

Grady staffers sanctioned over reporting of suspected student sex

Three employees at Atlanta's Grady High School were sanctioned because district officials said they failed to do the right thing after learning that several members of the school's football team and a female student may have left campus during lunch to engage in sexual activity.

A social worker, a teacher and the football coach either failed to properly report the incident or lacked professional judgment in addressing it, according to a district report.

No students have been disciplined over the incident, Atlanta Public Schools spokesperson Pat St. Claire said.

The school district's police department is not investigating because the female student declined to participate in the investigation and the three male students said no sexual activity took place, school district police chief Ron Applin said.

But under Georgia law, school staff are generally required to report suspected child abuse within 24 hours. That includes suspected abuse that happens off campus.

In some cases, whether abuse occurred may be a judgment call by a staff member, said **Alexa Ross**, an Atlanta lawyer who has practiced education law in Georgia for 26 years. But erring on the side of reporting is beneficial, she said.

"You never want to take a chance that ... some harm or potential harm goes unnoticed," she said.

Records show the incident took place on January 11. Many details of the incident and staff members' actions are unclear: School district officials heavily redacted a district investigative report obtained under state open-record laws.

But district records show football coach Earthwind Moreland was suspended for one day without pay for lacking "professional judgment." Teacher Carrie Rowe was suspended for five days. Social worker Kara Wright, whom district officials recommended firing, resigned.

None returned messages from The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.