

# UPPAC NEWS

A BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER FROM THE UTAH PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES ADVISORY COMMISSION

## Avoiding the Pitfalls of Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory reporting is more than a policy—it is a fundamental safeguard. When an educator fails to report, the fallout is devastating, causing pain to minors and their families and resulting in professional consequences for licensed educators. In Utah, the presumption for failing to report child or sexual abuse is up to a one-year license suspension. These cases of failure to report are rarely intentional; instead, they often stem from a misunderstanding of what constitutes abuse, confusion over reporting nuances, or simple breakdowns in communication between staff.

This article serves as a reminder for all licensed educators— including administrators, social workers, counselors, librarians and coaches—to help navigate the complexities of mandatory reporting and avoid critical pitfalls.

### Relay Don't Delay

The educator standards and state law require an educator *immediately* report any suspected child abuse or neglect to either the nearest police officer or law enforcement or the Division of Child of Family Services (DCFS). "Immediately" means exactly that. It is easy to get sidetracked by a busy school day, travel plans, or competing emergencies but these do not excuse a delay. Failure to report cases have been referred to UPPAC because educators got busy with other issues and forgot to report.

In Utah, educators have two primary points of contact: DCFS (the Division of Child and Family Services) and Law Enforcement. Your School Resource Officer is often the most accessible point of contact. Take advantage of these two

## COMMISSION NEWS

UPPAC would like to thank Corby Briggs from North Sanpete School District who recently left the commission after years of dedicated participation in the process. At the same time, we are excited to welcome Braden Johnson from Millard School District who has been appointed the newest member of UPPAC.

points of contact to ensure that a busy schedule does not lead to failing to report.

### **The Buck Stops With You**

President Harry S. Truman famously kept a sign on his desk that read, *"The buck stops here."*



Licensed educators—from assistant coaches and teachers to principals and social workers—must adopt this same mentality. If you know of the allegations, you have a personal duty to immediately report.

In a school hierarchy, educators are trained to consult superiors before making major decisions. Mandatory reporting requires a different mindset. While your LEA may have a policy asking you to notify an administrator, doing so does not satisfy your legal obligation. And even if your supervisor disagrees with you, has a conflict of interest, or simply forgets to follow up when you discuss allegations that may be potential abuse, **you** are still legally responsible to report.

Additionally, every LEA policy that directs a school employee to notify a school official of suspected neglect or abuse must clarify “that notifying a school official does not satisfy the

employee’s personal duty to report to law enforcement or DCFS.” R277-401-3(2).

### **Recognizing Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse**

A common misconception is that abuse only occurs when there is a large power imbalance or an adult perpetrator. However, mandatory reporting laws include Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse.

If a minor engages in sexually abusive behavior or inappropriate touching toward another minor, it must be reported. Unwanted or forceful physical sexual touch between peers constitutes sexual battery or abuse under the law. Seemingly trivial interactions like nut taps or butt grabs amongst peers have led to law enforcement reports of misconduct to UPPAC against educators. These situations can be difficult to conceptualize, but they must be treated with the same urgency as adult-on-child abuse.

### **When in Doubt, Reach Out**

Under Utah Code §80-2-602, licensed educators are required to report if you have "reason to believe" a child is being physically or sexually abused or neglected or if you observe circumstances that would "reasonably" result in a child being neglected or abused. You do not need proof; you only need a reason to believe.

If you are unsure if a situation warrants a report, you can chat with a DCFS worker online on the DCFS Website during work hours. (Monday–Friday, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.). The DCFS online chat makes it easy to answer specific questions about mandatory reporting. Your school

resource officer is also an excellent resource for your questions.

You may report allegations of abuse to the DCFS Intake Hotline: 1-855-323-3237, through the DCFS Website, <https://dcfs.utah.gov/child-abuse-reporting-form/>, or by contact your school resource officer or local law enforcement.

### **Hindsight is 20/20**

As an educator, your role is a reporter, not an

investigator. It is not your job to determine if an allegation is true or to gather evidence before reporting.

When you look back on an allegation of abuse, you don't want to regret silence. Law enforcement and DCFS carry the burden of investigation; your sole responsibility is to pass the information to the experts who can protect the child. If you have a reason to believe, you have a duty to report.

## **UPPAC EDUCATOR DISCIPLINE**

### **A Summary of Utah State Board of Education Licensing Actions from July 2025 to December 2025**

#### **Surrender**

UPPAC Case No. 23-1947

An educator pled guilty to an amended charge of Assault, and to an amended charge of Aggravated Child Abuse, both class A misdemeanors. The charges arose from allegations that the educator strangled his wife and threw his daughter out of a chair. His pleas will be held in abeyance for a period of twelve months. The educator voluntarily and permanently surrendered his license prior to completion of the UPPAC investigation.

UPPAC Case No. 24-2135

A student alleged that an educator gave him oral sex on two occasions when he was eighteen and sent him a nude picture via Instagram. The student had screenshots of Instagram messages with the educator. The educator voluntarily and permanently surrendered her license prior to completion of the UPPAC investigation.

UPPAC Case No. 24-2172

An educator briefly pointed his pocketknife at a student's neck and put another student in a chokehold. He admitted telling students "in jest" that he would murder them and their families if they crashed his go-kart. He used the f-word in class. Students alleged the educator made disparaging remarks about students' penis sizes. In 2022, the educator received a reprimand from USBE for moving cars in the school parking lot with a forklift. The educator voluntarily and permanently surrendered his license prior to completion of the UPPAC investigation.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2242

An educator who was an administrator had inappropriate communications with a teacher who allegedly sexually abused students, which interfered with an official investigation. The educator voluntarily and permanently surrendered his license prior to completion of the UPPAC investigation.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2268

An educator exchanged messages on the Hush app with an undercover detective posing as a fourteen-year-old girl. The educator then switched to emailing the supposed girl. They communicated daily for about ten days and exchanged clothed pictures. The educator voluntarily and permanently surrendered his license prior to completion of the UPPAC investigation.

### **Revocation**

UPPAC Case No. 23-1972—Default

An educator struck and killed a pedestrian while driving under the influence of alcohol in California. He was convicted of Second-Degree Murder after a jury trial. The educator's license was permanently revoked by default order.

UPPAC Case No. 24-2162—Default

An educator sexually abused children in Utah from the 1990s until the night before his arrest in 2024. He pled guilty to nine first-degree felonies: six counts of Aggravated Sexual Abuse of a Child, one count of Rape, and two counts of Forcible Sodomy. The educator's license was permanently revoked by default order.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2210—Default

An educator communicated via an app with an undercover officer he thought was a thirteen-year-old female. He asked the supposed minor if she would have sex with him and arranged to meet the minor. The educator pled guilty to Enticing a Minor, a second-degree felony. The educator's license was permanently revoked by default order.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2213

An educator pled guilty to an amended charge of Attempted Rape, a first-degree felony. The charge arose from a sexual relationship

between the educator and a junior-high student. The educator's license was permanently revoked.

### **Suspension**

UPPAC Case No. 24-2071

A special needs student had a toileting accident on a fieldtrip. An educator took a video of the student and discussed the accident while driving the student back from the field trip. The educator then sent the video to multiple people. The educator also kissed a student on the forehead, told a student to hit another student, took a picture of a student without a shirt on, and improperly restrained a student. The educator's license was suspended for not less than one year.

UPPAC Case No. 24-2112

An educator engaged in a physical relationship with another educator on campus during school hours multiple times over a one-year period. Their physical relationship included hugging, kissing, groping, touching beneath clothes and having oral sex several times. The educator's license was suspended for not less than one year.

UPPAC Case No. 24-2118—Default

An educator took a nude photo of himself in his classroom. He and a parent exchanged the photo and sexts through an abandoned school social media account. The educator's nude photos and sexts were obtained through the account and shared with many high school students. The educator's license was suspended for not less than five years by default order.

UPPAC Case No. 24-2124

An educator completed student surveys to give herself higher marks and manipulated another teacher's surveys to be lower than

hers. The educator's license was suspended for not less than two years.

#### UPPAC Case No. 24-2142

An educator was under the influence of alcohol at school. She had one empty can and one full can of beer in her backpack. She pled no contest to Possession of Alcohol at School, a class B Misdemeanor. Her plea will be held in abeyance for a period of twelve months. The educator received a prior letter of warning from USBE for a DUI in 2021. The educator's license was suspended for not less than three years.

#### UPPAC Case No. 24-2134

An educator tried to set up his eighteen-year-old student with the educator's twenty-five-year-old friend. The educator took a picture of the student and sent it to the twenty-five-year-old. He asked students inappropriate questions about their dating lives and made inappropriate jokes. The educator also failed to report when a student told him she had been raped. The educator's license was suspended for not less than three years.

#### UPPAC Case No. 24-2157

An educator masturbated in the school bathroom while video messaging a woman he met online. During the video messaging, the woman took photos of the educator's face and genitals. The educator was blackmailed. The images were sent to the PTA Facebook account where they were intercepted and deleted by administration. The educator's license was suspended for not less than three years.

#### UPPAC Case No. 24-2151

A principal expressed favoritism towards certain students and families. She was retaliatory and created a fear of retaliation. She engaged in inappropriate conversations with students and their families. After telling

parents their child might have been abused, she failed to report the abuse to DCFS. The educator's license was suspended for not less than three years.

#### UPPAC Case No. 24-2163

An educator used her hand to cover the mouths of non-verbal students, yelled in the ear of one of the students, and used inappropriate language with students. The educator received a prior reprimand from USBE for using physical force with students in 2014. The educator's license was suspended for not less than one year.

#### UPPAC Case No. 25-2184

An educator developed a close personal relationship with a female high school student which included personal conversations, handwritten letters, daily texts, and phone calls. The educator did not report that the student was self-harming. The educator's license was suspended for not less than three years.

#### UPPAC Case No. 25-2186

An educator discussed sex and how to perform sexual acts with her daughter's sixteen-year-old boyfriend. The educator sent the minor hundreds of texts, many containing sexual content. The educator pled guilty to Dealing in Materials Harmful to a Minor, a third-degree felony. The plea will be held in abeyance for a period of twenty-four months. The educator's license was suspended for not less than ten years.

#### UPPAC Case No. 25-2187

An educator referred to a student as a "basic bitch." He texted a student about personal matters. He went running alone with the student. He also gave students hugs and massages. The educator's license was suspended for not less than three years.

UPPAC Case No. 24-2189

A principal had sexual relationships with both a teacher and a secretary. The administrator had sex in the school on multiple occasions. Another employee alleged that the administrator sexually harassed her. Additionally, the administrator submitted false information on applications for employment in two districts. The educator's license was suspended for not less than four years.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2203—Default

An educator engaged in multiple instances of criminal activity that resulted in five misdemeanor convictions (two counts of Attempted Violation of a Civil Stalking Injunction; one count of Providing False Info to Peace Officer; one count of Theft of Services under \$500; and one count of Criminal Trespass). The educator repeatedly failed to appear for court dates and failed to comply with her probation requirements resulting in warrants for her arrest. The educator currently has an active warrant. The educator's license was suspended for not less than five years by default order.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2208

After administrators observed a "drug smell" emanating from an educator's classroom, law enforcement found a container of raw marijuana, a pipe, and two empty cans of White Claw in the educator's bag. The educator admitted smoking marijuana at school but said she drank the alcohol the night before. The educator's license was suspended for not less than two years.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2215

An educator told her paraprofessionals about her dating life, sexual encounters, and how she pretended to be a child in sexual relationships. She allowed a student to lay in her lap, spent prolonged time with the student

in a seclusion room, helped a student climb on top of cupboards, and allowed a student to sit in his soiled clothes for an extended time before calling the student's parents. The educator's license was suspended for not less than three years.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2227

An educator submitted an application for certification in New Jersey with allegedly false employment information and a forged signature. While in the midst of suspension proceedings in New Jersey, she submitted an application for a Utah license and stated she was not under investigation in any other jurisdiction. Her license has been suspended in multiple states based on the New Jersey matter. The educator's Utah license was suspended for not less than one year.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2234

An educator came to school and attended an IEP meeting with a student after drinking at home. Breath alcohol tests revealed the educator's blood alcohol concentration was .23. The educator's license was suspended for not less than two years.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2245

An educator gave a seventh grader a letter telling her how much she meant to him and that she was beautiful. The educator had two prior letters of reprimand from his LEA for inappropriate interactions with students. The educator's license was suspended for not less than two years.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2258

An educator whose license was suspended by USBE in 2024 misrepresented on an application to a private school that he had a valid license. The educator's license suspension was extended for not less than one additional year.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2270

An educator was convicted of Resisting Arrest in Arizona after evading an Arizona state trooper on I-15 during a mental break. She believed the trooper was involved in an ICE sting. In February 2025, the educator told a School staff member who was a US citizen to move to Mexico before she was deported. She also frequently discussed her personal life, political views, and drugs with students. The educator's license was suspended for not less than three years.

**Reprimand**

UPPAC Case 24-2115

An educator who was a coach made multiple comments to a Black student about her hair and "white people problems." When another student raised her hand, the educator asked if she was heiling Hitler and suggested she "go get" a student on the opposing team who wore a Star of David necklace. The educator received a reprimand.

UPPAC Case 24-2127

An educator threw markers at students, called students "bastards," and told them to "shut the f\*\*\* up." When he thought a student was cheating, he yelled at the student and told the student he was "f\*\*\*ed." The educator received a reprimand.

UPPAC Case 24-2140

An educator observed a student giving another student a tattoo in her classroom. The educator did not stop the behavior but took a picture of it and posted it on social media. The educator received a reprimand.

UPPAC Case 24-2250

An educator used slides from a book which was banned in accordance with Utah Code Section 53G-10-103. The educator informed

students that the content was from a banned book. The educator received a reprimand.

UPPAC Case 24-2216

An educator blocked a student from entering her classroom and pushed the student away from the door with her forearm, causing the student to fall to the floor. The educator received a reprimand.

UPPAC Case 25-2247

Witnesses reported an educator used a harsh, aggressive voice with a student after the student was in a fight. The educator threw gym clothes at a student and removed the backpack from another student. The educator received a reprimand.

UPPAC Case 24-2252

An educator attempted to walk a sluffing student out of the gym. When the student tried to run away, the educator grabbed the student, spinning him around. The educator struggled with the student and pushed the student. The educator received a reprimand.

**Letter of Warning**

UPPAC Case No. 24-2098

An educator had sixty-six errors in her IEPS including missing documentation, missing signatures, and IEPs past due. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 24-2131

An educator was accused of grabbing the buttocks of an in-law and pushing his elbow against the in-law's breast at a family baptism. He was charged with two counts of Sexual Battery, a class A misdemeanor. The educator denied wrongdoing but pled guilty to one reduced count of Sexual Battery, a class B misdemeanor. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 24-2138

An educator emailed parents information about a non-school-sponsored summer student travel opportunity in violation of Board rule and LEA policy. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 24-2153

An educator used his forearm to push a female student in the chest against a bookshelf while attempting to confiscate the student's cell phone. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 24-2159

An educator taped three students' mouths shut when they would not stop talking during a ballroom dance class. The duct tape did not stick to their mouths but left red marks on their cheeks and necks and pulled out some hair. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 24-2160

A coach was informed that a student was sexually assaulted by another student. The victim's mother told the coach she had already reported the allegations to the Utah Rape Hotline. The educator said he reported the allegations to the principal as required by district policy but did not report to law enforcement. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 24-2161

An assistant coach was informed that a student was sexually assaulted by another student. The educator believed the head coach reported the allegations to the principal in accordance with district policy and that police had been contacted. The educator did not report to law enforcement. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 24-2175

An educator got into an argument with a student where the educator got very close to the student, escalating the student. The educator had previously been directed on two occasions to alert the front office if a student was not complying. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 24-2182

Multiple staff and parents complained about an educator's bad mood and harsh comments to students. Additionally, a student alleged that the educator grabbed his elbow, but the educator denied this. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 24-2193

An educator was charged with two counts of Aggravated Child Abuse, a second-degree felony. The charges arose from allegations by the educator's children. Both charges were dismissed with prejudice for lack of evidence. The educator failed to report the criminal allegations within forty-eight hours as required by Board rule. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 25-2199

An educator used an air compressor to spray air inside a female student's shirt in an attempt to remove ceramics glaze from the shirt. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 25-2205

An educator touched a female paraeducators' buttocks on two occasions. He touched another paraeducator's breast once. The paras could not say if these thoughts were intentional. The educator said these were unintentional touchings that occurred accidentally while helping special needs students in close quarters. He admitted making an inappropriate comment about

Muslims to his paras. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 25-2238

An educator accepted \$1750 in solicited and unsolicited donations via personal check and Venmo. He used the funds to purchase classroom games, books and a classroom magazine subscription. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 25-2246

An educator was captured on video asking a student with autism why he couldn't do work by himself like other kids in the school, and telling the student, "Don't be a butthole." The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case No. 25-2247

When a student was rocking in his chair, an educator pushed the back of the chair down so all four legs were on the floor. The student alleged that the educator then pushed the chair forward, propelling his abdomen into a table. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 25-2261

An educator used the word "bitch" in reference to the school secretary. He sprayed a student several times with a water bottle. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 25-2271

An educator was pulled over for speeding and police found a marijuana pipe with a leafy green substance in the car. The educator pled no contest to one count Possession of a Controlled Substance (Marijuana), a class B misdemeanor. The charge was later reduced to an infraction. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 25-2271

An educator used the N-word multiple times during a discussion with her fourth-grade class about the history of the word. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 25-2284

A coach alleged he reported allegations of abuse to the principal as required by district policy with the expectation that the principal would report to law enforcement. The principal did not report the allegations to law enforcement. The principal denied that the coach reported anything to him akin to sexual abuse. The principal received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 25-2288

An educator swore at his students and called them stupid. He then left school during school hours, leaving his class unattended. The educator did not notify school administration. The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 25-EH44

While discussing the book, "To Kill A Mockingbird," an educator thought a student used a racial slur which led to a discussion of the racial slur. Another student (who was not in the class) entered the classroom and challenged the educator's use of the word leading to a heated exchange. The educator told the student to "Get the f\*\*\* out of my classroom!" The educator received a letter of warning.

UPPAC Case 25-EH49

An educator texted a parent after the parent's child was injured by another student. The educator texted the parent a screenshot from the principal stating that the other student was being suspended. The educator received a letter of warning.

#### UPPAC Case 25-EH57

An educator used an AI story generator to create the practice passages for the Acadience test. The practice passages had similar topics and identical phrases to the actual Acadience passages. The format of the practice passages was also similar to the Acadience test. The educator received a letter of warning.

#### UPPAC Case 25-EH58

An educator planned to modify an Acadience test for a student with autism and anxiety by cutting questions into individual squares. His stated intent was to reduce anxiety and increase engagement. The assistant principal informed him this was not permissible, but the educator continued cutting the test. The educator received a letter of warning.

#### UPPAC Case 25-EH60

An educator grabbed a student's backpack to stop the student from kicking a water bottle in the hall after the student did not comply with verbal requests. The educator received a letter of warning.

#### UPPAC Case 25-EH61

When a student was not paying attention, an educator grabbed and turned the student's chair, which caused the student to fall. A parent also raised concerns about the educator's system of putting names and marks on the board for discipline. The educator received a letter of warning.

#### UPPAC Case 25-EH62

An aide reported that an educator physically put a dysregulated student's head down on a desk. The educator then moved the student to a workstation using a supportive guide technique, where the student stumbled. The student began yelling "Did you hit me!" but the educator denied hitting the student. The educator moved another dysregulated student by her shoulders to sit on the floor. The student pulled away and fell into a chair, hitting her head. The educator received a letter of warning.

#### UPPAC Case 25-EH63

An educator found a picture of a marijuana leaf, wrote a student's name and "BFF" on it, and displayed it on his projector in front of twenty-five students as a joke. The educator received a letter of warning.

#### UPPAC Case 25-EH70

An educator called an Asian student the "short Asian" during track practice. The educator said it was a lighthearted setting, and students (including the Asian student) were laughing. The educator immediately apologized. The educator received a letter of warning.

#### UPPAC Case 25-EH76

An educator brought her dune buggy to school because students wanted to take pictures with it. The educator asked students to push the dune buggy while she steered it. A student was knocked down by the dune buggy, and the dune buggy ran over the student's foot. The educator received a letter of warning.

#### UPPAC Case 25-EH78

On yearbook day, an educator (a special education teacher) thought his students had all left school early. The educator left school an hour before contract hours ended without notifying anybody. There were five students from his class still at school, and one of them became upset when she could not find the educator. The educator received a letter of warning.

#### UPPAC Case 25-EH79

An educator was hit by a volleyball as he was trying to speak to some students. He grabbed the volleyball and threw it at the student who had thrown it, hitting the student in the leg. The educator received a letter of warning.

## **QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT US**

Our UPPAC team is available if you need to report an ethical violation, have questions about the ethics of a situation, or if you would like us to provide training to your school or LEA regarding the educator standards. Please email UPPAC at [uppac@schools.utah.gov](mailto:uppac@schools.utah.gov) or call (801) 538-7835.