

5300.60 STUDENT SEARCHES AND INTERROGATIONS

The Board of Education is committed to ensuring an atmosphere on school property and at school functions that is safe and orderly. To achieve this kind of environment, any school official authorized to impose a disciplinary penalty on a student may question a student about an alleged violation of law or the district code of conduct. Students are not entitled to any sort of "Miranda"-type warning before being questioned by school officials, nor are school officials required to contact a student's parent before questioning the student. However, school officials will tell all students why they are being questioned.

The Board authorizes the Superintendent of Schools, Building Principals, the school nurse and district security officials to conduct searches of students and their belongings, in most instances, with exceptions set forth below in A. ~~and B.~~, if the authorized school official has reasonable suspicion to believe that the search will result in evidence that the student violated the law or the district code of conduct.

An authorized school official may conduct a search of a student's belongings that is minimally intrusive, such as touching the outside of a book bag, without reasonable suspicion, so long as the school official has a legitimate reason for the very limited search.

Reasonable suspicion for an authorized school official to conduct a search of a student or the student's belongings may be based upon information received from a reliable informant. Individuals, other than the district employees, will be considered reliable informants if they have previously supplied information that was accurate and verified, or they make an admission against their own interest, or they provide the same information that is received independently from other sources, or they appear to be credible and the information they are communicating relates to an immediate threat to safety. District employees will be considered reliable informants unless they are known to have previously supplied information that they knew was not accurate.

Before searching a student or the student's belongings, the authorized school official should question the student as to whether he or she possesses physical evidence that they violated the law or the district code, request that the student voluntarily consent to the search. Searches will be limited to the extent necessary to locate the evidence sought.

Whenever practicable, searches will be conducted in the privacy of administrative offices and students will be present when their possessions are being searched.

A. Student Lockers, Desks and other School Storage Places

The rules in this code of conduct regarding searches of students and their belongings do not apply to student lockers, desks and other school storage places. Students have no reasonable expectation of privacy with respect to these places and school officials retain complete control over them. This means that student lockers, desks and other school storage places may be subject to search at any time by school officials, without prior notice to students and without their consent.

B. Treatment of Cell Phones

Teachers and administrators are authorized to confiscate student cell phones that are being used in violation of the code of conduct and/or policy 5695, Student Use of Electronic Devices. Teachers and administrators are permitted to look at the screen of the cell phone and can request the student's cooperation to search the cell phone further. Without a student's permission, teachers and administrators should not undertake a more extensive search without reasonable suspicion, and until conferring with the Superintendent or school attorney for guidance.

C. Documentation of Searches

The authorized school official conducting the search is encouraged to promptly recording the following information about each search:

1. Name, age and grade of student searched.
2. Reasons for the search.
3. Name of any informant(s).
4. Purpose of search (that is, what item(s) were being sought).
5. Type and scope of search.
6. Person conducting search and his or her title and position.
7. Witnesses, if any, to the search.
8. Time and location of search.
9. Results of search (that is, what items(s) were found).
10. Disposition of items found.
11. Time, manner and results of parental notification.

The Principal or the Principal's designee shall be responsible for the custody, control and disposition of any illegal or dangerous item taken from a student. The Principal or his or her designee shall clearly label each item taken from the student and retain control of the item(s), until the item is turned over to the police. The Principal or his or her designee shall be responsible for personally delivering dangerous or illegal items to police authorities.

D. Police Involvement in Searches and Interrogations of Students

District officials are committed to cooperating with police officials and other law enforcement authorities to maintain a safe school environment. Police officials, however, have limited authority to interview or search students in schools or at school functions, or to use school facilities in connection with police work. Police officials may enter school property or a school function to question or search a student or to conduct a formal investigation involving students only if they have:

1. A search or an arrest warrant; or
2. Probable cause to believe a crime has been committed on school property or at a school function.

Before police officials are permitted to question or search any student, the Principal or his or her designee shall first try to notify the student's parent to give the parent the opportunity to be present during the police questioning or search. If the student's parent cannot be contacted prior to the police questioning or search, the questioning or search shall not be conducted, unless the student is 16 years of age or older. The Principal or designee will also be present during any police questioning or search of a student on school property or at a school function.

Students who are questioned by police officials on school property or at a school function will be afforded the same rights they have outside the school. This means:

1. They must be informed of their legal rights.
2. They may remain silent if they so desire.
3. They may request the presence of an attorney.

E. Child Protective Services Investigations

Consistent with the district's commitment to keep students safe from harm, and the obligation of school officials to report to child protective services when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a student has been abused or maltreated, the district will ~~cooperate with~~ **provide data and assistance** to local child protective services workers, **or members of a multi-disciplinary team accompanying such workers**, who ~~wish to conduct interviews of students on school property relating~~ **are responding** to allegations of suspected child abuse, and/or neglect, or custody investigations. ~~when such a report has been initiated by the District.~~ **Such data and assistance include access to records relevant to the investigation, as well as interviews with any child named as a victim in a report, or a sibling of that child, or a child resident in the same home as the victim.**

All requests by child protective services to interview a student on school property shall be made directly to Principal or his or her designee. **Child protective service workers and any associated multi-disciplinary team members must comply with the district's procedures for visitors, provide identification, and identify the child(ren) to be interviewed.**

~~The Principal or designee shall set the time and place of the interview.~~ The Principal or designee shall decide if it is necessary and appropriate for a school official **staff member, including but not limited to an administrator or school nurse**, to ~~be present during~~ **observe** the interview **either from inside or outside the interview room.**, ~~depending on the age of the student being interviewed and the nature of the allegations.~~ **If the nature of the allegations is such that it may be necessary for the student to remove any of his or her clothing in order for the child protective services worker to verify the allegations, the school nurse or other district medical personnel must be present during that portion of the interview. No student may be required to remove his or her clothing in front of a child protective services worker or school district official of the opposite sex.**

A child protective services worker may not remove a student from school property without a court order, unless the worker reasonably believes that the student would be subject to

danger of abuse if he or she were not removed from school before a court order can reasonably be obtained. If the worker believes the student would be subject to danger of abuse, the worker may remove the student without a court order and without the parent's consent.

Cross-ref: 5695, Students and Personal Electronic Devices

Ref: Social Services Law §425
18 NYCRR §432.3

Safford Unified School District #1 et al. v. Redding, 129 S. Ct. 2633 (2009)

Vassallo v. Lando, 591 F.Supp.2d 172 (E.D.N.Y. (2008)

Phaneuf v. Fraikin 448 F.3rd 591 (2006)

New Jersey v. TLO, 469 U.S. 325 (1985)

In re Gregory, 82 N.Y.2d 588 (1993)

People v. Scott D., 34 N.Y.2d 483 (1974)

People v. Singletary, 37 N.Y.2d 310 (1975))

People v. Overton, 20 N.Y.2d 360 (1969)

M.M. v. Anker, 607 F.2d 588 (2d Cir. 1979)

Opinion of Counsel, 1 EDR 800 (1959)

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