

The State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) proposes amendments to §§249.12, 249.14, and 249.15, concerning enforcement actions and guidelines. The proposed amendments to 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 249, Subchapter B, would implement House Bill (HB) 3, Senate Bills (SBs) 1230, 1476, and 37, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, by reflecting new reporting requirements for superintendents, principals, and directors of public schools and private school administrative officers; adding individuals listed on the registry of persons ineligible to work in public schools to the people that must be fired or refused employment by a certified educator; and removing the reference to student loan default as a ground for discipline by the SBEC. The proposed amendments would also allow the SBEC to deny the application for certification of any person who had abandoned a Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 21, contract within the preceding 12 months. The proposed amendments would also make technical changes to improve the readability of provisions and to align citations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Contract Abandonment

The proposed amendment to §249.12, Administrative Denial; Appeal, would add a new subsection (b)(7) to allow the SBEC to deny the certificate of a person who has abandoned a TEC, Chapter 21, contract within the past 12 months. The intern and probationary certificates that the SBEC issues to beginning teachers last only 12 months. When a person's certification expires, the SBEC loses jurisdiction over the person and cannot impose sanctions. Under 19 TAC §249.17(d)(3), the minimum sanction for contract abandonment is a one-year suspension. In most cases when an educator on an intern or probationary certificate abandons his or her contract, there is not enough time left before the certificate expires for the SBEC to impose a full one-year suspension. Under the current wording of §249.12, these educators can reapply for certification as soon as their intern or probationary certification expires, and the SBEC could not deny them certification unless the SBEC could prove that they were unworthy to instruct. While beginning educators who abandon contracts with school districts may not be permanently unworthy to instruct, they may need time to consider whether the education profession is right for them and time to get additional training before attempting to teach again--lest they abandon another contract the next year, disrupting the lives and learning of another classroom full of Texas students.

The proposed rule would allow SBEC to deny individuals who reapply within 12 months of abandoning a contract to ensure that those who abandon contracts have taken at least a 12-month break from teaching for self-reflection and additional training before they make another attempt. The proposed rule would only impact educators whose intern and probationary certificates have expired so that the person must reapply for a new certificate. The proposed rule would not impact educators on standard certificates who allow their certificates to go inactive. SBEC maintains jurisdiction over inactive certificates because they can be renewed without the educator having to fully reapply and, therefore, SBEC can sanction a standard certificate with the typical one-year suspension for contract abandonment required by 19 TAC §249.17(d)(3) without losing jurisdiction.

House Bill 3, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019

Throughout §249.14, Complaint, Required Reporting, and Investigation; Investigative Notice; Filing of Petition, and §249.15, Disciplinary Action by State Board for Educator Certification, the proposed amendments would modify "open-enrollment charter school" to read "charter school" to comport with the changes to TEC, Chapter 21, in HB 3, which now includes all forms of charter entities, whether open-enrollment or otherwise.

HB 3 also creates a registry of persons not eligible for employment in Texas public schools and requires superintendents or directors of school districts, districts of innovation, charter schools, regional education service centers, or shared services arrangements to notify the commissioner of education if an employee resigned or was terminated when there is evidence that the employee abused or otherwise committed an unlawful act with a student or minor or was involved in a romantic relationship with a student or minor. To reflect these new requirements, the proposed amendments would add reporting to the commissioner of education under TEC, §22.093, to the list of required reporting for which an educator can be disciplined if the educator fails to report under §249.15(b)(4). The proposed amendments would also reflect the registry of persons ineligible to work in public schools in §249.15(b)(12), which allows for SBEC to sanction an educator if the educator hires or fails to fire an employee on the register.

HB 3 also modifies the requirements of TEC, §22.085, which sets out the criminal history that requires a school district, charter school, or shared services arrangement to discharge or refuse to hire an employee or applicant, to parallel TEC, §21.058, by including individuals on deferred adjudication community supervision for which a defendant is required to register as a sex offender. To reflect these modifications, the proposed amendments would add language regarding community supervision to the reference to TEC, §22.085, in §249.15(b)(12).

Senate Bills 1230 and 1476, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019

To implement SB 1230, a proposed amendment to §249.14(d) would reflect the statute's language requiring a "chief administrative officer of a private school" to report to SBEC rather than to the "director of a private school." This semantic change does not change the meaning of the rule, which already required private school heads to report misconduct to the SBEC.

Similarly, to reflect the creation of misconduct reporting requirements for private school chief administrative officers in SB 1230, the proposed amendments would add TEC, §21.0062, to the list of reporting obligations for which the SBEC can discipline a certified educator if the educator fails to comply.

To reflect the requirements of SB 1476 and SB 1230, a proposed amendment to §249.14(d) would allow superintendents and directors of public schools not to report evidence of misconduct if the superintendent or director has completed an investigation before the educator resigned and determined that the educator did not engage in misconduct.

Senate Bill 37, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019

To implement SB 37, the proposed amendments would remove a reference to student loan default as a ground for discipline by the SBEC in §249.15(f).

The proposed amendments also include technical edits to remove language regarding sanctions for failing to report from §249.14(d) and (e) because this language is redundant in §249.14(h) and makes §249.14(d) and (e) difficult to read. The proposed amendments would also make the list of "Priority 1" conduct match in §249.15(b)(9) and §249.14(k)(1).

FISCAL IMPACT: Ryan Franklin, associate commissioner for educator leadership and quality, has determined that for the first five-year period the proposal is in effect, there is no additional fiscal impact on state or local governments and there are no additional costs to entities required to comply with the proposal.

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT IMPACT: The proposal would have no effect on local economy; therefore, no local employment impact statement is required under Texas Government Code (TGC), §2001.022.

SMALL BUSINESS, MICROBUSINESS, AND RURAL COMMUNITY IMPACT: The proposal has no direct adverse economic impact for small businesses, microbusinesses, or rural communities; therefore, no regulatory flexibility analysis, specified in TGC, §2006.002, is required.

COST INCREASE TO REGULATED PERSONS: The proposal does not impose a cost on regulated persons, another state agency, a special district, or a local government and, therefore, is not subject to TGC, §2001.0045.

TAKINGS IMPACT ASSESSMENT: The proposal does not impose a burden on private real property and, therefore, does not constitute a taking under TGC, §2007.043.

GOVERNMENT GROWTH IMPACT: The Texas Education Agency staff prepared a Government Growth Impact Statement assessment for this proposed rulemaking. During the first five years the proposed rulemaking would be in effect, the proposed rule would limit the requirement that a superintendent or director report educator misconduct to the SBEC by removing the requirement that a superintendent report when the investigation is complete and would exonerate the educator, in accordance with HB 3. The proposed rule would expand the reporting requirements for which the SBEC can sanction an educator if the educator fails to report in compliance with the statutory requirements. The proposed rule would also expand the reporting requirements for chief administrative officers in

private schools, in accordance with SB 1230. The proposed rule would expand the enumerated reasons for which an educator's application can be denied to include educators who have abandoned a contract within the preceding 12 months. The proposed rule would expand the reasons for which SBEC may sanction an educator to include hiring or failing to fire someone listed on the registry of persons who are not eligible to be employed under TEC, §22.092, in accordance with HB 3. The proposed rule would repeal the existing regulation that allowed the SBEC to consider sanctioning an educator for student loan default, in accordance with SB 37.

The proposed rule would not create or eliminate a government program, would not require the creation of new employee positions or elimination of existing employee positions, would not require an increase or decrease in future legislative appropriations to the agency, would not increase or decrease fees paid to the agency, would not create a new regulation; would not increase or decrease the number of individuals subject to the rule's applicability, or would not positively or adversely affect the state's economy.

PUBLIC BENEFIT AND COST TO PERSONS: Mr. Franklin has determined that for each year of the first five years the proposal is in effect, the public benefit anticipated as a result of the proposal would be ensuring consistency in the penalties and repercussions of contract abandonment for educators with intern and probationary certificates and improving student safety through enhanced enforceability of the new administrator reporting requirements imposed by the 86th Texas Legislature. The TEA staff has determined that there is no anticipated cost to persons required to comply with the proposal.

DATA AND REPORTING IMPACT: The proposal would have no new data and reporting impacts that were not directly created by HB 3 or SB 1246.

PRINCIPAL AND CLASSROOM TEACHER PAPERWORK REQUIREMENTS: The TEA staff has determined that the proposal would not require any additional written reports or other paperwork to be completed by a principal or classroom teacher that were not directly required by the 86th Texas Legislature through HB 3.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: The public comment period on the proposal begins October 25, 2019, and ends November 25, 2019. A form for submitting public comments is available on the TEA website at [https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Laws_and_Rules/SBEC_Rules_\(TAC\)/Proposed_State_Board_for_Educator_Certification_Rules/](https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Laws_and_Rules/SBEC_Rules_(TAC)/Proposed_State_Board_for_Educator_Certification_Rules/). The SBEC will take registered oral and written comments on the proposal at the December 6, 2019 meeting in accordance with the SBEC board operating policies and procedures. All requests for a public hearing on the proposal submitted under the Administrative Procedure Act must be received by the Department of Educator Leadership and Quality, Texas Education Agency, 1701 North Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701, Attention: Mr. Ryan Franklin, associate commissioner for educator leadership and quality, not more than 14 calendar days after notice of the proposal has been published in the *Texas Register* on October 25, 2019.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY. The amendments are proposed under Texas Education Code (TEC), §21.006(a), (b), (c), (c-1), and (c-2), as amended by House Bill (HB) 3 and Senate Bill (SB) 1476, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which requires the superintendent or director of a school district, district of innovation, open-enrollment charter school, other charter entity, regional education service center or shared services arrangement to report to the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) within seven business days of when the superintendent knew or received a report from a principal that an educator has resigned or is terminated when there is evidence that the educator has engaged in certain misconduct, unless the superintendent or director completes an investigation before the educator resigns or is terminated and determines that the educator did not commit the alleged misconduct; TEC, §21.006(b-2), as amended by HB 3, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which requires a principal of a school district, district of innovation, or charter school to notify the superintendent within seven days when an educator is terminated or resigns, and there is evidence that the educator engaged in misconduct; TEC, §21.006(f) and (g), which give the SBEC rulemaking authority to implement TEC, §21.006; TEC, §21.006(g-1), as added by HB 3, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which requires the SBEC to develop and maintain an internet portal through which a superintendent or director can file a report confidentially and securely; TEC, §21.006(i), as amended by HB 3, 86th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2019, which gives the SBEC authority to impose administrative penalties on principals and superintendents who fail to fulfill their reporting obligations to the SBEC under TEC, §21.006; TEC, §21.0062, added by SB 1230, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which requires the chief administrative officer of a private school to notify the SBEC within seven days when a private school educator resigns before the completion of an investigation or is terminated when there is evidence that the educator has engaged in certain misconduct and

gives the SBEC rulemaking authority to implement the section; TEC, §21.007, which gives the SBEC authority to place a notice that an educator is under investigation for alleged misconduct on the educator's public certification records; requires that the SBEC give the educator notice and an opportunity to show cause; requires that the SBEC limit the amount of time the notice can appear on the educator's certification; and gives the SBEC rulemaking authority as necessary to implement the provision; TEC, §21.009(e), which states that the SBEC may revoke the certificate of an administrator if the board determines it is reasonable to believe that the administrator employed an applicant despite being aware that the applicant had been adjudicated for or convicted of having an inappropriate relationship with a student or minor; TEC, §21.031(a), which charges the SBEC with regulating and overseeing all aspects of the certification, continuing education, and standards of conduct for public school educators; TEC, §21.035, which states that Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff provides administrative functions and services for SBEC and gives SBEC the authority to delegate to either the commissioner of education or to TEA staff the authority to settle or otherwise informally dispose of contested cases involving educator certification; TEC, §21.041, which authorizes the SBEC to adopt rules as necessary for its own procedures, regulate educators, specify the requirements for issuance or renewal of educator certificates, administer statutory requirements, provide for educator disciplinary proceedings and for enforcement of the educator's code of ethics; TEC, §21.058, which requires the SBEC to revoke the certification of an educator convicted or placed on deferred adjudication community supervision for certain offenses; TEC, §21.0581(a), as amended by SB 1230, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which gives the SBEC authority to sanction the educator certification of person who assists another person in obtaining employment at a school district, private school, or open-enrollment charter school when the certified educator knew the other person had previously engaged in sexual misconduct with a minor or student in violation of the law; TEC, §21.060, which sets out crimes that relate to the education profession and authorizes the SBEC to sanction or refuse to issue a certificate to any person who has been convicted of one of these offenses; TEC, §21.105(c), which allows the SBEC to impose sanctions against an educator who abandons a probationary contract; TEC, §21.160(c), which allows the SBEC to impose sanctions against an educator who abandons a continuing contract; TEC, §21.210(c), which allows the SBEC to impose sanctions against an educator who abandons a term contract; TEC, §22.082, which requires the SBEC to subscribe to the criminal history clearing house and allows the SBEC to obtain any criminal history from any closed case file; TEC, §22.0831, which requires the SBEC to review the criminal history of certified educators and applicants for certification; TEC, §22.085, as amended by HB 3, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which requires school districts, charter schools, and shared services arrangements to conduct fingerprint criminal background checks on employees and to refuse to hire those that have certain criminal history; TEC, §22.087, which requires superintendents and directors of school districts, charter schools, private schools, regional education service centers, and shared services arrangement to notify the SBEC if an applicant for a certification has criminal history that is not in the criminal history clearing house; TEC, §22.092, as added by HB 3, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which requires school districts, charter schools, districts of innovation, regional education service centers, and shared services arrangements to discharge or refuse to hire any person listed on the registry of persons not eligible for employment in Texas public schools; TEC, §22.093, as added by HB 3, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which requires superintendents or directors of school districts, districts of innovation, charter schools, regional education service centers, or shared services arrangements to notify the commissioner of education if an employee resigned or was terminated when there is evidence that the employee abused or otherwise committed an unlawful act with a student or minor, or was involved in a romantic relationship with a student or minor; Texas Government Code (TGC), §411.090, which allows the SBEC to get from the Texas Department of Public Safety all criminal history record information about any applicant for licensure as an educator; TGC, §2001.058(d-1) and (e), which set out the requirements for when the SBEC can make changes to a proposal for decision from an administrative law judge; Texas Family Code (TFC), §261.308(d) and (e), which requires the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to release information regarding a person alleged to have committed abuse or neglect to the SBEC; TFC, §261.406(a) and (b), as amended by SB 1231, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which require the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to send a copy of a completed investigation report involving allegations of abuse or neglect of a child in a public or private school to the TEA; Texas Occupations Code (TOC), §53.021(a), as amended by SB 1342, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which allows the SBEC to suspend or revoke an educator's certificate, or refuse to issue a certificate, if a person is convicted of certain offenses; TOC, §53.022, as amended by SB 1342, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which sets out factors for the SBEC to determine whether a particular criminal offense relates to the occupation of education; TOC, §53.023, as amended by SB 1342, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which sets out additional factors for the SBEC to consider when deciding whether to allow a person convicted of a crime to serve as an educator; TOC, §53.024, which states that proceedings to deny or sanction an educator's certification are covered by the Texas Administrative Procedure Act, TGC, Chapter 2001; TOC, §53.025, which gives the SBEC rulemaking authority to issue guidelines to define which crimes relate to the

profession of education; TOC, §53.051, as amended by SB 1342, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which requires that the SBEC notify a license holder or applicant after denying, suspending or revoking the certification; TOC, §53.052, which allows a person who has been denied an educator certification or had their educator certification revoked or suspended to file a petition for review in state district court after exhausting all administrative remedies; TOC, §56.003, as amended by SB 37, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which prohibits state agencies from taking disciplinary action against licensees for student loan non-payment or default; and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 20 United States Code (USC), §7926, which requires state educational agencies to make rules forbidding educators from aiding other school employees, contractors, or agents in getting jobs when the educator knows the job-seeker has committed sexual misconduct with a student or minor in violation of the law.

CROSS REFERENCE TO STATUTE. The amendments implement Texas Education Code, §§21.006(a), (b), (b-1), (b-2), (c), (c-1), (c-2), as amended by HB 3 and SB 1476, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, (f), (g), (g-1), as added by HB 3 and SB 1476, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019; and (i), as amended by HB 3, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019; 21.0062, as added by SB 1230, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019; 21.007; 21.009(e); 21.031(a); 21.035; 21.041; 21.058; 21.0581; 21.060; 21.105(c); 21.160(c); 21.210(c); 22.082; 22.0831; 22.085, as amended by HB 3, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019; 22.087; 22.092, as added by HB 3, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019; and 22.093, as added by HB 3, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019; Texas Government Code, §411.090 and §2001.058(e); Texas Family Code, §261.308(d) and (e) and §261.406(a) and (b), as amended by SB 1231, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019; Texas Occupations Code, §53.021(a), as amended by SB 1342, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019; 53.022 and 53.023, as amended by SB 1342, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, 53.024, 53.025, 53.051, as amended by SB 1342, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, 53.052, and 56.003, as amended by SB 37, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019; and the ESSA, 20 USC, §7926.

<rule>

§249.12. Administrative Denial; Appeal.

(a) This section applies to administrative denials, as that term is defined in §249.3 of this title (relating to Definitions). This section does not apply to the denial of an application for a certificate that has been permanently revoked, and it does not apply to the failure to issue a certificate because specific certification requirements have not been met.

(b) The Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff may administratively deny any of the matters set out in subsection (a) of this section based on satisfactory evidence that:

(1) the person filed a fraudulent application;

(2) the person assisted another person in obtaining employment at a school district or open-enrollment charter school, other than by the routine transmission of administrative or personnel files when the person knew that the other person had previously engaged in an inappropriate relationship with a minor or student in violation of the law;

(3) the person has committed an act that would make them subject to required revocation under the Texas Education Code (TEC), §21.058;

(4) the person has committed an act that would make them subject to mandatory permanent revocation or denial under §249.17(i) of this title (relating to Decision-Making Guidelines);

(5) the person has engaged in conduct or committed a crime or an offense that:

(A) demonstrates that the person lacks good moral character;

(B) demonstrates that the person is unworthy to instruct or to supervise the youth of this state; or

(C) constitutes the elements of a crime or offense relating directly to the duties and responsibilities of the education profession; ~~or~~

(6) the person failed to comply with the terms or conditions of an order issued by or on behalf of the State Board for Educator Certification or the TEA staff; or ~~or~~

(7) TEA staff has previously received a timely report from a school district that the person is subject to sanctions for having abandoned a TEC, Chapter 21, contract in violation of the TEC, §§21.105(c), 21.160(c), or 21.210(c) and less than 12 months has elapsed from the first day that, without district permission, the person failed to appear for work under the contract.

(c) The TEA staff shall provide written notice of the denial and the factual and legal reasons for it to the person whose application or request has been administratively denied. The notice shall be given by registered or certified mail to the address the person has provided in the application or request that is being denied. The person may attempt to show compliance with legal requirements by written submission or by requesting an informal conference, and/or may appeal and request a State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH) hearing as hereafter provided. The 30-day deadline to appeal and request a hearing is not tolled during any attempts to show cause.

(d) The appeal and request for a SOAH hearing of an administrative denial shall be in the form of a petition that complies in content and form with §249.26 of this title (relating to Petition) and 1 Texas Administrative Code, Part 7, §155.301 (relating to Required Form of Pleadings). In order to be referred to the SOAH for a contested case hearing, an appeal petition must be filed with the TEA staff within 30 calendar days after the person received or is deemed to have received written notice of the administrative denial. Unless otherwise proved by the person, the notice shall be deemed to have been received by the examinee no later than five calendar days after mailing to the most recent address provided by the person. The TEA staff may dismiss an appeal that is not timely filed without further action.

(e) The TEA staff shall send an answer to the petition to the person appealing an administrative denial and shall refer the petition and answer to the SOAH for a contested case hearing.

§249.14. Complaint, Required Reporting, and Investigation; Investigative Notice; Filing of Petition.

(a) The Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff may obtain and investigate information concerning alleged improper conduct by an educator, applicant, examinee, or other person subject to this chapter that would warrant the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) denying relief to or taking disciplinary action against the person or certificate.

(b) Complaints against an educator, applicant, or examinee must be filed in writing.

(c) The TEA staff may also obtain and act on other information providing grounds for investigation and possible action under this chapter.

(d) A person who serves as the superintendent of a school district or district of innovation, ~~or~~ the director of a ~~an~~ ~~open enrollment~~ charter school, ~~private school,~~ regional education service center, or shared services arrangement, ~~or the chief administrative officer of a private school~~ may notify the SBEC of any educator misconduct that the person believes in good faith may be subject to sanctions under this chapter and/or Chapter 247 of this title (relating to Educators' Code of Ethics). However, under any of the following circumstances, a person who serves in such a position shall promptly notify the SBEC in writing by filing a report with the TEA staff within seven business days of the date the person either receives a report from a principal under subsection (e) of this section or knew of any of the following ~~those~~ circumstances, except if the person is a superintendent or director of a public school and has completed an investigation in accordance with Texas Education Code (TEC), §21.006(c-2), resulting in a determination that the educator did not engage in misconduct ~~and may be subject to sanctions for failure to do so, pursuant to §249.15(b)(4) of this title (relating to Disciplinary Action by State Board for Educator Certification)] :~~

(1) that an applicant for or a holder of a certificate has a reported criminal history, which the superintendent or director obtained information by a means other than the criminal history clearinghouse established under Texas Government Code, §411.0845;

(2) that a certificate holder was terminated from employment and there is evidence that he or she committed any of the following acts:

(A) sexually or physically abused a student or minor or engaged in any other illegal conduct with a student or minor;

(B) possessed, transferred, sold, or distributed a controlled substance;

(C) illegally transferred, appropriated, or expended school property or funds;

(D) attempted by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or to alter any certificate or permit that would entitle the individual to be employed in a position requiring such certificate or permit or to receive additional compensation associated with a position;

(E) committed a crime, any part of such crime having occurred on school property or at a school-sponsored event; or

(F) solicited or engaged in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student or minor;

(3) that a certificate holder has submitted a notice of resignation and that there exists evidence that he or she committed one of the acts specified in paragraph (2) of this subsection.

(A) Before accepting an employee's resignation that, under this paragraph, requires a person to notify the SBEC by filing a report with the TEA staff, the person shall inform the certificate holder in writing that such a report will be filed and that sanctions against his or her certificate may result as a consequence.

(B) A person required to comply with this paragraph shall notify the governing body of the employing school district before filing the report with the TEA staff.

(C) A superintendent or director of a school district shall complete an investigation of an educator if there is reasonable cause to believe the educator may have engaged in misconduct described in paragraph (2)(A) of this subsection despite the educator's resignation from district employment before completion of the investigation; or

(4) any other circumstances requiring a report under the TEC ~~[Texas Education Code (TEC)]~~ , §21.006.

(e) A person who serves as a principal in a school district, a district of innovation, or a ~~an~~ ~~open enrollment~~ charter school must notify the superintendent or director of the school district, district of innovation, or charter school and

may be subject to sanctions for failure to do so [~~pursuant to §249.15(b)(4) of this title (relating to Disciplinary Action by State Board for Educator Certification),~~] no later than seven business days after:

(1) an educator's termination or resignation following an alleged incident of misconduct involving one of the acts described in subsection (d)(2) of this section; or

(2) the principal knew about an educator's reported criminal history.

(f) Pursuant to the TEC, §21.006(b-2), (c), (h), and (i), a report filed under subsections (d) and (e) of this section must include:

(1) the name or names of any student or minor who is the victim of abuse or unlawful conduct by an educator; and
(2) the factual circumstances requiring the report and the subject of the report by providing the following available information:

(A) name and any aliases; certificate number, if any, or social security number;

(B) last known mailing address and home and daytime phone numbers;

(C) all available contact information for any alleged victim or victims;

(D) name or names and any available contact information of any relevant witnesses to the circumstances requiring the report;

(E) current employment status of the subject, including any information about proposed termination, notice of resignation, or pending employment actions; and

(F) involvement by a law enforcement or other agency, including the name of the agency.

(g) Pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 United States Code, §1232g(a)(4), and the federal regulations interpreting it at 34 Code of Federal Regulations, §99.3, education records that are protected by FERPA must be records that are directly related to a student, and the term "education records" does not include records that relate to a school employee in his or her capacity as a school employee.

(h) A person who is required to file a report under subsections (d) and (e) of this section but fails to do so timely is subject to sanctions under this chapter.

(i) If a school district board of trustees learns of a failure by the superintendent of the district or a district principal to provide a notice required under the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure (TCCP), §15.27(a), (a-1), or (b), the board of trustees shall report the failure to the SBEC. If the governing body of a private primary or secondary school learns of a failure by the principal of the school to provide a notice required under the TCCP, §15.27(e), and the principal holds a certificate issued under the TEC, Chapter 21, Subchapter B, the governing body shall report the failure to the SBEC.

(j) The TEA staff shall not pursue sanctions against an educator who is alleged to have abandoned his or her TEC, Chapter 21, contract in violation of the TEC, §§21.105(c), 21.160(c), or 21.210(c), subject to the limitations imposed by the TEC, §21.4021(g), unless the board of trustees of the employing school district:

(1) submits a written complaint to the TEA staff within 30 calendar days after the effective date of the educator's separation from employment from the school district. For purposes of this section, unless the school district and the educator have a written agreement to the contrary, the effective date of separation from employment is the first day that, without district permission, the educator fails to appear for work under the contract;

(2) renders a finding that good cause did not exist under the TEC, §§21.105(c)(2), 21.160(c)(2), or 21.210(c)(2). This finding constitutes prima facie evidence of the educator's lack of good cause, but is not a conclusive determination; and

(3) submits the following required attachments to the written complaint:

(A) the educator's resignation letter, if any;

(B) the agreement with the educator regarding the effective date of separation from employment, if any;

(C) the educator's contract; and

(D) school board meeting minutes indicating a finding of "no good cause" (if the board does not meet within 30 calendar days of the educator's separation from employment, the minutes may be submitted within 10 calendar days after the next board meeting).

(k) To efficiently administer and implement the SBEC's purpose under this chapter and the TEC, the TEA staff may set priorities for the investigation of complaints based on the severity and immediacy of the allegations and the likelihood of harm posed by the subject of the investigation. All cases accepted for investigation shall be assigned one of the following priorities.

(1) Priority 1: conduct that may result in the placement of an investigative notice pursuant to the TEC, §21.007, and subsection (l) of this section because it presents a risk to the health, safety, or welfare of a student or minor, parent of a student, fellow employee, or professional colleague, including, but not limited to, the following:

(A) any conduct constituting a felony criminal offense;

(B) indecent exposure;

(C) public lewdness;
(D) child abuse and/or neglect;
(E) possession of a weapon on school property;
(F) drug offenses occurring on school property;
(G) sale to or making alcohol or other drugs available to a student or minor;
(H) sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a student or minor;
(I) certificate fraud;
(J) state assessment testing violations;
(K) deadly conduct; and
(L) conduct that involves inappropriate communication with a student as described in §247.2(3)(I) of this title (relating to Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators), inappropriate professional educator-student relationships and boundaries, or otherwise soliciting or engaging in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student or minor.

(2) Priority 2: any sanctionable conduct that is not Priority 1 conduct under paragraph (1) of this subsection. An investigative notice will not be placed on an educator's certification records on the basis of an allegation of Priority 2 conduct. The TEA staff may change a case's priority at any time based on information received. Priority 2 conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

(A) any conduct constituting a misdemeanor criminal offense or testing violation that is not Priority 1 conduct;
(B) contract abandonment; and
(C) code of ethics violations that do not constitute Priority 1 conduct.

(l) After accepting a case for investigation, if the alleged conduct indicates a risk to the health, safety, or welfare of a student or minor, as described in subsection (k)(1) of this section, the TEA staff shall immediately place an investigative notice on the certificate holder's certification records stating that the certificate holder is currently under investigation. The placement of such an investigative notice must follow the procedures set forth in subsection (m)(1) of this section. After accepting a case for investigation, if the alleged conduct indicates a risk to the health, safety, or welfare of a parent of a student, fellow employee, or professional colleague, as described in subsection (k)(1) of this section, the TEA staff may place an investigative notice on the certificate holder's certification records stating that the certificate holder is currently under investigation. The placement of an investigative notice must follow the procedures set forth in subsection (m)(2) of this section.

(m) The following procedures must be followed for placing an investigative notice on the educator's certification records.

(1) At the time of placing an investigative notice on an educator's certification records for alleged conduct that indicates a risk to the health, safety, or welfare of a student or minor, the TEA staff shall serve the certificate holder with a letter informing the educator of the investigation and the basis of the complaint.

(A) Within ten calendar days of placing an investigative notice on the educator's certification records, the letter notifying the certificate holder of the investigation shall be mailed to the address provided to the TEA staff pursuant to the requirements set forth in §230.91 of this title (relating to Procedures in General).

(B) The letter notifying the certificate holder of the investigation shall include a statement of the alleged conduct, which forms the basis for the investigative notice, and shall provide the certificate holder the opportunity to show cause within ten calendar days why the notice should be removed from the educator's certification records.

(2) Prior to placing an investigative notice on an educator's certification records for alleged conduct that indicates a risk to the health, safety, or welfare of a parent of a student, fellow employee, or professional colleague, as described in subsection (k)(1) of this section, the TEA staff shall serve the certificate holder with a letter informing the educator of the investigation and the basis of the complaint.

(A) At least ten calendar days before placing an investigative notice on the educator's certification records, the letter notifying the certificate holder of the investigation shall be mailed to the address provided to the TEA staff pursuant to the requirements set forth in §230.91 of this title.

(B) The letter notifying the certificate holder of the investigation shall include a statement of the alleged conduct, which forms the basis for the investigative notice, and shall provide the certificate holder the opportunity to show cause within ten calendar days why the notice should not be placed on the educator's certification records.

(3) The TEA staff shall determine whether or not to remove or place an investigative notice on the educator's certification records, taking into account the educator's response, if any, to the letter notifying the certificate holder of the investigation.

(n) An investigative notice is subject to the following time limits.

(1) An investigative notice may remain on the certification records of a certificate holder for a period not to exceed 240 calendar days.

(2) The TEA staff may toll this time limit if information is received indicating that there is a pending criminal or administrative matter related to the alleged act of misconduct that gives rise to the investigative notice. For purposes of this subsection, a criminal or administrative matter includes an audit by a state or federal agency, an arrest, an investigation, related litigation or other enforcement action brought by a state or federal administrative agency, or a prosecution by a criminal law enforcement agency. Upon receiving notice that the criminal or administrative matter has been resolved the tolling period shall end. As part of its procedure, the TEA staff will attempt to make bimonthly (once every two months) contact with the agency where a related matter is pending to determine whether the related matter has been closed or otherwise resolved.

(3) The TEA staff may toll this time limit if the matter is referred for a contested case hearing, upon agreement of the parties, or while the matter is pending action by the SBEC on a proposed agreed order.

(o) The TEA staff shall remove an investigative notice from an educator's certification records:

(1) when a case's final disposition occurs within the time limits established in subsection (n) of this section; or

(2) when the time limits for an investigative notice have been exceeded, if:

(A) the certificate holder has made a written demand to the TEA staff that the investigative notice be removed because the time limits have been exceeded; and

(B) the TEA staff has failed to refer the matter to the State Office of Administrative Hearings for a contested case hearing within 30 calendar days from the date of receipt of the written demand to remove the investigative notice.

(p) Only the TEA staff may file a petition seeking sanctions under §249.15 of this title. Prior to filing a petition, the TEA staff shall mail to the certificate holder affected by written notice of the facts or conduct alleged to warrant the intended action and shall provide the certificate holder an opportunity to show compliance with all requirements of law.

§249.15. Disciplinary Action by State Board for Educator Certification.

(a) Pursuant to this chapter, the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) may take any of the following actions:

(1) place restrictions on the issuance, renewal, or holding of a certificate, either indefinitely or for a set term;

(2) issue an inscribed or non-inscribed reprimand;

(3) suspend a certificate for a set term or issue a probated suspension for a set term;

(4) revoke or cancel, which includes accepting the surrender of, a certificate without opportunity for reapplication for a set term or permanently;

(5) impose any additional conditions or restrictions upon a certificate that the SBEC deems necessary to facilitate the rehabilitation and professional development of the educator or to protect students, parents of students, school personnel, or school officials; or

(6) impose an administrative penalty of \$500-\$10,000 on a superintendent or director who fails to file timely a report required under §249.14(d) of this title (relating to Complaint, Required Reporting, and Investigation; Investigative Notice; Filing of Petition) or on a principal who fails to timely notify a superintendent or director as required under §249.14(e) of this title under the circumstances and in the manner required by the Texas Education Code (TEC), §21.006.

(b) The SBEC may take any of the actions listed in subsection (a) of this section based on satisfactory evidence that:

(1) the person has conducted school or education activities in violation of law;

(2) the person is unworthy to instruct or to supervise the youth of this state;

(3) the person has violated a provision of the Educators' Code of Ethics;

(4) the person has failed to report or has hindered the reporting of child abuse pursuant to the Texas Family Code, §261.001, or has failed to notify the SBEC, the commissioner of education, or the school superintendent or director under the circumstances and in the manner required by the TEC, §21.006, §21.0062, §22.093, and §249.14(d)-(f) of this title;

(5) the person has abandoned a contract in violation of the TEC, §§21.105(c), 21.160(c), or 21.210(c);

(6) the person has failed to cooperate with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in an investigation;

(7) the person has failed to provide information required to be provided by §229.3 of this title (relating to Required Submissions of Information, Surveys, and Other Data);

(8) the person has violated the security or integrity of any assessment required by the TEC, Chapter 39, Subchapter B, as described in subsection (g) of this section or has committed an act that is a departure from the test administration procedures established by the commissioner of education in Chapter 101 of this title (relating to Assessment);

(9) the person has committed an act described in §249.14(k)(1) of this title, which constitutes sanctionable Priority 1 conduct, as follows:

- (A) any conduct constituting a felony criminal offense;
 - (B) indecent exposure;
 - (C) public lewdness;
 - (D) child abuse and/or neglect;
 - (E) possession of a weapon on school property;
 - (F) drug offenses occurring on school property;
 - (G) sale to or making alcohol or other drugs available to a student or minor;
 - (H) sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a student or minor;
 - (I) certificate fraud;
 - (J) state assessment testing violations;
 - (K) deadly conduct; or
 - (L) conduct that involves inappropriate communication with a student as described in §247.2(3)(I) of this title (relating to Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators), inappropriate professional educator-student relationships and boundaries, or otherwise soliciting or engaging in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student or minor;
- (10) the person has committed an act that would constitute an offense (without regard to whether there has been a criminal conviction) that is considered to relate directly to the duties and responsibilities of the education profession, as described in §249.16(c) of this title (relating to Eligibility of Persons with Criminal History for a Certificate under Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 53, and Texas Education Code, Chapter 21). Such offenses indicate a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of a student or minor, parent of a student, fellow employee, or professional colleague; interfere with the orderly, efficient, or safe operation of a school district, campus, or activity; or indicate impaired ability or misrepresentation of qualifications to perform the functions of an educator and include, but are not limited to:
- (A) offenses involving moral turpitude;
 - (B) offenses involving any form of sexual or physical abuse or neglect of a student or minor or other illegal conduct with a student or minor;
 - (C) offenses involving any felony possession or conspiracy to possess, or any misdemeanor or felony transfer, sale, distribution, or conspiracy to transfer, sell, or distribute any controlled substance defined in the Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 481;
 - (D) offenses involving school property or funds;
 - (E) offenses involving any attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit that would entitle any person to hold or obtain a position as an educator;
 - (F) offenses occurring wholly or in part on school property or at a school-sponsored activity; or
 - (G) felony offenses involving driving while intoxicated (DWI);
- (11) the person has intentionally failed to comply with the reporting, notification, and confidentiality requirements specified in the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, §15.27(a), relating to student arrests, detentions, and juvenile referrals for certain offenses;
- (12) the person has failed to discharge an employee or to refuse to hire an applicant when the employee or applicant was employed in a public school and on the registry of persons who are not eligible to be employed under TEC, §22.092, when the person knew that the employee or applicant had been adjudicated for or convicted of having an inappropriate relationship with a minor in accordance with the TEC, §21.009(e), or when the person knew or should have known through a criminal history record information review that the employee or applicant had been placed on community supervision or convicted of an offense in accordance with the TEC, §22.085;
- (13) the person assisted another educator, school employee, contractor, or agent in obtaining a new job as an educator or in a school, apart from the routine transmission of administrative and personnel files, when the educator knew or had probable cause to believe that such person engaged in an inappropriate relationship with a minor or student;
- (14) the person is a superintendent of a school district or the chief operating officer of an open-enrollment charter school who falsely or inaccurately certified to the commissioner of education that the district or charter school had complied with the TEC, §22.085; or
- (15) the person has failed to comply with an order or decision of the SBEC.
- (c) The TEA staff may commence a contested case to take any of the actions listed in subsection (a) of this section by serving a petition to the certificate holder in accordance with this chapter describing the SBEC's intent to issue a sanction and specifying the legal and factual reasons for the sanction. The certificate holder shall have 30 calendar days to file an answer as provided in §249.27 of this title (relating to Answer).

(d) Upon the failure of the certificate holder to file a written answer as required by this chapter, the TEA staff may file a request for the issuance of a default judgment from the SBEC imposing the proposed sanction in accordance with §249.35 of this title (relating to Disposition Prior to Hearing; Default).

(e) If the certificate holder files a timely answer as provided in this section, the case will be referred to the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH) for hearing in accordance with the SOAH rules; the Texas Government Code, Chapter 2001; and this chapter.

(f) The provisions of this section are not exclusive and do not preclude consideration of other grounds or measures available by law to the SBEC or the TEA staff, including ~~[student loan default or]~~ child support arrears. The SBEC may request the Office of the Attorney General to pursue available civil, equitable, or other legal remedies to enforce an order or decision of the SBEC under this chapter.

(g) The statewide assessment program as defined by the TEC, Chapter 39, Subchapter B, is a secure testing program.

(1) Procedures for maintaining security shall be specified in the appropriate test administration materials.

(2) Secure test materials must be accounted for before, during, and after each test administration. Only authorized personnel may have access to secure test materials.

(3) The contents of each test booklet and answer document are confidential in accordance with the Texas Government Code, Chapter 551, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. Individual student performance results are confidential as specified under the TEC, §39.030(b).

(4) Violation of security or confidential integrity of any test required by the TEC, Chapter 39, Subchapter B, shall be prohibited. A person who engages in conduct prohibited by this section may be subject to sanction of credentials, including any of the sanctions provided by subsection (a) of this section.

(5) Charter school test administrators are not required to be certified; however, any irregularity in the administration of any test required by the TEC, Chapter 39, Subchapter B, would cause the charter itself to come under review by the commissioner of education for possible sanctions or revocation, as provided under the TEC, §12.115(a)(4).

(6) Conduct that violates the security and confidential integrity of a test is evidenced by any departure from the test administration procedures established by the commissioner of education. Conduct of this nature may include, but is not limited to, the following acts and omissions:

(A) viewing a test before, during, or after an assessment unless specifically authorized to do so;

(B) duplicating secure examination materials;

(C) disclosing the contents of any portion of a secure test;

(D) providing, suggesting, or indicating to an examinee a response or answer to a secure test item or prompt;

(E) changing or altering a response or answer of an examinee to a secure test item or prompt;

(F) aiding or assisting an examinee with a response or answer to a secure test item or prompt;

(G) fraudulently exempting or preventing a student from the administration of a required state assessment;

(H) encouraging or assisting an individual to engage in the conduct described in paragraphs (1)-(7) of this subsection; or

(I) failing to report to an appropriate authority that an individual has engaged in conduct outlined in paragraphs (1)-(8) of this subsection.

(7) Any irregularities in test security or confidential integrity may also result in the invalidation of student results.

(8) The superintendent and campus principal of each school district and chief administrative officer of each charter school and any private school administering the tests as allowed under the TEC, §39.033, shall develop procedures to ensure the security and confidential integrity of the tests specified in the TEC, Chapter 39, Subchapter B, and shall be responsible for notifying the TEA in writing of conduct that violates the security or confidential integrity of a test administered under the TEC, Chapter 39, Subchapter B. A person who fails to report such conduct as required by this subsection may be subject to any of the sanctions provided by subsection (a) of this section.