

GUN-FREE SCHOOL ZONES POLICY V2.0.2024



GUN FREE SCHOOLS



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

**POLICY
TITLE/NAME:**

GUN-FREE SCHOOL ZONES POLICY V2.0.2024

VISION: To ensure a safe and secure environment where teaching and learning takes place.

POLICY NO.: V2.0.2024

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 2, 2024

POLICY STATEMENT: The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all individuals on school premises, the school district and program spaces, and departmental facilities. In alignment with this commitment, and in consideration of the Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990 (GFSZA) and the Gun-Free Schools Act of 2001 (GFSA), the VIDE has established this policy to prohibit the possession and use of firearms within school zones without any exemptions, except as explicitly detailed below.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all individuals present on school premises, the school district and program spaces, and departmental facilities, including students, faculty, staff, visitors, and any other persons involved in school-related activities. Exemptions will apply as specified within this policy.

DEFINITIONS:

<u>Premises</u>	For the purpose of this policy, "premises" refers to any property owned, leased, or controlled by the school, the school district, and the Department, including but not limited to classrooms, hallways, administrative offices, outdoor facilities, auditoriums, school gymnasiums, play grounds, warehouses, and parking lots.
<u>Visitors</u>	"Visitors" include anyone not students, faculty, staff, and department officials. This encompasses parents, guardians, community members, and any other non-school-affiliated persons present on school premises.

PROHIBITED ACTIONS:

- Possession of Firearms:* No individual shall possess a firearm on school premises, the school district and program spaces, and departmental facilities, including classrooms, hallways, administrative offices, outdoor facilities, and property owned or leased by the Department. This includes all types of firearms, any devices capable of launching projectiles, and Conducted Energy Devices (CED: Tasers). Exemptions apply as specified below.
- Discharge of Firearms:* No person shall discharge a firearm on school premises for any purpose. This prohibition includes intentional or unintentional discharges, even if the firearm is not loaded.
- Possession of Dangerous Items:* In addition to firearms, the possession of dangerous items, including knives, CEDs, and explosives, is prohibited. This also applies to items resembling firearms.
- Intentional Display of Firearms:* The intentional display of firearms and/or CEDs in a manner intended to intimidate, threaten, or create fear is prohibited.
- Unauthorized Access to Firearms:* Unauthorized access to firearms on school premises is prohibited.

- EXEMPTIONS:** This policy recognizes the following exemptions:
- A. *Law Enforcement Officers:* Law enforcement officers acting in their official capacity are exempted from the prohibition.
 - B. *Contracted Individuals:* Individuals under contract with the school, requiring the use of firearms and are duly licensed by the Virgin Islands Police Department, are exempted from the approval of the Insular Superintendent.

- RESPONSIBILITIES:**
- 1. **Immediate Notification:**
 - All school personnel, including teachers, administrators, and support staff are required to immediately report any observed or suspected possession or use of firearms and/or dangerous item(s) within designated Gun-Free Zones to the appropriate authorities.
 - 2. **School Administrators:**
 - Review policies related to firearms on school premises.
 - Ensure awareness of the firearm policy among school staff, students, and visitors.
 - Collaborate with local law enforcement agencies to verify the validity of claimed exemptions.
 - Establish clear protocols for reporting and responding to incidents involving firearms.
 - Maintain a record of approved exemptions and contractual agreements allowing the possession and use of firearms on school premises.
 - 3. **Staff and Employees:**
 - Familiarize themselves with the firearm policy and adhere to its provisions.
 - Cooperate with law enforcement and school administration during investigations related to firearms on school premises.
 - Provide documentation if claiming an exemption, ensuring compliance with safety guidelines.
 - 4. **Law Enforcement Officers:**
 - Adhere to protocols established by the school administration and local law enforcement agencies.
 - Display proper identification when carrying firearms on school premises.
 - Collaborate with school administrators to ensure a coordinated response to security concerns and incidents.
 - Participate in training sessions organized by the school administration to enhance communication and coordination with school staff.
 - 5. **Contracted Individuals:**
 - Adhere to the terms and conditions outlined in their contracts.
 - Provide necessary documentation, including proof of licensing and certifications, to the school administration.
 - Report any issues or concerns related to the use of firearms during their contractual obligations.
 - Collaborate with school administration to address safety concerns and ensure alignment with the educational mission of the school.
 - 6. **Students, Parents and Visitors:**
 - Students are to report any knowledge of firearms within Gun-Free Zones to school staff or administrators promptly.

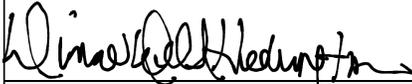
- Parents or guardians who become aware of any potential firearm-related incidents on school premises are to report the information to school administrators or law enforcement.
- Familiarize themselves with the firearm policy and educate their children about the associated rules and regulations.
- Cooperate with school authorities and law enforcement during investigations and follow any safety instructions provided.

7. Anonymous Reporting Mechanism:

- To encourage the reporting of incidents without fear of reprisal, schools shall use the VIDE Compliance Line at:
 - ✓ Text “REPORT” to 1-800-403-2461
 - ✓ Visit www.vide.complianceline.com

where individuals can submit information regarding potential firearm-related concerns.

REVIEW AND REVISION: This policy will be periodically reviewed to ensure its effectiveness and relevance, with revisions made as needed based on emerging concerns and changes in local laws and regulations.

REVIEWED FOR LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:		
	Cynthia B. Moore, Esq., VIDE Legal Counsel	Date: January 2, 2024
PRE-APPROVAL:		
	Victor Somme III, Assistant Commissioner	Date: January 2, 2024
APPROVALS:	The signatures of the officials below signify review and approval of this policy.	
COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION:		
	Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Ed.D.	Date: January 2, 2024
INSULAR SUPERINTENDENT:		
	Stefan V. Jurgen, Ph.D., St. Thomas-St. John School District	Date: January 2, 2024
INSULAR SUPERINTENDENT:		
	Ericilda Ottley-Herman, Ed.D., St. Croix School District	Date: January 2, 2024