

STUDENT ABUSE ALLEGATIONS

How to Make Yourself Less Vulnerable

Short of never touching a student, period, there are a number of ways that educators can make themselves less vulnerable to being falsely accused:

- **Keep your classroom door open.** This lets people know that you have nothing to hide and lets administrators and colleagues observe your classroom. If you're working "after-hours" with a student or group, let your principal or another teacher know.
- **Don't ever leave your class unattended.** Be sure your students understand your classroom rules and regulations. Make sure students are adequately supervised at all times.
- **Try never to discipline a child alone.** Go to the principal's office if you can; but at the very least, discipline a student in the hall, within sight of the rest of your class or another teacher.
- **Communicate with other teachers.** Compare notes about students who appear to be having difficulty. Share this information with your administrators.
- **Avoid physical contact.** If you must physically restrain a student in a discipline situation, use no unnecessary or unreasonable force. A hug or a pat on the back may be fine for primary-age children, but refrain from any touches that may be misinterpreted by the child, other children, or adults.
- **Limit out of school contact with students.** Don't take students home. Any interaction with your students outside of school must be limited to those activities that are approved in writing by both school administration and the student's parents. Transporting students in your personal auto should only occur with written assignment by your employer and written parental release.
- **Document everything.** While details are still fresh in your mind, make a written description of any incidents that you think may cause problems later on. Keep a record of every individual contact you have with a student—some teachers write themselves notes on the back of attendance slips. Keep track of who initiated the meeting, what was said, and what action was taken.
- **Keep good records.** Save attendance records and seating charts—you may be able to discern a pattern. Also save your grade books and make careful notes of any discipline or academic problems students may have had. Be especially sure to keep copies of any notes you may have intercepted from students.
- **Be credible.** Strive to make your behavior above reproach. It helps to be well-liked and respected if your case should go to trial. Any problems you may have had in the past could come back to haunt you.



Contact Your UniServ Directors, Laura Black or Cindy Carroll with any further questions.