



PRESS RELEASE

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REDLANDS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT BLAMES VICTIMS FOR ALLEGED SEXUAL ASSAULT BY TEACHER

REDLANDS, CA - Attorneys representing alleged victims of convicted child molester and former Redlands High School teacher and coach, Kevin Patrick Kirkland, condemned the Redlands Unified School District for asserting in court documents that the victims of Kirkland were negligent and at fault for their own abuse and "...freely and voluntarily exposed themselves to all risks of harm," when they were allegedly molested by Kirkland.

Morgan Stewart, a partner in Manly, Stewart & Finaldi, called the District's response to the current lawsuit, "One more example of a long pattern of victim blaming and attempts to shame those who speak out by Redlands Unified School District." He added, "To call vulnerable young girls 'at fault' and 'negligent' when they are the alleged victims of abuse is amongst the most base and despicable of behavior by individuals who are entrusted with the safety of those in society that need the protection the most."

The School District made these charges in answering six lawsuits which accuse the District administrators of a decade-long cover-up of Kirkland's alleged sexual assault and harassment of minors. [See District Response here.](#)

The parent of one alleged victim, identified as Jane RSL Doe in the lawsuit, reacted angrily to the RUSD claims, "I entrusted the safety of my daughter to the Redlands Unified School District. They exposed her to Kevin Kirkland, an individual with a long history of complaints for alleged sexual misconduct. Kirkland abused his position of trust and control as a teacher and coach in the alleged sexual assault of my child. Now the District claims it was her fault and she could have "mitigated the damage." What kind of people are these? They are certainly not the kind of people we should trust with our kids," she said.

The District's answer to the Complaints violates a long held statutory policy that consent cannot be a defense when an adult holds a position of authority over a minor, such as in the case of a teacher-student relationship.

This is not the first time that the District has asserted that minor students are at fault when they have been abused by a teacher in an authority position. In 2013, the District made a

similar assertion, in the Laura Whitehurst case, blaming the student victim for his own abuse. In that case, the District ultimately paid six million dollars for a single victim.

In the present litigation, it asserts that school administrators ignored reports of alleged sexual misconduct by Kirkland going back to 2006, encouraged students not to report alleged sexual harassment and abuse to law enforcement, lied to police and refused to cooperate with the police investigation of Kirkland.

According to the complaint, administrators received complaints that Kirkland allegedly engaged in sexually inappropriate conduct with female students in 2006, 2012 and 2015. Rather than remove Kirkland from the classroom, the District had a pattern of removing students from the classroom in response to their complaints.

The lawsuit alleges that Kirkland preyed on vulnerable female special needs students by going through their student files and poring over their medical and family information, as well as their history of discipline, peer issues and bullying.

After gleaning information from student files, Kirkland would approach the most vulnerable students and befriend them. He complimented them on their looks, requested their phone numbers, provided them money, and even showed them a gun he kept in his classroom, among other things. He also allegedly tried to get female students alone with him in his classroom to engage in sexual acts, and invited them to his home when his wife was away, the lawsuit alleges.

Kirkland pled guilty to four criminal sex abuse charges, including one felony involving minors, and served one year in state prison.

During the past decade, no less than five Redlands High School faculty members have been accused of sexual misconduct involving students. All five were fired and two of them went to jail.

Morgan Stewart further asserted that, "Redlands Unified School District's pattern and practice is to ignore and cover up alleged abuse, and then when it is revealed to blame the victims for those same failures. Here, the District says that Kirkland was a known danger, and that Plaintiffs' assumed the risks. That is precisely the wrong message to send to those that are willing to come forward and report their abuse."

Mr. Stewart repeated his request for an independent investigation by the State Attorney General's office of the School District.

[Manly, Stewart & Finaldi](#) is California's leading law firm representing child victims of sexual abuse. The firm has represented more than 150 victims of clergy sexual abuse in California and hundreds of others throughout the United States. The firm also represented plaintiffs in the

\$140,000,000 settlement against LAUSD in the Miramonte case, the largest sex abuse settlement against a School District in the US.