

UT Southwestern Medical Center

Open Carry and Campus Carry Laws

March 7, 2016

To the UT Southwestern Community:

During its 2015 Session, the Texas Legislature passed two pieces of legislation with important implications for UT Southwestern and other institutions of higher education: House Bill 910 (the “Open Carry” law), which became effective on January 1, 2016; and Senate Bill 11 (the “Campus Carry” law), which will take effect on August 1, 2016.

The Open Carry law now in effect allows an individual holding a valid license to carry a handgun to openly carry a holstered handgun. However, institutions of higher education and specified medical facilities were exempted from this legislation. Thus, Open Carry anywhere on the UT Southwestern campus remains a violation of state law and institutional policy. We will be posting “No Open Carry” signs that conform to the requirements of Section 30.07 of the Texas Penal Code. Anyone seen violating this should be reported to our campus police immediately.

In contrast, the Campus Carry law allows an individual holding a valid license to carry a concealed holstered handgun on the campus of a public institution of higher education and forbids campus-wide exemptions. However, the legislation gives the Presidents of public institutions the authority to designate specific areas of a campus where concealed handguns cannot be carried, even by those holding a license to carry a handgun.

Guided by the recommendations of a committee chaired by Dr. Charles Ginsburg, Senior Associate Dean for Academic Administration, which included faculty, staff, students, and trainees, I am writing now to inform the campus community of the plans for UT Southwestern’s compliance with Senate Bill 11, beginning on August 1, 2016.

The key provisions of our plan are:

- Carrying concealed handguns by licensed holders will be prohibited in:
 - Patient care areas
 - Campus childcare and playground facilities
 - Buildings with laboratories where greater than 50 percent of the net assignable square feet contains chemicals, biologic agents, and/or potentially explosive gases.
- Within mixed use buildings that contain laboratories and patient care space (and may serve other functions as well), laboratories with chemicals, biologic agents, and/or potentially explosive gases will be designated as prohibited areas for concealed carry, and the same prohibition will also be applied to discrete patient care areas in those buildings.

- Areas where concealed carry is prohibited will be marked by signage that conforms to Section 30.06 of the Texas Penal Code.
- UTSW will not provide weapon storage facilities in campus buildings.
- Any individual holding a valid license who carries a handgun on campus, including in a backpack or purse, must carry it in a holster that completely covers the trigger and the entire trigger guard area. The holster must have sufficient tension or grip on the handgun to retain it in the holster even when subjected to unexpected jostling.

We will be creating a publicly available website on this policy, which will include a map of the campus showing the areas where concealed carry is prohibited, and the policy will be posted in our UT Southwestern Handbook of Institutional Policies and Operating Procedures.

Compliance is essential for maintaining public trust, and I appreciate your understanding of our policy and support of our implementation plan.

Thank you for your commitment to UT Southwestern and for your ongoing contributions to our goals and aspirations.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center