

What Parents Need to Know About Educator Sexual Misconduct with Students

Educator sexual misconduct¹ includes a wide range of behaviors, not limited to, sexual innuendo; inappropriate touching; inappropriate text messaging, email, or social media contact with a student; soliciting sex from a student; or sexual contact with a student.

Who are the Perpetrators?^{2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8}

- Perpetrators may be classroom teachers, administrators, coaches, counselors, tutors, volunteers, or any others who work in an educational setting.
- Perpetrators may be either male or female.
- Perpetrators may be well-respected and highly regarded by other teachers, administrators parents and the community.



Prevalence^{1, 7, 9, 10}

In a five-year period

 **More than
2,570**

Educators nationwide had their teaching credentials revoked, denied, surrendered, or sanctioned for **sexual misconduct with a student**.



446

of these cases involved **educators who had multiple victims**.

In a study by the American Association of University Women (2001)

**Almost
10%**



Students grades 8 through 11 reported **being sexually harassed by teachers or school employees**.

Manipulation of Student/Staff/ Community ^{2, 4, 11, 12, 13}

- Manipulation, also known as “grooming”, is a deliberate and carefully orchestrated process by which sexual offenders target, initiate, and maintain sexually abusive relationships with children and adolescents.
- Manipulation behaviors may, on the surface, appear innocent in nature, and distinguishing between sexually motivated manipulation and normal child/adult interactions can be difficult.
- Successful manipulation involves the student, the student’s family, school staff, and the community; which increases the likelihood that sexual misconduct can be initiated and maintained without detection.
- Offenders often target vulnerable or marginal students who have prior academic, emotional, or behavioral problems, because these students are more likely to keep silent or if they do “tell”, are less likely to be believed.
- Offenders may target students who are facing family challenges or adversities because these students are often susceptible to inappropriate attention from an adult.
- Offenders persuade students to keep silent by manipulating students’ affections, or by exploiting the power differential between themselves and students.

Warning Signs ⁴

- Obvious or inappropriate preferential treatment of the student.
- Excessive time spent alone with the student.
- Time spent with the student outside of class or other school functions.
- Repeated time spent in private spaces with the student.
- Driving the student to or from school.
- Befriending parents and making visits to the student’s home.
- Acting as the student’s confidante.
- Inappropriate calls, texts, or emails to the student.
- Overly affectionate behavior with the student.
- Flirtatious behavior or off-color remarks with the student.

- Schoolmates suspect an improper relationship between the educator and student, and make jokes or references about it to other students or adults

How Parents Can Protect ^{1, 2, 4, 10, 16, 17, 18}

- Discuss body safety and teach your child how to refuse inappropriate behavior and how to report such activity.
- Review the school’s “Code of Conduct” which should clearly define school personnel’s obligations and responsibilities toward maintaining appropriate boundaries with students, to whom to report if an employee observes violations, and how the school will respond to situations involving inappropriate behavior with students.
- Inquire about the school’s hiring policies, which should include criminal background checks and reference checks for all school personnel and volunteers.
- Inquire about the school’s prevention activities, which should include a combination of annual workshops for all school personnel, students, and parents that focus on sexual exploitation of students; written policies; posters and flyers that remind students and staff (including department and administrative offices) about appropriate conduct.
- Inquire about the school’s mandatory reporting policy and stated consequences for failure to report to authorities if a student alleges educator misconduct.

How Parents Should Respond ^{1, 12, 15}

- Provide practical and emotional support to their child.
- Accept and support their child, regardless of personal feelings about the alleged offender.
- Refrain from blaming their child, because blaming can become a significant barrier to a child’s recovery.
- Refrain from investigating or proving the truth of an allegation.
- Call local law enforcement as soon as possible after a child discloses educator sexual misconduct or if the parent suspects educator sexual misconduct has occurred.

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