

**False  
allegations  
can destroy  
a life...**

**How to  
prevent  
them?**



# Zero tolerance? Okay, but what if the charges are false?

Abuse and neglect of children are serious problems. In recent years, a social and political trend has advocated zero tolerance of abuse and aggression, particularly when it concerns people who are in a situation of dependence. If sexual abuse allegations trigger as many emotional reactions, it is because the social consensus strongly condemns this conduct, both in the general population and among CSQ members. In our society, protecting children is fundamental.

However, false allegations of abuse also constitute a serious problem for victims of false accusations.

That is why it is so important to properly identify real situations of abuse. Society must offer the necessary support to victims and the treatment that is imposed on the perpetrators. On the other hand, we must know how to distinguish between true and false allegations. Although some allegations of abuse are founded, others are not.

But one thing is certain: a false allegation of a sexual nature becomes a nightmare for the employee, in personal, professional, social and economic terms. Even in the case of an acquittal, it is often impossible to restore a reputation.

## Situations at risk

False allegations are often the result of misinterpreted gestures. They can also be caused by fabrication, prejudice, abuse of power or the desire for revenge.

### What situations are at risk?

- Situations involving relations of authority. The fact of having a relation of authority with students can trigger contradictory, hostile reactions: "The teacher scolded me, and I'm going to make him pay for it..." or a fantasized love: "My teacher is so wonderful that I'd like him to pay special attention to me."
- Any situation in which physical contact is possible: physical education, intervening in fights or shoving matches or with students having made violent or provocative gestures, crisis situations, encouragement, the demonstration of affection, first aid, etc.
- Any situation in which a student is found to be partially or entirely undressed (supervision and discipline in locker rooms, maintaining washrooms, first aid, participating in a fashion show, a teacher who witnesses a student's exhibitionism).
- Any situation in which an employee is alone and out of sight with a student (closed office or room, after-class meeting with a student, during an exam rewrite), unless this is necessary as part of his duties.

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# How to prevent them?

## Better safe than sorry

Any person who works in the field of education, whether as a teacher, a professional or a support staff employee, must always distinguish between a professional relationship and a friendship.

### What are the preventive behaviours?

- Avoid making affectionate gestures or compliments with physical or sexual connotations.
- Take into account the fact that some students do not like close proximity, or being touched.
- Notify the authority immediately should an ambiguous or uncomfortable situation arise.
- Take advantage of a number of subjects in which the topic is discussed (such as philosophy classes) to make students aware of the problem (what is a gesture of sexual connotation?).
- Inform students of their rights, but also make them aware of the consequences of a false allegation.
- Do not invite students to your house.
- Do not give a student a ride alone in your car.
- Do not tolerate provocative gestures from students (leaving the locker room when nude) and inform them that this type of behaviour is entirely unacceptable.
- As far as possible, avoid physical contact outside a well-defined framework; if physical contact occurs, it must be in the presence of a witness.
- Before proceeding to clean the washrooms, the janitor must make sure that they are empty, and place a panel indicating that cleaning is in progress.
- Use a known and approved method of managing students in locker rooms.
- Avoid being alone with a student unless it is required as part of one's duties.
- Avoid making jokes of a sexual or racist nature, or jokes in bad taste.
- Exercise caution during trips, outings, social activities, festivities, by adopting behaviour that cannot give rise to ambiguity.

## What to do in the event of a false allegation?

Above all, let's stress that abuse and harassment of children and minors are not acceptable under any circumstances, and particularly not in an educational institution. The CSQ has adopted a position of zero tolerance with respect to such conduct.

For this reason, if you witness such conduct, you are obliged to assist the person in danger and to report the facts to the Direction de la protection de la jeunesse.

Moreover, if you notice that one of your colleagues shows "at risk" behaviour, which could lead to a misinterpretation, we suggest that you make him aware of the dangers of false allegations and speak to a union representative.

In the same way, if you hear rumours, it is essential to intervene immediately to stop them and to notify the person who is involved.

Lastly, if you are the victim of an unfounded allegation (or if you witness such a situation involving one of your colleagues), report the facts immediately to the union representative or to your union, without delay.

In addition, when the allegation is unfounded, you must speak to your colleagues so that they can adopt appropriate behaviour with respect to the victim of the false allegation and so that the victim does not feel isolated. Remember that these persons are presumed innocent until proven guilty.