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TOP STORY

Mid-Buchanan School district faces federal lawsuit

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A mother filed a federal Title IX lawsuit against Mid-Buchanan County R-V School District, alleging sexual assault and bullying against her son.

The lawsuit, filed on Feb. 28, alleges a student playing for Mid-Buchanan's football team was the victim of bullying and a sexual assault, with the problems starting in the spring of 2016. The lawsuit alleges football coach Aaron Fritz was aware of the bullying first hand and didn't act.

In the spring of 2016, the son went to Fritz for counseling because he broke up with his girlfriend. The lawsuit alleges Fritz informed other players on the team of the conversation, which the son believed to be confidential. After this disclosure, the lawsuit alleges the son became the target of bullying from members of the football team and other students.

The bullying persisted throughout the school year and the lawsuit says the son was singled out and physically assaulted during football practice. The lawsuit alleges a ringleader sexually assaulted the son by urinating on him through the crack of a bathroom stall.

The mother then scheduled a meeting with district officials, demanding the school resource officer take action to pursue charges against the ringleader. The SRO refused, according to the lawsuit.



During this same meeting, the mother asked Principal David Rapp to intervene, but according to the lawsuit, Rapp refused, citing his need to focus on an upcoming wrestling meet.

The mother then spoke to the school board in a closed session, and the lawsuit alleges that information in the meeting was not kept confidential and was transmitted via text message to Fritz. According to the lawsuit, the bullying escalated after the meeting.

The son was eventually checked into a mental health facility for depression and suicidal thoughts. He was diagnosed with situational, acute depression and anxiety related to the bullying and assault. The mother moved her son to another school district.

The lawsuit alleges Rapp and Fritz were aware of multiple instances of bullying against the student and failed to act, and that Fritz promoted this behavior.

The lawsuit, filed by attorneys Daniel R. Zmijewski and Christopher Dove of Kansas City, is not related to three bullying lawsuits filed against local schools in Buchanan County circuit court. The federal suit alleges violation of Title IX, violation of the Missouri Human Rights Act and negligence.

In December, the Missouri Commission on Human Rights issued a right to sue letter to the plaintiff. The lawsuit named the mother but not son at the center of the case.

News-Press Now declined to publish the mother's name, in order to maintain the family's anonymity. District Superintendent Cody Hirschi said the district doesn't have a comment at this time.

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