

Texas Principal Misconduct Reporting Guide

Senate Bill 571 | Effective September 1 2025 | TEPSEA Summary

The working rule: document when you became aware, identify every clock that applies, report on time, and do not wait for a local investigation to establish guilt.

24 HOURS Suspected child abuse or neglect A professional reports to DFPS or qualifying law enforcement within 24 hours after first having reasonable cause to believe child abuse or neglect occurred.	48 HOURS Covered employee or service provider misconduct A principal notifies the superintendent within 48 hours after becoming aware of evidence of covered student abuse, misconduct, or boundary violations.	7 BUSINESS DAYS Termination, resignation, or criminal record A principal notifies the superintendent or director after a covered termination or resignation, or after learning of an educator's covered criminal record. TEC §22A.051(c).
--	---	---

Three separate reporting tracks may run at once

Trigger	Who acts	Required action
Reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect	Individual professional	Report within 24 hours to DFPS or qualifying law enforcement OTHER THAN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICE. Telling an administrator does not replace the individual report.
Evidence of alleged covered misconduct	Principal and superintendent	Principal notifies superintendent within 48 hours. Superintendent separately reports to TEA or SBEC within 48 hours when required.
Termination or resignation after alleged misconduct, or a covered criminal record	Principal	Notify the superintendent or director no later than the seventh business day after the termination or resignation, or after the principal knew of the covered criminal record. TEC §22A.051(c).

What allegations fall within the 48-hour framework

- Abuse or another unlawful act involving a student or minor, including unjustified physical mistreatment or a threat of violence—even without bodily injury.
- Involvement in or solicitation of a romantic relationship, or solicitation of or engagement in sexual contact, with a student or minor.
- Inappropriate communications or failure to maintain appropriate boundaries, as defined by SBEC rule.
- The duty applies to certified and noncertified employees and applicable contractors or service providers; resignation, termination, leave, or an ongoing local investigation does not stop the clock.

Four questions for the principal

1 When did I first become aware of the allegation?	2 Does the 24-hour duty to report child abuse/neglect apply? If so, have I made the DFPS report?	3 Does the 48-hour or seven-business-day principal notice apply? If so, has the superintendent or director been notified?	4 Have I documented what I knew, when I knew it, and what I did?	Pointer: Do not wait to do your own investigation. If you become aware of a triggering allegation, make the reports.
--	--	---	--	--



Recognize it • Document it • Report it

This guide is for training, not legal advice. Follow district policy and consult district counsel on specific facts.

Would You Report This

Use the stated facts only | Discuss the trigger, the clock, and the next action

These are training conclusions. Real cases are fact-specific; report based on reasonable suspicion, not a completed investigation.

1 Late night texts A teacher tells a fifth grader “You’re my favorite,” shares personal problems, and asks the child to hide late-night messages. YES Possible inappropriate communication and boundary violations; secrecy is a critical concern.	2 Force into a chair During an argument, a teacher forcefully grabs a student and pushes the child into a chair. No injury is visible. YES, if unjustified Physical mistreatment can be reportable even without bodily injury.
3 Comforting hug A kindergarten teacher gives a brief, age-appropriate hug to a crying child after a playground fall. NOT ON THESE FACTS ALONE Ordinary comforting contact is not automatically misconduct; context and patterns matter.	4 Private social DMs A teacher uses Snapchat to discuss students’ dating lives and the teacher’s own relationships. YES Private, personal communications may show inappropriate communication or a boundary violation.
5 One ride home With parental knowledge and under district procedures, a teacher gives a student one ride after an activity. NOT ON THESE FACTS ALONE Change the facts to repeated secret rides or unnecessary stops, and the answer may become yes.	6 Just joking A teacher repeatedly comments on a student’s appearance, says he would date her if she were older, and sends heart emojis. YES Intent need not be proved first; the allegation raises romantic and inappropriate-communication concerns.
7 Restraint during fight A trained administrator restrains an attacking student consistently with law, training, and district procedures. NOT NECESSARILY Physical contact alone is not unjustified mistreatment. The facts and legal justification control.	8 Gifts and secrecy A coach privately messages a student, buys gifts, calls her “more mature,” and the student asks the principal not to tell. YES Gifts, special attention, private contact, and secrecy present possible grooming and boundary concerns.

The curveball

A parent reports inappropriate messages Monday. The principal investigates until Thursday, decides there is an innocent explanation, and only then contacts the superintendent.

Problem: The principal may have missed the 48-hour deadline. The clock begins when the principal becomes aware of evidence of the allegation—not when the campus investigation ends.

ASK FIRST

What evidence do I have?
When did I learn it?
Which clock is running?

Key sources

Texas Education Agency, Administrator Responsibilities; TEA, Required Misconduct Reporting and Notices SB 571; Texas Education Code Chapter 22A, including §22A.051(c); Texas Family Code §261.101. Accessed September 21, 2026.

