



Policy #37. Health, Safety, additional laws

The following is a selection from *Fundamentals of School Board Membership—A guide for Newly-Elected Charter School Board Members*, pp. 30-32.

“The charter school statute provides that charter schools must “meet all applicable state and local health and safety requirements.” In other words, charter schools are subject to the same health and safety regulations as other public schools.

The main health and safety areas to keep in mind are¹:

- **Immunizations and Screening.** State law requires that students entering Kindergarten in Minnesota be immunized against a number of diseases. The list currently includes DPT (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hemophilus influenza B, and hepatitis B (beginning 200-2001). All schools must obtain this information from parents of entering kindergartners; contact MACS for a sample Immunization Record form. When registering new students, it is also good to include questions about any allergies or other medical conditions a student may have, the family physician, and phone numbers for an individual to contact in an emergency. Children entering grade 7 must show proof of an additional diphtheria/tetanus and measles/mumps/rubella booster shot. In practice many schools, particularly in low-income areas, offer to do immunizations for kids who need them. Depending on your population, you may want to consider this. In addition, it is standard practice (though not required by law) to screen children for vision and hearing problems. If at all possible, it is a good idea to have a school nurse maintain student health records and take care of screenings, and train staff in basic first aid procedures. Most charter schools will not need (or be able to afford) a full time nurse, but it may be possible to contract with one for a few hours per week; consider this when planning staffing for the school. State law also requires evidence of a sensory and developmental screening upon kindergarten enrollment (also known as Early Childhood Screening, or ECS)
- **Medications.** If students are on medications that must be administered during the day, the school must be provided with a written order by a prescribing health professional and authorization by a parent or guardian. This applies to over-the-counter as well as prescription medications. Medications must be kept locked up, and must be administered by a school nurse or other individual designated to do this. You will want to have a form to authorize administration of medications. A sample form is included on page 99.

- **Criminal Background Checks.** Minnesota statutes (M.S. 120.1045) mandate that all schools must request a criminal background check on all individuals hired. The usual way to do this is through the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, which conducts the background checks for a fee of \$8 each. The employee must sign a consent form in order for the check to be carried out; the BCA will send a template for this, showing what information is needed. A school may terminate an individual based on the results of the background check.
- **Mandatory Reporting.** State law requires that anyone working with children who suspects neglect or abuse must report this to county child protection officials.
- **Building Safety.** You'll want to make sure your school facility meets fire code, tornado safety requirements, and air and water quality standards. Asbestos and lead-based paints may be an issue in older buildings.
- **Bus Safety.** All schools must provide bus safety training to any students who are transported on buses. If the charter school provides its own transportation, it must ensure that the vehicles used meet codes.
- **Food Safety.** Any school that serves food must meet state health department requirements for sanitation in food preparation and storage. Personnel responsible for sanitation must attend a training course.