



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
ADULT EDUCATION DIVISION
LOCAL PROGRAM POLICY

SERVICES FOR MINORS

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POLICY SUMMARY

- Students aged 6-17 (inclusive) must attend school, as required by Tennessee's compulsory school attendance law.
- 16- and 17-year-olds can enroll in and attend AE to satisfy the compulsory school attendance law.
- AE staff must inform the local school district of minor student enrollment, and the local school district must ensure the student is making satisfactory progress in compliance with the compulsory school attendance law.
- 17-year-olds must have a completed HSE recommendation form and approved age waiver to take the HiSET and GED and attain a HSE diploma.

REVISIONS SUMMARY

- Clarified that local school districts, rather than AE staff, are responsible for ensuring minor students are making satisfactory progress.
- Updated who may sign HSE recommendation forms to include parents of homeschoolers and nonpublic school leaders.
- Added the requirement to submit an age waiver request in order to take the HiSET or GED.
- Revised references to "taking the HiSET" to now say "pursuing a high school equivalency diploma".

POLICY

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1. School Attendance Law

Tennessee law requires children ages 6-17 (inclusive), who reside within the state to attend public or nonpublic school, unless the individual:

- A. Already has a secondary school diploma or equivalent,
- B. Is enrolled and making satisfactory progress in a state-approved adult education program leading to the attainment of a high school equivalency diploma; or
- C. Is seventeen (17) years old and enrolled in a home school.¹

2. Adult Education (AE) Enrollment

To satisfy compulsory school attendance requirements, 16- and 17-year-olds may enroll in a state-approved AE program² leading to the attainment of a high school equivalency diploma, in lieu of a regular high school diploma.

For a 16- or 17-year-old to be eligible to enroll in AE, they must not be enrolled in school (including public, private, church-related, or home school). If they are currently enrolled in school, they must be officially unenrolled by their parent or guardian.

As part of the AE enrollment process, the parent or guardian must sign an approval form that certifies the child is not enrolled in school or has been unenrolled, and allows for the child’s enrollment in AE (see example form in Appendix A). Local AE staff must have this form completed at the time of enrollment and keep a copy of the form with the student’s records.

¹ See [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3001\(c\)\(1-2\)](#).

² State-approved AE programs are those that are (1) funded through grants administered by TDLWD, (2) established as “adult high schools” within local school districts, or (3) other programs that have received state approval, such as through the Dept. of Children’s Services or Dept. of Correction.

3. Accountability for Student Progress

The sole responsibility and authority for enforcement of the compulsory school attendance law is placed with the local school district. To assist local school districts in enforcing compulsory attendance, as part of the intake process when enrolling a minor student, local AE staff must inform the student’s school district³ that the student has enrolled in AE (e.g., by contacting the district’s attendance officer or other official—contact info is typically found on the school district’s website). The school district is required to get progress reports on minor students at least three times each year. School district staff are responsible for establishing this process with AE staff.

4. High School Equivalency (HSE) Diploma Restriction⁴

Tennessee State Board of Education rules require a student to be 18 years old before being eligible to attain an HSE diploma. However, a 17-year-old may be eligible to attain an HSE diploma if they receive a signed recommendation form (see example form in Appendix B) from an authorized official, as follows:

Student’s Current School	Authorized Official
Adult Education program	School district director of schools or designee
Public school, or not enrolled in school ⁵	School district director of schools or designee
Private school or church-related school	Leader of the school
Home school	Parent or guardian

A 17-year-old will be prohibited from signing up to take the HiSET or GED until they submit an age waiver request with a completed recommendation form. ([Click here for link to age waiver request form.](#))

GOVERNANCE

Local program directors are responsible for disseminating this policy to their staff members, and for providing staff with associated training, checking for understanding, enforcing compliance, and seeking technical assistance from TDLWD staff as necessary.

To ensure compliance with this policy, TDLWD staff will review minor students’ registration records and approval forms and review the local provider’s process for informing school districts of minor student enrollment.

³ This is the public school district where the student resides, even if the student was in a nonpublic school or home school.

⁴ See [Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 0520-01-03-.06\(5\)\(c-d\)](#).

⁵ For students in education programs overseen by TN Department of Children’s Services (TDCS), the authorized official is the administrator or designee from TDCS.

Approval for Minor Student Enrollment in Adult Education

Student Full Legal Name

Date of Birth

Current Address (Street, City, State, Zip)

Name of Last School Attended and Location (City, State)

By signing below, I certify that the above-named child is in my custody, is at least 16 years old, and is not enrolled in school or has been officially unenrolled (including from public, private, church-related, or home school). I approve for this child to be enrolled in an adult education program and to pursue a high school equivalency diploma in lieu of a regular high school diploma. I acknowledge that this child shall only be allowed to attain a high school equivalency diploma if she/he is 17 years old and has written approval from the local director of schools.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Print Name

Phone Number

Email Address

APPENDIX B

High School Equivalency Recommendation for 17-Year-Old Student

Student Full Legal Name

Date of Birth

By signing below, in compliance with the rules of the Tennessee State Board of Education, I recommend the above-named student to pursue a high school equivalency diploma in lieu of a regular high school diploma, conditioned upon the student being at least 17 years old.

Authorized Signature*

Date

Print Name

Position/Title

School District or Nonpublic School Name

* Authorized signatories include the director of schools or designee (for an Adult Education, public school, or unenrolled student), the leader of the nonpublic school (for a nonpublic school student), or the parent/guardian (for a home-schooled student).