

Case Study - School Mandated Reporter

You are a 5th grade classroom teacher at a left leaning community charter school that has a stated commitment towards social justice and culturally responsive curriculum. The school's staff are culturally diverse, as are the student's families. The school is a small one, with just one other 5th grade class. There are a number of queer teachers at the school that are out with their students. Nobody in administration is queer, and you have noticed that there is some lack of attention around policies regarding students and gender variance, although being welcoming to LGBTQQ2IA families is a tenet of the school's mission.

One of your students, J, is well liked by their peers. J mostly hangs out with a group of girls, they like to sit around and talk at recess. Most of the boys in the class respect J as well. J has an amazing sense of humor, is witty, quick and clever. This wins them favor and social standing, and is also often disruptive during class. J is gender non conforming. Male assigned at birth, most of J's peers refer to them as he. J does not seem bothered by this. Many of the girls in class really welcome J's expression of femininity. They will often lend J headbands and hair ties, play with J's hair, and lend them their articles of clothing. Every morning J comes to school dressed in more typical boy's clothing, and through the course of the day will often make clothing changes that are more reflective of their gender with the help of their friends.

Recently, in a few conversations with J, they have been open with you about how they see themselves. They have talked about not feeling much like a boy, that they feel comfortable with girls and feel like they don't see much difference between themselves and their close friends. They have talked about how at school they can be who they want to be. At home, they cannot mention these feelings. J also mentioned how they have an uncle, Mario, whom they loved a lot. J said that they felt really comfortable with this uncle, and that they were also "different". J lives at home with their mother Maria, their father Luis, their 8 year old sister Betzy, and their 17 year old brother Robbie. They are a latino family who have had roots in Oakland for a few generations. They have a strong community that revolves around the Catholic church. Betzy is in 3rd grade at the same school as J. She is a quiet kid, who does very well in school. Her parents express a lot of pride in this. She is very mature and concerned for her age. She will often ask you how J is doing in class when you see her in the halls. Robbie is at a separate high school, he is very engaged in sports, and had a casual, quiet confidence about him when you met him. Luis only comes to pick up J and Betzy occasionally. When he does, he does not linger or chat, he seems reserved and down to business. Maria is very involved in the school. She is part of the PTA, and often helps organize events at school. You frequently talk together at pick up. She is warm and friendly, although often expresses how overwhelmed she is by her schedule and responsibilities. At pick up

recently you have needed to talk with her more frequently about J's behavior in class. J has been acting out more, disrupting class with loud and sarcastic outbursts that get a lot of positive attention from the other students. When you mention this to Maria, she will express how overwhelmed she feels, and how she doesn't know what happened to her child. She feels like she has lost J. J won't listen to her or Luis at home either. J will act out, and get loud and defiant at home. She says that J and Robbie often get into really bad arguments and fights at home. She also tells you that Luis has been very hard on J. Luis will not tolerate the way that J has been acting and the changes he has been going through.

Today at school J came into class looking like they had not had much sleep. They were quiet, reserved and not their usual gregarious self. They kept their hoodie on all morning. Beneath the hoodie you noticed that J's left cheek was swollen, bruised and red. When you checked in with J, they told you that they fell off the bed when they were wrestling with their brother. They ended the conversation and clearly wanted to be left alone. Later in the day, at recess, when J took off their sweat shirt, you notice that they had large bruises on their wrist and upper arm in what looked like finger marks.

You know from your years at the school that the administration is very rigid about rules and mandates as related to expectations from the state. At the beginning of the school year you had a training on being a mandated reporter, you know that you are criminally liable for reporting suspected issues of abuse or neglect with your students. You also know that the law states you must file a report within 36 hours of noticing suspected abuse.