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For Immediate Release

Contact: [Steve Walker](#) (619) 531-3890  
[Tanya Sierra](#) (619) 531-3315  
*En Español* [Barbara Medina](#) (619) 531-3305

## DA Reminds Parents and Students to Report Suspected Student Abuse in Schools

### *Task Force Reviews Online Reports of Sexual and Physical Abuse as Well as Failure to Report Abuse*

As a new school year begins across the county, San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) is reminding parents, teachers and students of a DA website where they can report suspected sexual or physical abuse directly to the District Attorney's Office. The online reporting system is an additional tool for the public. Once a report is made, members of the DA Student Safety in Schools Systems Task Force will evaluate and investigate the claim. If appropriate, law enforcement will be notified so they can investigate the allegations and families will be connected with trauma-informed resources and support.

“Every student in San Diego County deserves to have a safe and healthy educational environment, free of sexual and physical abuse,” said DA Stephan. “But when that kind of abuse does happen, it’s critical that students, parents and teachers have a trusted way to report it and that those reports don’t fall through the cracks.”

#### The DA’s Student Safety in School Systems Task Force:

- Welcomes and receives submissions from any member of the public who is concerned about the safety of students in a school system.
- Referrals can be reported [here on the DA’s public website](#).
- Assists any member of the public who is navigating multiple agencies and departments when an incident involving a child has occurred in a school setting
- Reduces the public’s confusion by giving them direct access to the District Attorney’s Office so allegations and complaints can be tracked.
- Cross references allegations and complaints with law enforcement, Child Welfare Services, and educational institutions and programs where appropriate.
- Refers members of the public to services that may be available to those experiencing trauma as a result of an incident that has taken place within a school system.
- Offers and provides outreach and training to the public on issues and concerns surrounding possible physical and sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult or minor on a student in an educational setting.

- Criminally prosecutes those who fail to comply with mandated reporting laws where the evidence of such failure is sufficient. Criminally prosecute those who commit physical or sexual abuse if the facts and the law supports it.

**Note: This task force does not serve as a substitute for a mandated reporter’s duty to report abuse. Mandated reporters still must follow their duties under the law to report to the proper authorities under the Penal Code.**

Rather, recognizing that gaps existed between the multiple agencies and systems that address abuse, the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office created the reporting system in 2019.

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**Student Safety In School Systems Task Force**

The District Attorney's Student Safety in School Systems Task Force is committed to ensuring all of San Diego's youth have a safe and nurturing educational environment, free of sexual and physical abuse. The District Attorney's Office recognizes that there are gaps between the multiple agencies and systems that are currently addressing abuse. We aim to eliminate those inefficiencies and close those gaps so our students and youth can thrive. We invite the public to use this site to directly contact our experienced prosecutors and trained investigators if there is a concern of abuse within our school systems. Every submission will receive attention and every allegation will be addressed.

*This Task Force will not be a mechanism by which a mandated reporter may report suspected abuse, but the Task Force will work to make sure that mandated reporters are complying with their legal obligations to report acts of physical and sexual abuse against minors.*

**The District Attorney's Student Safety in School Systems Task Force will:**

- Welcome and receive submissions from any member of the public who is concerned about the safety of students in a school system;
- Facilitate any member of the public who is navigating the multiple agencies and departments when an incident involving a child has occurred in a school setting;
- Reduce the public's confusion by giving them direct access to the District Attorney's Office so allegations and complaints can be tracked;
- Cross-reference allegations and complaints with law enforcement, Child Welfare Services, and educational institutions and programs where appropriate;
- Refer members of the public to services that may be available to those experiencing trauma as a result of an incident that has taken place within a school system;
- Offer and provide outreach and training to the public on issues and concerns surrounding possible physical and sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult or minor on a student in an educational setting;
- Criminally prosecute those who fail to comply with mandated reporting laws where the evidence of such failure is sufficient.

The District Attorney’s Office also works closely with school districts across the county to remind mandated reporters of their responsibilities.

“Mandated reporters must make a report when there is any reasonable suspicion of abuse, based on facts,” DA Stephan said. “Mandated reporters typically won’t see the actual sexual abuse, but they often notice “grooming behaviors” that accompany or precede the sexual abuse.”

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**About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office**

*The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.*