



# SCHOOL SAFETY LAWS

In addition to everyday laws enforced in your community, which include schools, the State of Georgia has specific laws that apply directly to the school safety zone. By enforcing stricter penalties, these laws help schools to enforce rules that contribute to the overall safety of the school.

**OCGA 20-2-1180: Loitering in a School Safety Zone.** This statute requires visitors of a public or private school to check in at the designated location and give the reason for their visit. Use this law to stop gang members, drug dealers or other dangerous groups from operating near your school.

**OCGA 20-2-1181: Disrupting a Public School.** Removing disorderly individuals can help control dangerous behavior. This code section provides that any person who disrupts or interferes with the operation of a public school shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature. Among other things, this is widely used for bomb threats.

**OCGA 20-2-1182: Persons Other Than Students Who Insult or Abuse Teachers in the Presence of Pupils.** Use this law to deal with parents, guardians or others who are not students at your school who insult, abuse, or upbraid teachers, administrators or bus drivers after being advised of the presence of minor children. Anyone who fails to leave the premises after being advised to do so is guilty of a misdemeanor.

**OCGA 20-2-1183: Pupils Prohibited from Carrying Electronic Communication Devices.** This law now allows each school system to determine whether or not to restrict the use of cell phone or other electronic devices. Banning cell phones could help in a variety of situations. Drug dealers and gang members may conduct business during school hours. Banning cell phones may make it difficult for them to continue these activities. Also, students may use their cell phones to call their parents when they are evacuated during a bomb threat. Parents may then rush to the school to check on their kids, hindering the response effort. Finally, electronic devices may detonate an explosive device.

**OCGA 20-2-1184: Failure to Report Criminal Activity.** This law requires that any teacher or other employee of a public or private school who has reasonable cause to believe that a student at that school has committed an act on school property or during any school function, which is prohibited by any of the following statutes: 16-5-21, 16-5-24, Chapter 6 of Title 16, 16-11-127, 16-11-127.1, 16-11-132 and 16-13-30, shall report the act to his or her immediate supervisor, who shall then notify the appropriate superintendent, the police authority, and district attorney. Any person who knowingly violates this code section will be guilty of misdemeanor.

**OCGA 16-5-61: Hazing.** This law prohibits any person to "haze" any student in connection with or as a condition or precondition of gaining acceptance, membership, office, or other status in a school organization. "Haze" means to subject a student to an activity which endangers or is likely to endanger the physical health of a student, regardless of a student's willingness to participate in such activity. Any person who violates this code section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature.

**OCGA 16-11-127.1: Possession of a Weapon on or Within 1,000 Feet of a School.** This statute provides penalties for possession of a wide range of weapons in the School Safety Zone. This can discourage carrying and using weapons.

**OCGA 16-13-32.4: Drug-Free School Zones.** This law states it is illegal to manufacture, distribute, dispense, or possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance or marijuana on or within a school safety zone. This law provides an additional charge to any person(s) who is already charged under OCGA 16-13-30.

**OCGA 3-3-21.1: Possession of Alcoholic Beverages on Public School Grounds.** This law makes it illegal to possess alcoholic beverages on any public school grounds.

In addition to the laws described above, some penalties for other crimes committed upon schools grounds against students or school personnel are enforced with stronger penalties, including greater minimum incarceration times. Examples of these crimes include, but not limited to, the various degrees of assault and battery crimes.

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