

Recent Changes to SB 571 : Protecting Students & Reporting Misconduct

- **Effective September 1, 2025**



Why This Matters

- - Strengthens protections for students against staff misconduct.
- - Expands mandatory reporting requirements.
- - Increases accountability for schools and staff. **(this includes all professionals who may serve children).**
- - Creates potential legal liability for failure to act.

SB 571: Mandatory Abuse Reporting

- - Report to DFPS or Law Enforcement within **24 hours** if you suspect abuse. (*law previously provided a 48 hour window to report*).
- - Definition of abuse now includes:
 - Sexual conduct harmful to a child's welfare.
 - Improper educator–student relationships.
- - Law enforcement means DPS, city police, sheriff, or constable — NOT school police.

SB 571: Reporting Misconduct Within Schools

- - Principals: The time frame to report certain allegations to superintendent within 48 hours.
- - Superintendents: The time frame to report to TEA/SBEC within 48 hours.
- - Misconduct includes:
 - Abuse or unlawful acts with a student/minor.
 - Romantic/sexual relationships with students.
 - **Inappropriate communications or boundary violations.**

****Failure to report can be a state jail felony.**

SB 571: New Requirements for Misconduct Within Schools

- - Online Misconduct Reporting Portal must be used.
- - **Parent Notification required when misconduct is alleged.**

HB 4623: Legal Liability

- - Schools can be sued for gross negligence, recklessness, or intentional misconduct.
- - Covers:
 - • Sexual misconduct against students.
 - • Failure to report suspected abuse.
- - Governmental immunity waived – employees can't claim official immunity.
- - Damages up to \$500,000 per claimant + legal fees.

What You Need to Do

- - Know the 24-hour reporting time frame is now in effect.
- - Maintain and support professional boundaries with all students.
- - Report — even if unsure — to protect students and yourself.

Resources

- - Educators Duty to Protect Students – TEA:
<https://tea.texas.gov/texas-educators/investigations/educators-duty-to-protect-students>
- Consult with your supervisor if receiving concerns of suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult.
- Contact the Office for Safe Environment and Child & Family Resources for additional support.