
BOND INFORMATION MEMO

School Districts

August 2014

New Law Expands Child Abuse Reporting Obligations to School Coaches

On August 6, 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed a [bill](#) into law that will require school athletic coaches to report suspected child abuse to the authorities. Under state law, school personnel, including but not limited to, teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, social workers, nurses, administrators and other employees required to hold a teaching license or certificate have a legal duty to make a report to child protective services when they have reasonable cause to suspect a student is abused by a parent or other person legally responsible for the child. Previously, it was unclear whether coaches, who weren't also teachers, were included within the group of mandatory reporters. The new legislation removes this ambiguity by expanding the law to add athletic coaches to the list of mandatory reporters. However, the new law only applies to paid, full-time or part-time coaches, not to those who volunteer to coach school sports.

In addition, under the new law, coaches who hold or apply for a temporary coaching license or professional coaching certificate will be required to complete two hours of training on how to identify and report signs of child abuse. All coaches will be required to complete this training by July 1, 2015. The Commissioner of the State Education Department will be issuing regulations to assist schools in implementing this training.

While some school districts had already encouraged their athletic coaches to report any suspected child abuse, now coaches will have a legal duty to make a report if a student athlete or his/her parent or guardian comes to them in their professional capacity and provides information that would indicate that a child is the victim of abuse. Schools may not impose any conditions, including prior approval or notification to the school district, upon a coach who is a mandated reporter under this new law. Like all mandatory reporters, coaches will be protected from civil liability for any reports determined to be unfounded so long as the coach made the report in good faith. Schools should consider revising their mandatory reporting policies to reflect this new change.

If you have any questions regarding your school district's obligations under this new law, please contact [Christa Cook](#) at (315) 218-8321 or cookc@bsk.com.

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