

IX 01 00 Firearms and Other Weapons

Purpose

To maintain a safe educational and working environment for students and employees by establishing rules for possessing and carrying firearms and other weapons on Volunteer State Community College (hereinafter referred to as VSCC) property.

Definitions

As used in this policy:

1. **“Carry”** means to physically transport a firearm or other weapon on or about the body.
2. **“College Property”** means all land, ground, structures, and any other real property owned, operated or controlled by VSCC.
3. **“Concealed”** means not visible to ordinary observation.
4. **“Employee”** means all faculty, executive, administrative, professional and support staff employed in the service of and whose compensation is paid by VSCC. **“Employee”** does not include independent contractors who provide goods or services to the college or student workers as defined in Tennessee Board of Regents (hereinafter referred to as TBR) Policy 5:01:01:00.
5. **“Full-time Employee”** includes all faculty, executive, administrative, professional and support staff who are employed on a full-time basis by VSCC, but does NOT include a person who is enrolled as a student at the college, regardless of whether the person is also an employee. A full-time employee is one who has a regular work week of at least 37.5 hours, or who is scheduled to carry a full teaching load or its equivalent. **“Full-time Employee”** does NOT include independent contractors who provide goods or services to the college. For example, if the college contracts for employment or food services, the contracted employees are NOT allowed to carry a handgun on the premises, even if they work on the premises full time.
6. **“Enrolled as a Student”** as used in the definition of “Full-time Employee” means to be registered for an academic offering at VSCC, whether or not the academic offering is offered for credit or is not for credit. **“Enrolled as a Student”** does not include being registered for an academic offering that is delivered solely online, with no requirement for the student to appear on campus in order to complete the course.
7. **“Firearm”** means any weapon designed, made or adapted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or any device readily convertible to that use.
8. **“Formal Meeting”** means a preplanned meeting between one or more representatives of VSCC and one or more employees concerning any grievance, personnel policy violation, or other general condition of employment.

9. **“Handgun”** means any firearm with a barrel length of less than twelve inches (12”) that is designed, made or adapted to be fired with one (1) hand.
10. **“Motor Vehicle”** means a motor vehicle as defined in T.C.A. § 55-1-103.
11. **“On or About the Person”** means carried concealed on the person or carried concealed in a handbag, briefcase or other carrying case that remains within an arm’s reach of the person at all times.
12. **“Parking Area”** means property provided by VSCC for the purpose of permitting employees, students, or invitees to park motor vehicles.
13. **“Possess”** means either: (1) direct physical control over a firearm or other weapon at a given time; or (2) the power and intention at any given time to exercise dominion and control over a firearm or other weapon. Examples of possessing a firearm or other weapon include, without limitation, the presence of a firearm or other weapon on or about the person of the employee or in the employee’s motor vehicle, desk, lunch box, locker, tool kit, bag, purse, cabinet, or office.
14. **“Student”** means any person who is admitted and/or registered for study at VSCC for the current academic period. This shall include any period of time following admission and/or registration, but preceding the start of classes for any academic period. It will also include any period which follows the end of an academic period through the last day for registration for the succeeding academic period, and during any period while the student is under suspension from VSCC.
15. **“Valid Handgun Carry Permit”** means a current handgun carry permit issued by the State of Tennessee under T.C.A §39-17-1351 or issued by another state that has been given reciprocity under T.C.A §39-17-1351(r).
16. **“Weapon”** means firearm; explosive; explosive weapon; bowie knife; hawk bill knife; ice pick; dagger; slingshot; leaded cane; switchblade knife; blackjack; metal knuckles; razors and razor blades, except those used solely for personal shaving; any sharp pointed or edged instrument, except unaltered nail files and clips and tools used solely for preparation of food instruction and maintenance; or any other weapon of like kind, not used solely for instructional or school-sanctioned ceremonial purposes.

Policy

- I. **General Prohibition.** Except as otherwise provided in this policy, possession of firearms or other weapons on college property is prohibited. (T.C.A. §39-17-1309).
- II. **Exceptions for Employees with Valid Handgun Carry Permits.**

- A. In accordance with T.C.A. § 39-17-1309(e)(9) and subject to the limitations set forth in this policy, full-time employees who possess a valid handgun carry permit issued under T.C.A. § 39-17-1351 may carry a handgun on property owned, operated, or controlled by VSCC, provided that they are not permitted to carry a handgun openly or in any manner in which the handgun is visible to ordinary observation, or to intentionally disclose to other employees, students, or third parties that they are carrying a handgun, except for the registration required in subsection 1, below.
1. Full-time employees who intend to exercise this right to carry a handgun must first register with VSCC Campus Police to receive that registration. If VSCC has locations in more than one jurisdiction, the employee must register with the law enforcement agency in each jurisdiction where they intend to carry on campus.
 2. The registering employees' names and other identifying information shall be confidential, not open for public inspection and shall not be disclosed except to the VSCC Campus Police Department.
 3. The VSCC Campus Police Department shall develop and implement policies and procedures regarding the registration and confidentiality.
 4. Registered employees may not carry a handgun on the property of any TBR institution other than VSCC. If two or more institutions share a property, properly registered employees of all sharing institutions may carry on the shared property.
 5. Full-time employees who elect to carry a handgun under T.C.A. § 39-17-1309(e)(9) shall have their valid handgun carry permit in their immediate possession at all times when carrying a handgun and shall display the permit on demand of a law enforcement officer.
 6. Part-time employees may not carry a handgun on college property, even if they have carry permits.
 7. VSCC Campus Police Department may develop and implement a course or courses to be offered to employees electing to carry a handgun under T.C.A. § 39-17-1309(e)(9). Firearm safety shall be a component of any such course offered. Institutions are not required to offer such courses. Employees are not required to participate in such courses if they are offered.

8. Employees who elect to carry a handgun under T.C.A. § 39-17-1309(e) are not permitted to carry a handgun at the following times and at the following locations:
 - a. Stadiums, gymnasiums, and auditoriums when school-sponsored events are in progress, such as sporting events; pep rallies; convocations; graduations; concerts, plays and other entertainment; etc. This includes such events that are sponsored by recognized student organizations.
 - b. Formal meetings regarding employee or student disciplinary matters.
 - c. Formal meetings regarding tenure and promotion issues.
 - d. Any location where a provision of state or federal law prohibits the carrying of a handgun on that property, including, but not limited to:
 - i. In or on any public K-12 school building, bus, school campus, grounds, recreation area, athletic field or any other property owned, operated, or while in use by any K-12 board of education, school, or directors for the administration of any public or private K-12 educational institution. This includes buildings or parts of buildings that are dedicated to use by a campus K-12 school, middle college, etc. (*Source: T.C.A. § 39-17-1309*);
 - ii. In or on any building, bus, campus, grounds, recreation area, athletic field or any other property owned, operated, or while in use by a private institution of higher education that prohibits possession of firearms on its property. For example, if VSCC operates in a facility shared with a private institution of higher education that prohibits firearms on its property, a VSCC employee will not be able to carry a handgun into the portion of the facility controlled by the private institution. (*Source: T.C.A. § 39-17-1309*);
 - iii. A public park, playground, civic center or other building facility, area or property which, at the time of the employee's possession of a handgun, the employee knows or should know is being used by board of education, school, college or university

board of trustees, regents, or directors for the administration of any public or private educational institution for the purpose of conducting an athletic event or other school-related activity on an athletic field, permanent or temporary, including but not limited to, a football or soccer field, tennis court, basketball court, track, running trail, Frisbee field, or similar multi-use field (*Source: T.C.A. § 39-17-1311*); and

iv. A federal facility. (*Source: 18 United States Code § 1930*)

e. Property leased to VSCC, if the lessor has prohibited the possession of firearms on the premises.

f. In any motor vehicle that is owned, operated, or controlled by VSCC and that is provided to an employee for use during the course of employment. The Chancellor may grant an exception to this prohibition to Presidents and Directors who are provided a TBR vehicle under the terms of their employment agreement.

9. The employee shall not possess a handgun:

a. While under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance or controlled substance analogue (*Source: T.C.A. § 39-17-1321*); or

b. While consuming liquor, wine, beer, or other alcoholic beverage within the confines of an establishment open to the public where liquor, wine, beer, or other alcoholic beverages are served for consumption on the premises. (*Source: T.C.A. § 39-17-1321*)

B. An employee who is the holder of a valid handgun carry permit recognized in Tennessee may, unless expressly prohibited by federal law, transport and store a firearm or firearm ammunition in the permit holder's motor vehicle while on or utilizing a parking area if:

1. The employee's motor vehicle is parked in a location where it is permitted to be, and

2. The firearm or ammunition being transported or stored in the motor vehicle:

- a. Is kept from ordinary observation if the employee is in the motor vehicle; or
 - b. Is kept from ordinary observation and locked within the trunk, glove box, or interior of the employee's motor vehicle or a container securely affixed to such motor vehicle if the employee is not in the motor vehicle.
3. An employee transporting, storing or both transporting and storing a firearm or firearm ammunition in accordance with this paragraph does not violate this policy or the law if the firearm or firearm ammunition is observed by another person or security device during the ordinary course of the employee securing the firearm or firearm ammunition from observation in or on a motor vehicle.
- C. When on the premises of VSCC, employees who are registered to carry a handgun on the premises under T.C.A. § 39-17-1309(e)(9) and this policy must have the handgun either:
- 1. On or about their person, which means that the gun must be carried concealed on the person or it must be carried concealed in a handbag, briefcase or other carrying case that remains within an arm's reach of the person at all times; or
 - 2. Secured in their personal motor vehicle in accordance with T.C.A. § 39-17-1313.

III. Other Exceptions to the Prohibition on Weapons:

- A. A person may possess or carry a firearm or other weapon used solely for instructional or school-sanctioned ceremonial purposes on VSCC property with prior approval from VSCC's Chief of Police or designee.
- B. A non-student adult may possess a firearm, if the firearm is contained within a private vehicle operated by the adult and is not handled by the adult, or by any other person, while the vehicle is on college property.
- C. Persons employed in the Army, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard or Marine service of the United States or any member of the Tennessee National Guard, when in the discharge of their official duties and acting under orders requiring them to carry arms or weapons, may possess the weapons required by the orders.

- D. Civil officers of the United States in the discharge of their official duties may possess required weapons.
- E. Officers and soldiers of the militia and the National Guard, when called into actual service, may possess required weapons.
- F. POST-certified, active-duty law enforcement officers, whether on or off duty, may possess and carry their service firearm on VSCC property.

IV. Right to Search for Weapons

VSCC has the right to search for illegally possessed weapons in any area on the college's premises, including, but not limited to, lockers, furniture, containers, drawers, equipment or other facilities, lunch boxes, brief cases, personal bags, personal toolboxes or tool kits, parking lots, VSCC vehicles and other vehicles parked on the institution's premises. **Such searches may only be conducted by law enforcement officers.**

V. Sanctions

- A. Violation of the applicable laws regarding possession of firearms or other weapons on VSCC property shall be reported to the VSCC Campus Police Department and may result in arrest and prosecution.
- B. Violation of this policy and/or the applicable laws regarding possession of firearms or other weapons on VSCC property shall result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of employment or expulsion from VSCC.
- C. VSCC shall not take any adverse employment or disciplinary action against an employee or student based solely on the fact that the person has carried a handgun on VSCC property in compliance with T.C.A. §39-17-1309(e)(9) and this policy or stored a firearm or firearm ammunition in a motor vehicle on institution property in compliance with T.C.A. §39-17-1313.

VI. Limitations of Liability

- A. Unless carrying a handgun is a requirement of the employee's job description, the carrying of a handgun as allowed by T.C.A. §39-17-1309(e)(9) is a personal choice of the employee and not a requirement of VSCC. Consequently, an employee who carries a handgun on property owned, operated or controlled by VSCC is not:

1. Acting in the course of or scope of their employment when carrying or using the handgun;
 2. Entitled to workers' compensation benefits under T.C.A. §9-8-307(a)(1)(K) for injuries arising from the carrying or use of a handgun; or
 3. Immune from personal liability with respect to use or carrying of a handgun under T.C.A. §9-8-307(h).
- B. VSCC is absolutely immune from claims for monetary damages arising solely from or related to an employee's use of, or failure to use, a handgun by an employee of VSCC who has elected to carry a handgun under T.C.A. §39-17-1309(e)(9).

Procedures

- A. Full-time employees wishing to exercise their right to carry a handgun shall submit the *Intent to Carry Notification* form to the VSCC Campus Police Department in person. The form is available on VSCC Campus Police web page under Forms or in the Campus Police offices at each site. Applicants must bring their Tennessee driver's license, college identification card and valid handgun carry permit when submitting their notification.
- B. Upon receipt, VSCC Campus Police will have five business days to complete verification of requirements pursuant to T.C.A. §39-17-1309(e)(9).
- C. Upon verification completion, employees will be notified regarding the approval or denial of their request.
- D. Employees will not be permitted to carry a firearm until the registration process is complete.
- E. VSCC Campus Police Department shall hold all information that might identify the employee as a person who elects to carry a handgun pursuant to T.C.A. §39-17-1309(e)(9) as confidential and such information is not open for public inspection.

TBR Sources: Policy 7:01:00:00 - T.C.A § 39-12-1309; T.C.A § 39-17-1313; T.C.A § 39-17-1351; T.C.A § 39-17-1359; Public Chapter 806, 2016, Public Chapter 1061, 2016. NEW Policy Adoption; TBR Board Meeting, June 23, 2016, effective July 1, 2016. Policy 3:02:00:01 - TBR Meetings, December 2, 1977; March 3, 1978; March 18, 1983; September 30, 1983; TBR Board Meeting, March 29, 2012; TBR Board Meeting June 19, 2015. Guideline P-085 - November 3, 1999 - TBR President's Meeting; Public Chapter 1061, effective July 1, 2016.

VSCC Sources: President's Cabinet, June 27, 2016

