

# Getting “the Call” from the Principal’s Office



## What Every Caregiver Should Know if it Happens

By Dr. Leslie Strasser Murdock

How many of you have gotten the dreaded phone call from school that your child is in trouble and you need to pick him/her up immediately? No parent wants it but on the chance it does happen, schools are supposed to maintain safety for all children but also follow progressive disciplinary measures so that the punishment fits the crime once safety has been restored. Unless it is a mandatory expulsion offense—battery to school employee, immoral conduct, possession of firearms, arson, distribution of drugs, and violation of law—schools and school staff have the ability to offer different types of consequences.

Disciplinary actions may include a Required Parent Conference (RPC), suspension or recommendation for expulsion but schools also have the flexibility to offer other solutions:

- Referrals to alternative schools such as a behavior or continuation school for temporary time-outs from school
- In-house suspensions
- On location suspensions called STAR ON programs (located on some HS campuses)
- Temporary removals from extra-curricular activities
- Any other consequence available on campus (ask what options your school offers)

### What if My Child is Removed from School?

Typical removals are RPCs, suspensions, and expulsions recommendations. Each one of these involves a limited time out of school and may vary in length. RPCs, for example, may require a child be removed from school for two days: the day of the incident and next day. A suspension may last anywhere from 3 – 10 days. A school may recommend expulsion for a child, but the child should not be out of school on a suspension for more than 10 days, pending the expulsion recommendation.

All temporary removals (not expulsions) are intended to be for gathering facts, determining safety measures, and scheduling a parent conference. If an incident is brought to a principal or

dean’s attention, an Incident report and other forms should be filled out by school staff.

As a caregiver or foster parent, you can request copies of any incident reports or paperwork and it will be provided to you. If you are concerned about something written in the incident report you wish to dispute, you or your child may provide an alternate statement from your perspective that will be added to the report.

### Requesting Alternative Consequences

If your child gets in trouble and you do not like the recommended consequence, ask about alternative consequences available at school. You may also suggest your own fitting consequence for the school to consider.

If your child is removed from school and this is a hardship for you and/or you do not believe this is the proper consequence for the child (especially if the child wants to stay home from school), ask the school about available on-campus consequences. Finally, if your child is constantly getting removed from school or is recommended for expulsion, contact your child’s DFS caseworker or supervisor for possible assistance.

Hopefully, you won’t ever get “the call.” But if you do, remember: you have options and are an active participant in the process.



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