



## Law Enforcement Notification — Student Fights & Physical Altercations

California Education Code §48902 — Mandatory Notification & Discretionary Consultation

### LAW ENFORCEMENT NOTIFICATION GUIDE

#### Student Fights & Physical Altercations

Administrator Action Guide · EC §48902 — Mandatory Notification & Discretionary Consultation

#### PURPOSE

**PURPOSE.** This guide helps administrators decide when California law requires law enforcement notification after a student fight or physical altercation — and when notification is discretionary. It supports sound decision-making, student safety, due process, and compliance with EC §48902 and district policy.

**Scope:** Student fights and physical altercations only. Controlled-substance, weapon, and other mandatory triggers are summarized for context; handle those in their respective modules.

#### 1 REQUIRED BY CALIFORNIA LAW (EC §48902)

##### A. Acts that may violate Penal Code §245 [L-1: EC §48902(a); PC §245]

The principal or designee shall notify the appropriate law enforcement agency BEFORE the suspension or expulsion of the pupil for any act that may violate Penal Code §245.

§245 includes assault with a deadly weapon or instrument (§245(a)(1)) and assault by force likely to produce great bodily injury (§245(a)(4)) — among other subdivisions. A serious unarmed beating can trigger mandatory notification; a weapon is not always required. §48902(a) refers to any act that may violate §245.

Examples that may trigger §245 notification:

- Knife, club, or metal pipe used during a fight.
- Object used as a weapon capable of producing great bodily injury.
- Serious assault resulting in significant injuries.
- Force likely to produce great bodily injury — even without a weapon.

Timing: Notify before suspending or expelling the pupil. [L-1: EC §48902(a)]

##### B. Other mandatory triggers under EC §48902(b)/(c) [L-1]

(b) Acts that may violate EC §48900(c) or (d) (controlled substance, alcohol, or other intoxicant — possession, use, sale, furnishing, or offering to sell): notify within one schoolday AFTER suspension or expulsion.

(c) Possession or sale of narcotics or a controlled substance; violations of PC §626.9 (Gun-Free School Zone — firearm on school grounds / within 1,000 ft) or §626.10 (knives, daggers, stun guns, BB devices on school grounds); or acts under §48915(c)(1) (firearm) or (c)(5) (explosive) on a schoolsite. The statute sets no deadline — follow district procedure and notify promptly.

Reporter immunity: A principal or designee who reports in good faith is not civilly or criminally liable unless a false report is made knowingly or with reckless disregard for the truth. [L-1: EC §48902(d)]





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### 2 NOTIFICATION MAY BE APPROPRIATE

**Notification may be appropriate.** California law does not require notification for every fight. Use professional judgment, in accordance with district policy.

Consider notification when:

- ☐ Serious bodily injury occurred.
- ☐ Weapons were displayed or are suspected.
- ☐ Gang involvement is suspected.
- ☐ Criminal conduct extends beyond typical school discipline.
- ☐ Ongoing threats to campus safety exist.
- ☐ Retaliation is likely.
- ☐ LE assistance needed to preserve evidence or safety.

Robbery or extortion (§48900(e)) may justify discretionary consultation, but are NOT §48902 mandatory triggers. Staff assault or battery may trigger separate reporting duties — follow district policy and your staff-assault module. If facts suggest child abuse or neglect (including but not limited to adult/caregiver abuse), follow mandated-reporter procedures under CANRA (PC §11164). [L-1]

### 3 GENERALLY SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

Many student altercations can be investigated and addressed through school discipline procedures without law enforcement involvement.

Examples may include:

- Mutual pushing or shoving without significant injury.
- Playground disagreements.
- Minor fights resulting in no injuries.
- Conflicts not involving criminal conduct requiring notification.

Evaluate each incident individually. Even when notification is not required, document the incident and the basis for your decision.

### 4 INFORMATION TO PROVIDE

When notification is required or appropriate, document and provide:

- ☐ Student name(s).
- ☐ Date and time of the incident.
- ☐ Location.
- ☐ Summary of facts known at the time.
- ☐ Description of injuries.
- ☐ Description of any weapon involved.
- ☐ Known witnesses.
- ☐ Available video or physical evidence.

Share student information only as permitted by law and district policy; FERPA exceptions and §48902(d) good-faith reporting immunity may apply. [L-2: FERPA]

### 5 DOCUMENTATION

Record all law enforcement notifications in your student information system (e.g., Aeries, if applicable).

Document:

- ☐ Date and time of notification.
- ☐ Agency contacted.
- ☐ Officer or dispatcher name (if available).
- ☐ Incident or report number (if provided).
- ☐ Summary of information shared.
- ☐ Follow-up actions taken.

Maintain all documentation with the investigation file.

For students with exceptional needs, follow EC §48902(e), IDEA, FERPA, and district special-education procedures before transmitting special-education or disciplinary records. [L-1: EC §48902(e)]

### 6 PARENT NOTIFICATION





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Notify parents or guardians in accordance with district policy and applicable law.

- Explain the school's investigative process.
- Explain any disciplinary actions being considered.
- Explain when law enforcement has been notified, when appropriate.
- Document all parent communications.

Comply with the pre-suspension conference and parent-notice requirements under EC §48911. [L-1: EC §48911; D-1: district policy]

### 7 LEGAL AUTHORITY

#### PRIMARY AUTHORITY

California Education Code §48902 —  
Notification of Law Enforcement Authorities  
(a)/(b)/(c)/(d)/(e).

#### RELATED EDUCATION CODE

§48900(c)/(d) controlled substance/alcohol;  
§48911 pre-suspension conference;  
§48915(c)(1)/(c)(5) firearm/explosive.

#### PENAL CODE / FEDERAL

PC §245(a)(1)/(a)(4); §626.9 Gun-Free  
School Zone; §626.10 weapons on grounds;  
§11164 CANRA. FERPA 20 U.S.C. §1232g /  
34 CFR §99.36.

### EXECUTIVE TIP

Do not call law enforcement just because there was a fight. First check whether the facts create a statutory trigger (EC §48902), a campus-safety need, or a district-policy reason — then document your decision. A well-documented investigation is your best protection. [JK-1]

Sources: EC §48902(a)/(b)/(c)/(d)/(e), EC §48900(c)/(d), EC §48915(c)(1)/(c)(5), EC §48911 — [california.public.law](#). PC §245(a)(1)/(a)(4), PC §626.9, PC §626.10, PC §11164 — [california.public.law](#). FERPA 20 U.S.C. §1232g / 34 CFR §99.36 — [ecfr.gov](#). Authority tags: L-1 statute, L-2 federal, D-1 district policy, JK-1 best practice. Decision support, not legal advice — align with district policy and counsel.

