obscene or scandalous matters. ([Minn. Stat. § 546.37](#))

Care and Custody of Juvenile Offenders

A minor may not be detained or confined in the same area as adult prisoners while in jail or lockup unless the minor has been indicted for first-degree murder, certified for trial as an adult, or convicted of a crime as an adult. ([Minn. Stat. § 641.14](#))

The Commissioner of Corrections is prohibited from placing any juvenile referred by the juvenile court in a penal institution. ([Minn. Stat. § 242.14](#))

It is a misdemeanor for any person to abduct, conceal, or improperly interfere with any inmate in a juvenile correctional facility. ([Minn. Stat. § 242.47](#))

Expungement of Certain Criminal Records

A juvenile who has been certified to stand trial as an adult in criminal court and who is convicted of a crime may petition for the expungement of the criminal record if the juvenile has been discharged from the custody of the Department of Corrections or has successfully served the conditions of probation ordered by the court. If the court approves expungement, the juvenile's criminal record is sealed and cannot be reopened except under limited circumstances. (Juvenile offender photographs or images may not be expunged from law enforcement records or databases.) Expungement of delinquency records (as opposed to criminal records) is discussed on page 124. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 13.82](#); [609A.02](#), subd. 2; [609A.03](#))

Juvenile Court

This section provides a general overview of the juvenile justice system in Minnesota. First, the purpose and jurisdiction of the juvenile court are described with an explanation of key terms and concepts necessary for understanding the function of the court. Next, the juvenile court process is explained: first, for delinquency and other offenses; second, for cases involving a child in need of protection or services (CHIPS).

Most of the statutory provisions discussed in this section are located in [Minnesota Statutes, chapters 260, 260B, and 260C](#). Several other provisions are found in the Minnesota Rules of Juvenile Delinquency Procedure, effective September 2018, and Rules of Juvenile Protection Procedure, effective September 2019.

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Purpose and Jurisdiction of Juvenile Court

The juvenile court in Minnesota is authorized to hear and decide two main categories of cases:

- those involving juveniles who commit unlawful acts
- those involving children who, for a variety of reasons, are in need of protection or services by or from the juvenile court (CHIPS)

The juvenile court, however, lacks jurisdiction over two types of juvenile offenders: (1) juveniles 16 years old or older who are alleged to have committed first-degree murder; and (2) juveniles 16 years old or older who are alleged to have committed a petty misdemeanor-level traffic offense or a DWI or related nonfelony offense. The district (adult) court has jurisdiction over these offenders. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260B.007](#), subd. 6; [260B.101](#); [260B.225](#))

The juvenile court is also responsible for the following:

- **terminations of parental rights (TPR)** to a child. Parental rights may be terminated by the court either (1) for good cause with parental consent, or (2) if the child has been abandoned or substantially or continuously neglected, if a parent has been ordered to, but has continuously failed to contribute to the child's financial support without good cause, if the parent's conduct shows a clear unwillingness or unfitness to be a parent, or if reasonable efforts have failed to correct the conditions leading to the child's out-of-home placement ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.101](#), subd. 2, cl. (1); [260C.301](#))
- appointments and removals of **guardians** for minors, where parental rights have been terminated ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.101](#), subd. 2, cl. (3))
- juvenile **marriages** ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.101](#), subd. 2, cl. (4))
- **adoption matters** ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.101](#), subd. 2, cl. (5))
- periodic review of a child's placement in **foster care** ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.101](#), subd. 2, cl. (6))
- review of **voluntary foster care placement of a child for treatment** due to an emotional disturbance or developmental disability or related condition ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.101](#), subd. 2, cl. (7); [260D.01](#))
- **permanency matters** for a child in foster care ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.101](#), subd. 2, cl. (2); [260C.503](#))
- **persons** (including adults) alleged to be **contributing to the neglect, delinquency, or juvenile petty offender status of a minor**. Juvenile courts may order relief of a civil or injunctive nature and hear and decide a gross misdemeanor criminal charge in these cases ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260B.335](#); [260B.425](#))
- **reestablishment of a legal parent and child relationship** ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.101](#), subd. 2, cl. (8); [260C.329](#))

Records of juvenile court delinquency actions are accessible to the minor and his or her parents or guardian. Juvenile delinquency records may be seen by others outside the judicial and law enforcement systems in most cases only with a court order, except in the following situations:

- The victim of any alleged delinquent act may obtain the name and age of the juvenile, the act for which the juvenile was petitioned, the date of the offense, and the disposition of the case. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.171](#), subd. 4)
- A county attorney may give a law enforcement agency that referred a delinquency matter to the county attorney a summary of the results of that referral, including the details of any juvenile court disposition. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.171](#), subd. 4)
- Court disposition orders in certain cases are shared with schools as discussed on page 44. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.171](#), subd. 3)
- Records of adjudications, court transcripts, and delinquency petitions must be released to law enforcement agencies and prosecuting authorities for purposes of investigating and prosecuting crimes committed for the benefit of a gang. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.171](#), subd. 1)

All delinquency proceedings conducted by the juvenile court are closed to the public except: (1) hearings and court records⁵ involving minors 16 years or older are open to the public if the minor is accused of a felony-level offense; and (2) a victim of a child's delinquent act may attend any related delinquency proceeding, subject to the court's authority to exclude the victim for specified reasons. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.163](#), subds. 1 and 3)

The Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) retains juvenile history data on a child against whom a delinquency petition was filed and continued without adjudication, or a child who was found to have committed a felony or gross misdemeanor-level offense, until the child reaches age 28. If, however, the offender commits a felony violation between the ages of 18 and 28, the bureau retains the juvenile data for as long as the data would have been retained if the offender had been an adult at the time of the juvenile offense. Juvenile data held by the BCA are private data but accessible to criminal justice agencies, courts, and public defenders. In addition, the BCA must disseminate a juvenile adjudication record in connection with a background check required by statute. ([Minn. Stat. § 299C.095](#), subds. 1, para. (b) and 2) See also the publication *Criminal Background Check Statutes: An Overview*, House Research Department, February 2014.

Absent exceptional circumstances, juvenile protection hearings (except adoption proceedings) are presumed accessible to the public. In addition, most juvenile protection case records are presumed accessible to the public pursuant to the Rules of Juvenile Protection Procedure. The court, however, may close any hearing and related records as provided in rules. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.163](#), subd. 1; [260C.171](#); Minn. R. Juv. Prot. P. 8)⁶

⁵ Except for criminal justice and other government agencies, public juvenile delinquency records are not remotely accessible, but may be accessed in electronic or paper form at a court facility. (Minn. R. Juv. Del. 30.02) In 2013 the legislature passed a more restrictive law on electronic record access which the Supreme Court declined to adopt. See [Minn. Stat. § 260B.171](#), subd. 9; Order Promulgating Amendments to the Minnesota Rules of Delinquency Procedure, ADM 10-8003 (May 14, 2014).

⁶ Examples of records that are not accessible to the public include medical records, records that identify a reporter of abuse or neglect, and records that identify a minor victim of alleged or adjudicated sexual assault. (Minn. R. Juv. Prot. P. 8.01, 8.04, 27.01)

Juveniles Who Commit Unlawful Acts

As mentioned earlier, one important type of case generally assigned to the juvenile court involves minors who engage in unlawful conduct. In contrast to the adult courts, the juvenile proceeding in this context is not a criminal proceeding designed to determine criminal responsibility and punishment but, rather, is a civil proceeding designed to protect the child from the consequences of his or her own conduct, develop individual responsibility for unlawful behavior, rehabilitate him or her, and, at the same time, promote public safety. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.001](#), subd. 2)

Juveniles committing unlawful acts fall into one of the following categories, depending mostly on the nature of the conduct involved:

- **Delinquents:** children 10 years of age or older who commit acts that would be unlawful if committed by an adult, except for those the law designates as petty offenses, or who are 14 years old or older and whose cases are heard in adult court ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260B.007](#), subd. 6; [609.055](#); *In re Welfare of S.A.C.*, 529 N.W.2d 517 (Minn. App. 1995))⁷
- **Extended jurisdiction juveniles:** children 14 years old or older who commit felony-level delinquent acts and who the prosecutor or the court designates as being in this category ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.130](#))
- **Petty offenders:** children who engage in conduct that is unlawful for them but not unlawful for adults (i.e., status offense), such as violating curfew, drinking, and smoking. The petty offender category also includes juveniles charged with their first or second nonviolent misdemeanor offense, with the exception of certain designated offenses ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.007](#), subd. 16)
- **Juvenile traffic offenders:** children who violate traffic laws. In certain cases, depending on the age of the child and the nature of the traffic offense, the matter may be handled exclusively by the adult court rather than the juvenile court ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.225](#))

Safe Harbor

Juveniles who are alleged to have committed prostitution are not considered delinquents or petty offenders, but rather are considered sexually exploited youth and fall under the juvenile protection laws (i.e., CHIPS).

Certification for Adult Prosecution

In some cases, the juvenile court may decide that a child over the age of 14 who is accused of a particularly dangerous offense and/or has engaged in criminal conduct in the past would be handled more appropriately in the adult court. These alleged delinquents may be “certified to adult court for criminal prosecution” upon motion by the prosecutor if the juvenile court holds a hearing and finds that there is probable cause to believe the child committed a felony offense

⁷ However, children who commit traffic offenses are not labeled as delinquents, even if the conduct would have been unlawful if committed by an adult. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.225](#)) Similarly, children who commit certain nonviolent misdemeanors or who are found in possession of a small amount of marijuana are classified as petty offenders rather than delinquents. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.007](#), subd. 16)

and that there is clear and convincing evidence public safety is not served by handling the case in juvenile court. Once a child has been certified to the adult court for prosecution, the child may be prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced⁸ as if he or she were an adult.

The law presumes that certain juvenile offenders will be certified to adult court for criminal prosecution. The presumption applies if:

- the child was 16 or 17 years old at the time of the felony offense; and
- the court finds probable cause to believe the child committed either: (1) a felony offense that would result in a presumptive commitment to prison under the sentencing guidelines and applicable statutes (generally violent or other repeat serious offenses); or (2) any felony offense while using a firearm.

In such cases, the child has the burden to rebut the presumption by clear and convincing evidence demonstrating that retaining the case in juvenile court serves public safety. If the child does not rebut the presumption, the court must certify the case to adult court. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.125](#))

Dispositions for Juvenile Offenders and Juvenile Petty Offenders

Assuming the juvenile court retains jurisdiction over the alleged juvenile offender and, after a hearing, determines that the child did engage in the unlawful conduct, the court has a variety of dispositions available to it including fines, probation, counseling, home detention, electronic surveillance, sex offender treatment, placement out of the home, loss of driver's license, restitution or community service, residency restrictions, and (for delinquents only) commitment to the Commissioner of Corrections for placement in a state juvenile correctional facility. A juvenile adjudicated delinquent for a predatory offense (as defined in statute) must register as a predatory offender. A juvenile petty offender may not be placed outside the home except for in-patient treatment for chemical dependency. The juvenile court's jurisdiction over the child lasts until the child's 19th birthday. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 243.166](#), subd. 1b; [260B.193](#), subd. 5; [260B.198](#); [260B.225](#); [260B.235](#))

Extended Jurisdiction Juveniles

A juvenile offender alleged to have committed a felony-level offense after reaching the age of 14 may be prosecuted as an "extended jurisdiction juvenile" (EJJ) instead of being certified to adult court or dealt with as a juvenile delinquent. This intermediate category may apply to the following offenders:

- 14- to 17-year-olds who are designated EJJ's instead of being certified to adult court following a certification hearing

⁸ In a line of cases from 2005 to 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court addressed the issue of culpability of children in adult sentencing. The Court held that the Eighth Amendment bars capital punishment for children, prohibits a life sentence without the possibility of parole for children who committed nonhomicide offenses, and forbids a sentencing scheme that *mandates* life in prison without the possibility of parole for child offenders. *Roper v. Simmons*, 543 U.S. 551 (2005); *Graham v. Florida*, 560 U.S. 48 (2010); *Miller v. Alabama*, 132 S.Ct. 2455 (2012)

- 16- and 17-year-olds who would have been subject to the presumption in favor of certification but who are, instead, designated EJJ by the prosecutor
- 14- to 17-year-olds who are designated EJJ by the court after a hearing on the matter

A child who is designated an EJJ has the right to a jury trial in juvenile court and the effective assistance of counsel on the issue of guilt.

If convicted, a child designated as an EJJ receives both a juvenile disposition and a stayed adult sentence. This stayed adult sentence may be executed and the child may be sent to prison if the child violates the terms of the juvenile disposition order. The court's jurisdiction over an EJJ lasts until the child's 21st birthday, unless terminated sooner by the court. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260B.130; 260B.193](#), subd. 5)

CHIPS Cases

The other major category of cases the juvenile court hears are those involving "children in need of protection or services" (CHIPS). Grounds for invoking the juvenile court's CHIPS jurisdiction include the following:

- the child is abandoned
- the child is maltreated
- the child resides with a victim or perpetrator of domestic child abuse
- the child is without necessary food, shelter, or other care
- the child is without special care that is necessary due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition
- the child is medically neglected, including infants in need of "medically indicated treatment" within the statute's definition
- the child's parent or guardian desires, for good reason, to be relieved of the child's care and custody
- the child is in an illegal adoptive or foster care placement
- the child's parent or guardian is unable to provide care due to disability or immaturity
- the child is in dangerous surroundings or is exposed to criminal activity in the home
- the child is experiencing growth delays, which may be referred to as a failure to thrive, that have been diagnosed by a physician and are due to parental neglect
- the child is a sexually exploited youth
- the child has committed a delinquent act or juvenile petty offense before becoming ten years old
- the child is a runaway from home
- the child is habitually truant from school
- the child has been found incompetent to proceed or has been found not guilty by reason of mental illness or mental deficiency in connection with a delinquency certification, EJJ, or juvenile petty offense proceeding

- the child has a parent whose parental or custodial rights to another child have been involuntarily terminated or transferred and social services had compelling reasons not to file a TPR petition

In CHIPS cases, the juvenile court is directed by law to secure for each child the care and guidance that is in the child's best interests. In so doing, the court must observe the following policies wherever possible and in the best interests of the child:

- to make reasonable efforts to maintain the child in his or her own home
- to provide judicial procedures that protect the welfare of the child
- to remove the child from parental custody only when his or her welfare or safety cannot otherwise be adequately safeguarded
- when the child is placed out of the home, to secure care and discipline for him or her similar to that which should have been given by the parents
- to make reasonable efforts to reunite the child with his or her family, consistent with the child's best interests and safety, except in certain types of cases
- to ensure that when a child is removed from the home there is a voluntary placement agreement or court order with an individualized determination of the child's best interests
- to ensure appropriate permanency planning for children in foster care

([Minn. Stat. §§ 260.012; 260C.001; 260C.007](#))

Notice

After a petition has been filed alleging a child to be in need of protection or services, the court must issue a notice to a presumed father of the child and a grandparent with statutory rights to participate, unless these persons voluntarily appear or have been summoned. ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.151](#))

Dispositions in CHIPS Cases

The types of dispositions available to the court to achieve these purposes are:

- placing the child under protective supervision while permitting the child to remain at home;
- placing the child out of the home in a foster care setting or, under certain limited circumstances, in an independent living arrangement;
- ordering a trial home visit, when the child is returned to the parent or guardian for up to six months with services from the responsible social services agency, and under certain conditions;
- allowing the child to be adopted in cases where the child is not returned home;
- ordering the abuser out of the home in cases of domestic child abuse; or
- ordering that the child receive special services or treatment for his or her mental or physical health.

Dispositional orders are for a fixed period of time not to exceed one year and may be renewed or modified by the court.

If the child is in need of protection or services due to truancy or running away from home, the court may also order counseling, probation, delivery of the child to school by the parent or legal guardian, a fine, community service, loss or denial of driving privileges, or placement in a correctional group home.

The court's continuing jurisdiction over the child lasts until the child's 18th birthday, except when in the person's best interest, the court decides to continue jurisdiction until the person is 19 years old. In foster care review cases, jurisdiction shall continue to age 21. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.193; 260C.201](#))

Alternative Dispute Resolution

In CHIPS, TPR, and permanency cases, the court may authorize the parties to participate in alternative dispute resolution, including family group decision making, parallel protection process, and mediation. ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.163](#), subd. 12)

Court Process for Delinquency and Other Offenses

The following is a summary of the major stages of the juvenile court process for children alleged to have committed unlawful acts.

Apprehension

A child may be apprehended and taken into immediate custody by the police or a probation or parole officer before any court papers are filed, if the child is:

- in need of protection or services;
- a juvenile petty offender;
- one who has committed a delinquent act that would be a petty misdemeanor or misdemeanor if committed by an adult;
- found in dangerous surroundings;
- the subject of an arrest warrant;
- subject to arrest;
- a parole/probation violator;
- excluded from the parent's home under an order for protection against the child, in situations where the parent is unable or unwilling to provide an alternative safe living arrangement for the child; or
- under age 18 and truant from school. Custody under this circumstance is for the purpose of transporting the child home and into the custody of a parent or guardian, to school, or to a truancy service center.

([Minn. Stat. §§ 260B.143; 260B.175; 260C.143; 260C.175](#))

Pretrial Detention

Children taken into custody must be released as soon as possible to their parents, guardian, or custodian unless the child is a flight risk or the child's health or welfare would be immediately endangered. In those situations, an alleged delinquent may be held up to 36 hours, excluding Saturday, Sunday, and holidays, in a juvenile secure or shelter care facility. In order to detain children in juvenile facilities longer than these time periods, the court must hold a detention hearing and find that pretrial detention is necessary. Then, it must review the decision to continue detention every eight days until the child's case is heard and decided, or the child is released.

There are strict limits on detaining alleged delinquents in an adult jail or lockup. In most cases, no child may be detained in an adult jail or lockup for longer than six hours in a standard metropolitan statistical area or for longer than 24 hours elsewhere, unless a juvenile court petition and a motion to certify the juvenile for adult prosecution have been filed and a judge has approved the continued detention. A limited exception to the 24-hour rule exists if distance or weather conditions preclude a court appearance within 24 hours. In these cases, the juvenile may be detained in the adult facility for up to 48 additional hours or, in the case of weather conditions, for up to 24 hours after safe travel is available. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260B.176 to 260B.181](#))

Filing of Petition or Citation

The filing of a petition or citation with the court officially begins the juvenile court process. The county attorney prepares and files delinquency petitions; a peace officer may file citations for petty offenses and misdemeanor offenses. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260B.141; 260B.143](#))

Arraignment Hearing

At the arraignment hearing, the child is given the opportunity to admit or deny the allegations contained in the petition. This hearing must be held within 30 days of the date on which the petition is served or, if the child is in detention, within five days of the time he or she was taken into custody. (Minn. R. Juv. Del. P. 7.03)

If the child denies the allegations in the petition, or if the court refuses to accept the child's admission, the court schedules an adjudicatory hearing to take place within 30 or 60 days, depending on whether or not the child is in detention. If the child admits to the allegations and the court accepts the admission, the court will schedule a disposition hearing. (Minn. R. Juv. Del. P. 7, 8, 13, and 15)

Certification for Adult Prosecution Hearing

The juvenile court judge, upon motion by the prosecutor, may hold a hearing as to whether an alleged delinquent over the age of 14 should be referred to the adult court for criminal prosecution. In ordering the certification, the court must find that there is probable cause that the child committed the charged offense and that there is clear and convincing evidence that the public safety would not be served by handling the case in the juvenile system. The law

presumes that certain offenders will be certified to adult court (see page 118). ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.125](#))

Extended Jurisdiction Juvenile Hearing

Upon request of a prosecuting attorney, the juvenile court must hold a hearing on whether to designate an offender as an “extended jurisdiction juvenile” (EJJ). Additionally, under certain circumstances, the court or the prosecutor may place a child in the EJJ category without a hearing as an alternative to certification. If the child is not being considered for certification, the prosecutor must ask the court to hold a hearing if the prosecutor wants the child placed in the EJJ category. The effects of placement in the EJJ category are described on page 119. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260B.125; 260B.130; 260B.141](#))

Adjudicatory Hearing (Trial)

An adjudicatory hearing is the equivalent of a trial in adult court. The hearing is held before a judge, except that in EJJ prosecutions the child has the right to a jury trial on the issue of guilt. At the conclusion of the hearing the court has seven days to decide whether the allegations in the petition have been proven beyond a reasonable doubt. If the allegations have not been proven, the court must dismiss the petition. If they have been proven, the court may either: (1) adjudicate the child as a delinquent or an offender, or convict the child as an EJJ and schedule a disposition hearing; or (2) withhold adjudication for up to 360 days, during which time the court may order counseling, supervision, treatment, or other conditions. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260B.163; 260B.198](#); Minn. R. Juv. Del. P. 13, 14, 15, and 19)

Disposition Hearing

A disposition hearing is similar to a sentencing hearing in adult court. It is designed to be informal and to allow all participants the opportunity to be heard. Based on the information received, the judge may order any one of the dispositions summarized on page 119. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.198](#); Minn. R. Juv. Del. P. 15)

Expungement of Delinquency Records

Juvenile delinquency records may be expunged if the court determines that expungement would provide a benefit to the petitioner that outweighs the burden on the government and any detriment to public safety by sealing the records. A record expunged under this subdivision on or after January 1, 2015, may be opened, used, or exchanged between criminal justice agencies under specified circumstances. ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.198](#), subd. 6)

Major Constitutional Rights of a Child in Juvenile Court

The issue of how to treat juveniles in the criminal justice system has received extensive attention. The first juvenile court appeared in Chicago in 1899 and, for many years, juvenile courts were relatively informal. Minors received minimal procedural protections and had few due process rights. Until the 1960s, constitutional challenges to the procedures in juvenile court

were unsuccessful under the theory that juvenile courts protected and rehabilitated juveniles instead of establishing criminal responsibility and assigning punishment.

Since 1966, however, the U.S. Supreme Court has recognized that juvenile court proceedings can and do affect the rights of children to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” and, therefore, that juvenile court hearings and procedures must measure up to the essentials of due process and fair treatment.

In a series of cases decided during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the U.S. Supreme Court found that alleged delinquents have the following constitutional rights in juvenile adjudicatory hearings:

- the right to **written advance notice** of the adjudicatory hearing, allowing adequate time to prepare for it
- the **right to counsel**⁹
- the **privilege against self-incrimination**
- the right to **cross-examine witnesses** *In re Gault*, [387 U.S. 1](#), 87 S. Ct. 1428 (1967)
- that findings of delinquency must be based on **proof beyond a reasonable doubt** if the offense is one that would be unlawful if committed by an adult *In re Winship*, [397 U.S. 358](#), 90 S. Ct. 1068 (1970)
- the **Double Jeopardy** Clause of the Fifth Amendment prohibits prosecution in adult court of a juvenile if an adjudicatory hearing has been held on the same matter in juvenile court *Breed v. Jones*, [421 U.S. 519](#), 95 S. Ct. 1779 (1975)

In contrast, however, the U.S. Supreme Court held in *McKeiver v. Pennsylvania*, [403 U.S. 528](#), 91 S. Ct. 1976 (1971) that a **jury trial** is not constitutionally required in the adjudicative phase of a juvenile court proceeding, because juries are not essential to fundamental fairness in fact-finding procedures. However, several states have extended the right to trial by jury in some or all juvenile cases. Juveniles who have been designated “extended jurisdiction juveniles” in Minnesota’s juvenile courts have a right to a jury trial during the adjudicatory hearing.

Additionally, the Court held in *Schall v. Martin*, [467 U.S. 253](#), 104 S. Ct. 2403 (1984) that **pretrial detention** of an alleged delinquent, based on the risk that the child may commit additional crimes prior to trial, does not violate the child’s due process rights. It held that pretrial detention of alleged delinquents is compatible with the fundamental fairness requirement of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment, given the protective rather than punitive objectives of the juvenile justice system.

⁹ In 1994, the Minnesota Legislature made it extremely difficult for juvenile offenders charged with serious crimes to waive their right to counsel: juvenile offenders who are charged with felonies or gross misdemeanors or are to be placed out of the home must have counsel or, if the right to counsel is waived, must have standby counsel appointed. However, in 1995 the Minnesota Legislature provided that juveniles charged with a juvenile petty offense are not entitled to counsel appointed at public expense. The petty offender category includes not only status offenses, but also certain nonviolent misdemeanors. See [Minn. Stat. §§ 260B.163](#), subd. 4; [260C.163](#), subd. 3.

Of note, there has been a recent push to return to a system of informal juvenile justice focused more on the goals of rehabilitation and deterrence. This is in response to laws adopted in the late 1980s and early 1990s that make it easier to charge juveniles as adults.

Court Process for CHIPS and TPR Cases

The following is a summary of the major stages of the juvenile court process as it relates to (1) children alleged to be in need of protection or services (CHIPS), and (2) terminations of parental rights to children (TPR).

Pre-Adjudication Emergency Removal

As explained more fully on page 122, under certain circumstances a child may be taken into immediate custody by a peace officer or by order of the court prior to a juvenile court hearing. In child protection cases, the usual reasons for doing so are because the child is a runaway, to ensure the child's presence at a hearing, or to remove the child from surroundings or conditions that endanger or reasonably appear to endanger the child's health or welfare. Such a child may be held in custody for no longer than 72 hours unless (1) a petition has been filed and the judge determines after an emergency protective care¹⁰ hearing that the child should remain in custody, or (2) after a hearing on an order for protection, the court has made a finding of domestic abuse perpetrated by the minor.

If a child is taken into custody under a warrant or for the child's safety, the child is entitled to a hearing within 72 hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, of being taken into custody. In addition, upon the request of a party, the court will hold the adjudicatory hearing on the petition within 60 days of the emergency protective care hearing. However, if another party shows good cause why the hearing should not be held, the hearing will be held within 90 days.

The emergency protective care order must be issued within three days of the conclusion of the emergency protective care hearing, and reviewed informally by the judge every eight days until the case is decided. The order may be formally reviewed any time, upon motion of the court or request of a party or the county attorney. The order must include rules for parental visitation unless visitation would endanger the child's physical or emotional well-being.

Children who are detained because they are victims of alleged child abuse cannot be given mental health treatment for the effects of the abuse until the court finds probable cause to believe the abuse occurred or unless treatment is agreed to by the child's parent or guardian. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.175; 260C.176; 260C.178; 260C.181](#); Minn. R. Juv. Prot. P. 42)

Filing of Petition or Citation

Any reputable person, including any agent of the Commissioner of Human Services, who has knowledge of a child who appears to be in need of protection or services, may file a CHIPS

¹⁰ This hearing is referred to as the "emergency removal hearing" in [Minnesota Statutes, chapter 260C](#), and the "emergency protective care hearing" in the Minnesota Rules of Juvenile Protection Procedure.

petition in juvenile court. Additionally, the social service agency responsible for the placement of a child in voluntary foster care may petition the court to review the child's foster care status. A county attorney must draft the petition upon a showing of reasonable grounds to support the petition. A petition filed by an individual who is not a county attorney or an agent of the Commissioner of Human Services must be filed on a form developed by the state court administrator. All petitions must be verified (sworn to) by the petitioner.

Any reputable person may likewise petition the juvenile court to terminate the rights of a parent to his or her child if the person has knowledge of circumstances that support such a petition.

A peace officer may issue a notice to appear to a child believed to be a runaway, and a school attendance officer may issue a notice to appear to an alleged truant. A notice to appear filed with the court has the legal effect of a petition. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.141; 260C.143; 260C.307](#))

First Appearance

This is a hearing (called an admit/deny hearing) at which the child and the child's parents and guardian are required to admit or deny the allegations of the petition. This hearing must be held within ten days after an emergency protective care hearing for a child who has been placed in pre-adjudication placement or 20 days after filing the petition or citation if he or she is not in placement. If the allegations contained in the petition are admitted, the court will schedule a disposition hearing. If denied, the court will schedule an adjudicatory hearing (trial) within 60 days. (Minn. R. Juv. Prot. P. 46, 47, 49, and 50)

Adjudicatory Hearing (Trial) and Disposition Hearing

The adjudicatory hearing (trial) is held to determine if the allegations of the petition are proven. In contrast to the delinquency or offender adjudicatory hearing, proof of the allegations need not be made "beyond a reasonable doubt" but only by "clear and convincing evidence," which is a lesser standard. If the court finds the allegations of the petition are proven, it may either withhold adjudication for up to 90 days, or adjudicate the child as being in need of protection or services, or neglected and in foster care, and schedule a disposition hearing.

Except when the sole basis for the petition is habitual truancy, the court must appoint counsel to represent a child age 10 or older, parent, guardian, or custodian in any case in which the court feels appointment is appropriate if the person is financially unable to obtain counsel. In any case, before an out-of-home placement can be ordered, the court must appoint a public defender or counsel at public expense if the party is unable to obtain counsel on his or her own.

The court must conduct a disposition hearing, and to the extent practicable, must enter its disposition order the same day it makes a finding that the child is in need of protection or services, or is neglected and in foster care. In all cases, the order must be issued within ten days after the finding.

Where the petition is one to terminate parental rights and the allegations are proven, the court may terminate parental rights and transfer custody of the child in a disposition hearing. Even

where the allegations have not been sufficiently proven to terminate parental rights, the court may still determine that the child is in need of protection or services, or that the child is neglected and in foster care. In such a case the court will adjudicate the child accordingly and will schedule a disposition hearing. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.163; 260C.201; 260C.312; 260C.317](#); Minn. R. Juv. Prot. P. 36, 49-51)

Review of Court-Ordered Placements

The court must conduct a hearing to determine the permanency progress of the case not later than six months after the child is placed outside the home of the parent. For cases where the child is in voluntary foster care for treatment of the child's developmental disability or emotional disturbance under [chapter 260D](#) and the child continues in voluntary foster care, the court must review the status of the child not later than 13 months from the date of the voluntary foster care agreement. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.204; 260D.07](#); Minn. R. Juv. Prot. P. 43, 60)

Disposition

If the court finds that a child is in need of protection or services, it may order the dispositions summarized on page 121. Where the court terminates the parental rights of both parents or of the only known living legal parent, the court shall order guardianship of the child to the Commissioner of Human Services, a licensed child-placing agency, or a willing individual capable of assuming parental duties. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.201; 260C.317; 260C.325](#); Minn. R. Juv. Prot. P. 58)

Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act

Before ordering an out-of-home or permanency placement for an Indian child, the court must find that the local social services agency used active efforts to continuously involve the child's tribe to preserve the Indian child's family and tribal identity. Active efforts include acknowledging traditional helping and healing systems of the child's tribe and using these systems to help and heal the Indian child and family. ([Minn. Stat. § 260.751](#) to 260.835)

Reestablishment of Legal Parent/Child Relationship

Under the Family Reunification Act of 2013, amended in 2019, a county attorney or a parent whose parental rights were terminated may file a petition for reestablishment of the legal parent and child relationship that was previously terminated by the court, if certain conditions are met. A petition may not be brought in any case where a TPR was based on sexual abuse or death of a minor or where the parent has been convicted of certain crimes. If a petition is granted, permanent legal and physical custody of the child is awarded to the parent. ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.329](#))

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