Law Enforcement Officials

The school is responsible for students during school hours. This responsibility includes protecting each student's constitutional rights, assuring due process in questioning and arrest, protecting students from any form of illegal coercion, and keeping students safe from physical and emotional harm. Because of the many support services that local law enforcement agencies provide to the school, staff, and students, the Bethany Board of Education (Board) supports the best possible relationship with those agencies consistent with the Bethany Public School District's (District) responsibilities to protect legal rights of staff and students.

This policy is intended to balance the needs of school and police officials. The reduction of ambiguity and confusion in how these officials interact will provide an optimal environment for education while ensuring that the public safety needs of the school and community are adequately met. Priority shall be given to law enforcement's involvement in threat assessments and in the planning and implementation of District emergency plans, security procedures, intervention, and crisis response.

Law enforcement officials are viewed as key community stakeholders in developing and implementing a comprehensive emergency readiness plan for the District.

Interview of Students

Police interviews generally will not take place on District grounds. However, if the police do indicate that an interview on District grounds is necessary, school authorities may cooperate. When the interview involves a juvenile, a parent/guardian must be present. The exceptions to this rule are a) if the student is being interviewed as a victim and/or b) if there is an overriding immediate public safety concern. If a student under the age of sixteen (16) is being interviewed by the police and the parent/guardian cannot be present, a District Administrator should be present.

When police are investigating possible criminal acts which occurred or may have occurred, on District property, or while under the jurisdiction of the District, they may question students at school when the following procedures are observed:

1. Students will be questioned as confidentially and inconspicuously as possible.
2. An attempt will be made to notify the student's parent/guardian so that they may be present during the questioning. A District Administrator will be present. A District Administrator shall maintain a written record of all such interviews conducted.
3. Preferably, the officer doing the questioning will wear civilian clothes.

When investigating a possible criminal violation occurring off school grounds or not part of a school program, police will be encouraged to question students in their homes; however, they may be permitted to question students in the school when the procedures outlined in 1-3 above are observed. Police will make every attempt to minimize distractions or disruption of school routines during the performance of their duties.

Arrest of Students

The decision to call the police and request an arrest is within the discretion of school administration. A District Administrator may request the arrest of a student or there are times in which the police may request to pick up a student due to a warrant being issued for the individual's arrest. If a District Administrator agrees to assist in the arrest of a student, the student should be escorted from class by a District Administrator, and remain in a secured office until the police arrive. The arrested student will be removed from the school in a way that minimizes embarrassment to the student and any disruption of the school routine.

At no time will a student be released to a police officer without one of the following: a) a warrant, b) a court order, c) arrest, d) protective custody resulting from child abuse investigations, e) permission of the parent/guardian.

Weapons

In cases where a student is suspected of carrying a dangerous weapon and there is a safety issue inherent in the search process, the student should be secured in a private area and the police should be contacted to conduct the search.

If a search is conducted by a District Administrator and a weapon is found, weapons that are illegal should be turned over to the police immediately by the District Administrator. Illegal weapons include knives with over a four-inch blade, dirk knives, switchblade knives, martial arts weapons, and firearms. Ammunition should also be immediately turned over to the police. Weapons that are not illegal but are a violation of school policy may be retained by school administration.

Designation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures regarding this policy, including a process to ensure that appropriate staff has been informed, and to establish lines of communication with local law enforcement agencies to effect necessary cooperation toward ensuring the security of the school facilities, and the safety of students and staff.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes § 10-221
Connecticut General Statutes § 53a-185
Connecticut General Statutes § 54-76j

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