

**STATE OF TENNESSEE  
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

**February 8, 2017**

**Opinion No. 17-09**

**Tuition Discount for Teachers Employed by Charter Schools**

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**Question**

Do licensed teachers who teach at charter schools qualify for the tuition discount provided in Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-7-119?

**Opinion**

Yes.

**ANALYSIS**

“Every child in Tennessee . . . whose parent is employed as a full-time certified teacher in any public school in Tennessee” receives a discount on tuition to any state operated institution of higher learning. Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-7-119(a). “Public charter schools” are by statutory definition “*public school[s]* . . . established and operating under the terms of a charter agreement.” Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-13-104(10) (emphasis added). “Public charter schools shall be part of the state program of public education.” Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-13-104(10). The Tennessee legislature authorized the creation of public charter schools for the express purpose, among others, of providing “an alternative means within the public school system for ensuring accomplishment of the necessary outcomes of education by allowing the establishment and maintenance of public schools that operate within a school district structure but are allowed maximum flexibility to achieve their goals.” Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 49-13-102(b).

In short, charter schools are public schools that are part of the public school system and that operate within school districts. Accordingly, full-time certified teachers employed in public charter schools are teachers in public schools in Tennessee, and their children are eligible for the tuition discount provided for in Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-7-119(a).

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