PRESS RELEASE

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Misdemeanor Charges Being Brought Against Four Staff Members

On May 18, 2017, River Valley School District was notified by the Berrien County prosecutor that four staff members were being charged with misdemeanors around the issue of failing to report suspected child abuse. The failure to report charges focus on the case of a former student and are alleged to have occurred in 2015 and 2016.

"While our records indicate that child abuse was reported by a district staff member in this case, we are awaiting further information from the prosecutor's office," stated Will Kearney, River Valley Public Schools Superintendent. "We have and will continue to cooperate fully with any criminal investigation."

District officials confirmed that a District employee did in fact report suspected abuse in December of 2015. The district was subsequently notified by the state in February of 2016 that the evidence from their investigation did not support the concern and thus no action was being taken.

"We have a school policy that puts the needs of our children and community first. The policy is consistent with the law and every teacher and school administrator is informed of the policy and procedures annually," noted Superintendent Kearney. "We expect every staff member to report suspected abuse immediately."

The four staff members were expected to be arraigned on the misdemeanor charges of failure to report, over the course of the week of May 22, 2017. The district notified the staff members of the impending charges, provided them with additional copies of the school policy on reporting suspected abuse, and noted that the district would wait to see the outcomes and facts, prior to considering whether disciplinary action should be taken.

"While this is difficult, we will remain focused on our educational mission as well as celebrating the many outstanding accomplishments of the students and staff at River Valley this past year," said Kearney.

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