

A FALSE ACCUSATION IS MADE AGAINST YOU

**LOUISIANA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
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When a student or parent accuses you of excessive force, corporal punishment, or a morals offense, your reputation and your livelihood are at risk. Criminal authorities are usually contacted. The School Board and the Sheriff's Office may conduct separate investigations. You may innocently say or write something that could later affect your legal rights. You should exercise your legal rights, whether you are innocent or guilty.

1. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM ACCUSED OF THESE TYPES OF OFFENSES?

You should immediately contact your local Federation office or the LFT.

2. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE ASKS ME QUESTIONS?

EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT! YOU SHOULD NOT ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE ACCUSATION, EVEN IF YOU ARE TOTALLY INNOCENT, AND EVEN IF THE DEPUTY SAYS THAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ACCUSED OR AREN'T UNDER INVESTIGATION. If asked, you should give your name, address and date of birth, and ask to have your attorney present before you make a statement.

3. IF I AM INNOCENT, WHY SHOULDN'T I ANSWER QUESTIONS?

We have seen many situations where clients made statements believing the statements to be innocent and harmless, but later learned that their statements actually hurt their case. You have the right to remain silent, and you should exercise that right! Serious offenses are at stake, including Cruelty to a Juvenile, Child Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Battery, and Assault.

4. WHAT IF THE DEPUTY THREATENS TO ARREST ME IF I DON'T TALK?

If the deputy is going to arrest you, there is nothing you can say which will prevent it.

5. CAN I DO ANYTHING TO TRY TO AVOID BEING ARRESTED, WITHOUT ANSWERING QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE ACCUSATION?

Yes. We recommend that you ask the deputy to give you a "Summons" instead of arresting you.

6. IF I AM ASKED TO SIGN A SUMMONS, SHOULD I SIGN IT?

Yes. You are not acknowledging guilt. You are only agreeing to appear in court.

7. DO I NEED LEGAL REPRESENTATION AT MY FIRST COURT APPEARANCE?

Your first court appearance may either be a “bond-setting” or “arraignment.” Representation is advised.

8. WHAT IF THE PRINCIPAL ASKS ME QUESTIONS OR ASKS ME TO ATTEND A CONFERENCE WITH THE PARENT AND CHILD?

It is not in your best interest for you to make any written or verbal until you consult with an attorney. When the Sheriff asks you questions, you have a constitutional right to remain silent. But if you refuse to answer the principal's questions, you may be accused of insubordination. Therefore, we suggest that you take the following action.

We suggest that either you or your building representative speak privately with the principal. If the principal has directed you to submit a written statement, ask for additional time (a day or two), so that you may obtain assistance. Explain that any statements that you make can later be obtained by the student's lawyer, and may be used not only against you but also against the school board. If the principal wants you to attend a face-to-face meeting with the parent, and you are concerned that the parent may be confrontational or suit-happy, ask the principal to consider holding two separate conferences: one with the parent, and one with you (and the building rep). Explain that the reason is because statements that you make may be taken out of context or misinterpreted by the parent, and the parent may attempt to use it against both you and the school board in a lawsuit for money. You may also want to state that you should not be required to make any statements in front of the parent, because personnel conferences should be private and confidential, and a parent would have no right to attend.

9. WHAT IF THE PRINCIPAL STILL DIRECTS ME TO SUBMIT A WRITTEN STATEMENT OR TO ATTEND A CONFERENCE WITH THE PARENT?

Submit a written statement saying that you are not guilty of violating any school board policies or laws, and that you will be glad to provide further information at a later date. You should attend the conference. However, you should state that you cannot answer questions in the presence of the parent without first consulting with an attorney.

10. WON'T IT APPEAR THAT I AM GUILTY?

It shouldn't. You should state that you wish to first speak with an attorney and that you will submit a statement later. Rights are more important than “appearances.”

11. WILL IT REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF I EXERCISE THESE RIGHTS?

Yes. You don't know the parent's motives. The parent may file criminal charges or sue for money. If you make a statement without first consulting with an attorney, you lose valuable legal rights.

12. WILL THESE ACCUSATIONS CAUSE ME ANY OTHER PROBLEMS?

The parents may sue you. You may be contacted by phone, in person, or by letter, from the parent, an insurance company, or a lawyer. You should not make any statements. The School System may schedule a hearing to determine whether you have violated any School Board policies. You should not attend any conferences without representation. As a Federation member, you are protected by the AFT Occupational Liability Plan. For full information concerning legal representation on the criminal charges, on a lawsuit against you, and on school system hearings, contact the Federation.