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TOP STORY

Not believed

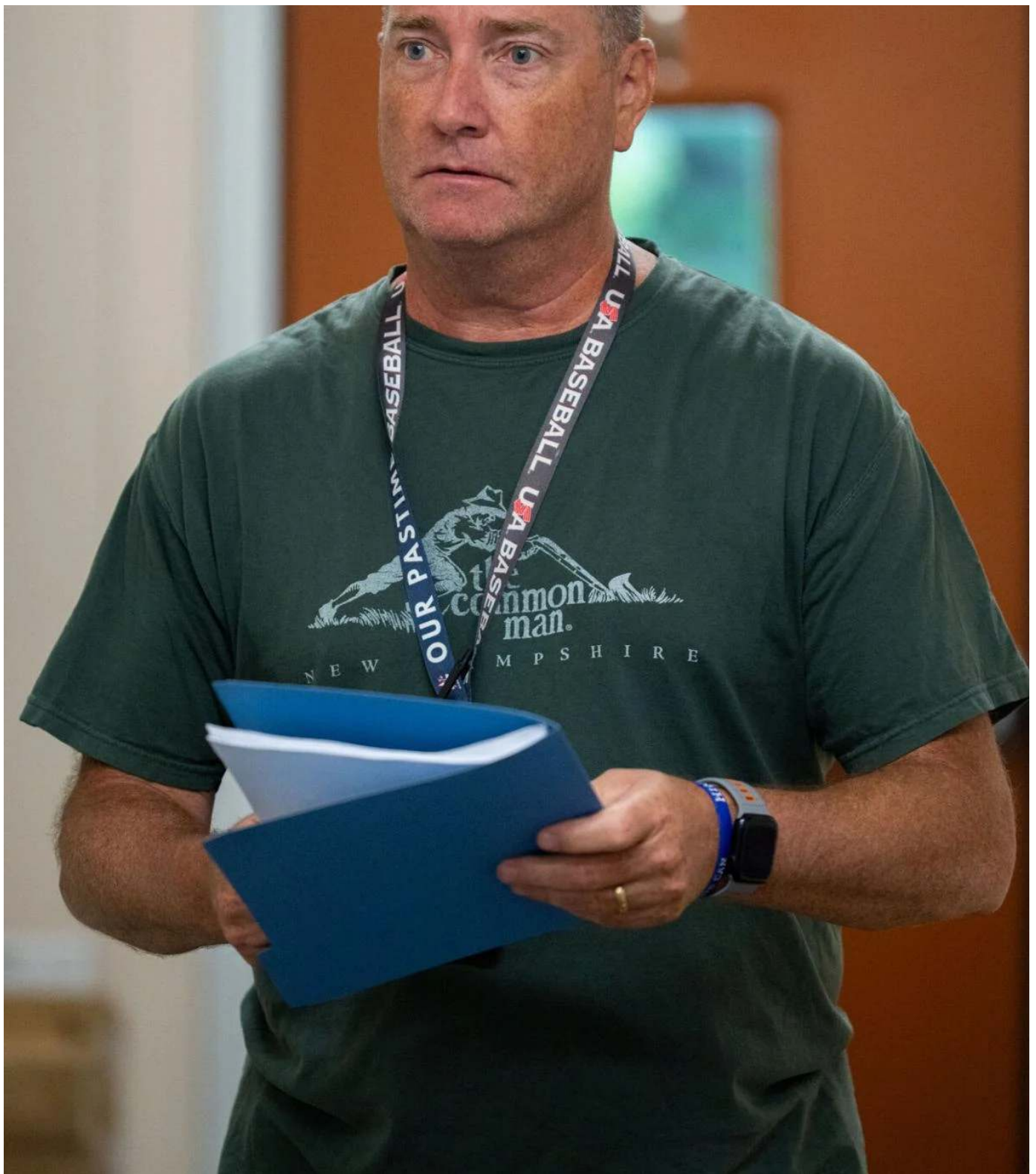
By Noah Diedrich Sentinel Staff
Aug 15, 2026

One mother's allegation that a Hinsdale Middle/High School staffer stalked her teenager on campus last school year led to a protective order in June barring him from entering the school.

A judge found the girl's claims credible enough to issue the protective order. School administrators didn't believe her.

As of Aug. 10, the staffer, who is not a teacher, was still employed by the Hinsdale district, assigned to an after-hours shift at the elementary school, according to Superintendent David Ryan.





Superintendent David Ryan carries a stack of papers on July 28 at the Hinsdale School District office in Hinsdale.

Bailey Stover / Sentinel Staff

The matter also resulted in a police investigation, although Principal Anna Roth said the staff member was not charged. When asked on Aug. 12 if the case was still open, Hinsdale Police Chief Melissa Evans said she was “not actively pursuing new



information.”

Earlier this month, Evans said the probe was “not closed” but declined to answer additional questions because the case concerns juveniles.

In written responses to questions for this article, Ryan said a stalking order is not grounds for termination, as it is different from a criminal conviction.

He also alleged the girl and her mother provided false information to the court system when seeking the order.

The judge put more stock in the girl’s story. In signing the order June 4, he said she “credibly testified the Defendant, [an employee] at the school, attempted to provide his telephone number to the Plaintiff on (2) occasions.”

Despite the girl’s allegations being reported to administrators in January and March, her mother told The Sentinel she did not hear about the alleged stalking until police contacted her in May. She said her daughter did not tell her because she thought the school was handling the matter.

A protective order

The male employee began speaking to the girl in November, according to the affidavit she and her mother filed May 12.



The girl said she initially thought the treatment was friendly, but that the man began waiting outside bathrooms and following her into classrooms, the affidavit said. Later, he gave her his phone number on a piece of paper and told her to “hit me up later I’m free,” according to the affidavit.

In January, the affidavit said, the girl reported his behavior to a teacher, who brought her to Principal Roth.

In response to questions from The Sentinel, Roth said via email that when she investigated the report that same day, she found that the employee “did give his phone number to the student as he was aware of a male individual in the student’s family selling firewood, and he asked the student to have the gentleman call him.”

During a follow-up interview with the principal later that day, the girl said there was a man in her family selling firewood, according to Roth.

Her mother, however, told a reporter there is no male adult in her immediate family, and that her daughter denied saying this.

In his order following a hearing in the case, Judge Justin Hersh said he did not find the firewood explanation credible.

In January, per the affidavit, the girl also reported a second alleged instance, in which she said the employee tried to give her his phone number while she was outside the school’s guidance office.



In her written responses to The Sentinel, Roth said she reviewed security camera footage from that day, which showed that the employee “was working outside the guidance office when the student came from another hallway and approached him and started a conversation.”

Superintendent Ryan said the report made to Roth in January was investigated immediately and not substantiated.

“It was in much smaller scope in comparison to what was written in the affidavit for the restraining order,” he wrote in an email to The Sentinel.



Clouds darken the sky and rain falls on Aug. 3 in Hinsdale. Below, Superintendent David Ryan carries a stack of papers on July 28 at the Hinsdale School District office in Hinsdale.

Ethan Weston / Sentinel Staff

In addition to not entering the middle/high school, the yearlong protective order bars the employee from being within 300 feet of the student.



He has been assigned to a position outside of this 300 foot proximity outline, according to Ryan, who said his shift begins 15 minutes after the girl leaves her campus on weekdays.

The elementary school is across the street from the middle/high school.

“Should the student’s schedule change, the [employee’s] schedule will be reviewed and adjusted, if necessary,” he said via email. “School district legal counsel reviewed and approved this plan prior to us enacting it.”

Teachers make reports

The girl reported the employee’s alleged behavior again later that winter.

On March 6, then-Hinsdale teacher Susannah O’Neil emailed two school counselors, as well as Principal Roth and Assistant Principal Christopher Ponce, about the girl’s concerns regarding the employee, according to a copy of the email shared with The Sentinel by Susannah O’Neil’s husband, Timothy.

Susannah O’Neil wrote that during a class period, the girl “returned from the bathroom visibly upset,” and told her that the staff member “had been following her in the hallway and waiting outside the bathroom for her.

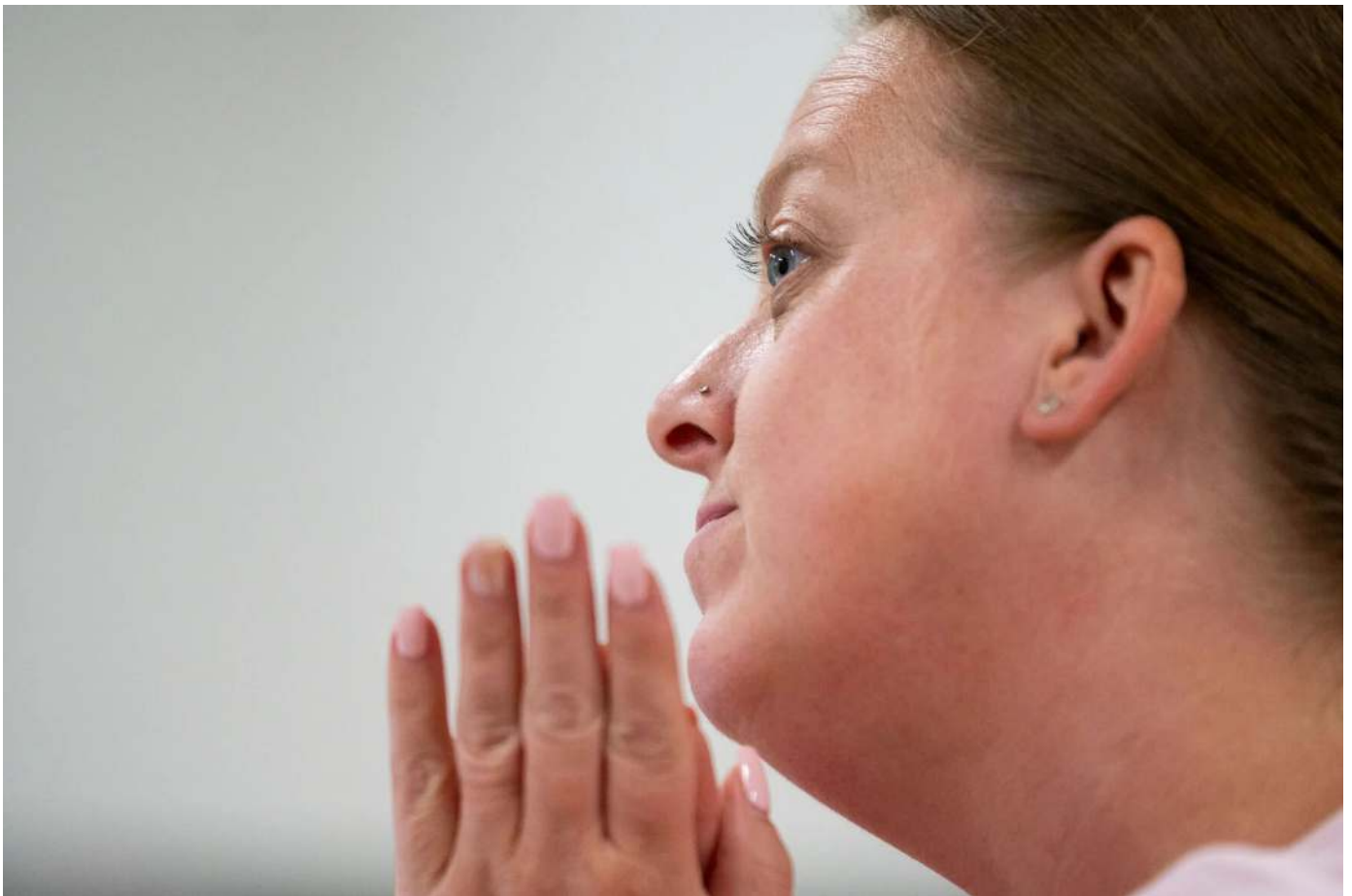
“She stated that he had previously given her his phone number and asked if she wanted to hang out,” the email continued.



Susannah O'Neil's email also stated the student told her "she had reported concerns about this behavior to the office previously and was told there was not enough evidence to take action."

Responding to Sentinel questions about this, Roth said she received O'Neil's email, but reviewed security camera footage that showed the girl and the employee were not in the hallway at the same time. She said the January and March reports were the only times anyone had notified her of the employee's alleged behavior toward the girl.

Roth said she read the protective order and is "aware of other statements made that are not factual."



Hinsdale Middle/High School Principal Anna Roth listens during a school board meeting on July 28 at the Hinsdale School District office in Hinsdale.

Bailey Stover / Sentinel Staff



Ryan said the January claim was reported to the N.H. Department of Education

and that “Upon receiving our summary of action, investigation procedure, and lack of evidence, the investigator agreed with our findings.”

He also said that, since Roth found no evidence to substantiate the claim in the March report, she did not contact the girl’s parent.

“In hindsight, Principal Roth saw this as an error in the notification process and when the parent met with her to discuss the issue, she apologized and explained why she did not contact her,” he wrote.

‘They deserve to be protected’

In May, then-teacher Timothy O’Neil reported “a student safety concern regarding a staff member” to Police Chief Evans. In his email doing so, which he shared with The Sentinel, he said he believed the administration had failed to act.

He said he also reported the matter to the N.H. Division for Children, Youth and Families, but Chief Evans told The Sentinel in May this agency was not involved with the investigation.

Ryan confirmed that a report was made to DCYF in March, and said there was a second student named who had been “reporting” to teachers. He did not specify in an email to The Sentinel what the student had reported or if this involved the same staff member, and did not answer these follow-up questions from a reporter.

During the course of the Hinsdale Police Department’s investigation, a third student was named, according to Ryan. Of the three students who were involved in the investigation, he said, only one of them alleged stalking. He did not answer a follow-up question asking how the second and third students were involved.

Ryan said Chief Evans met with Roth at school after speaking to two of the students and told the principal “in broad strokes what had been reported to her.”

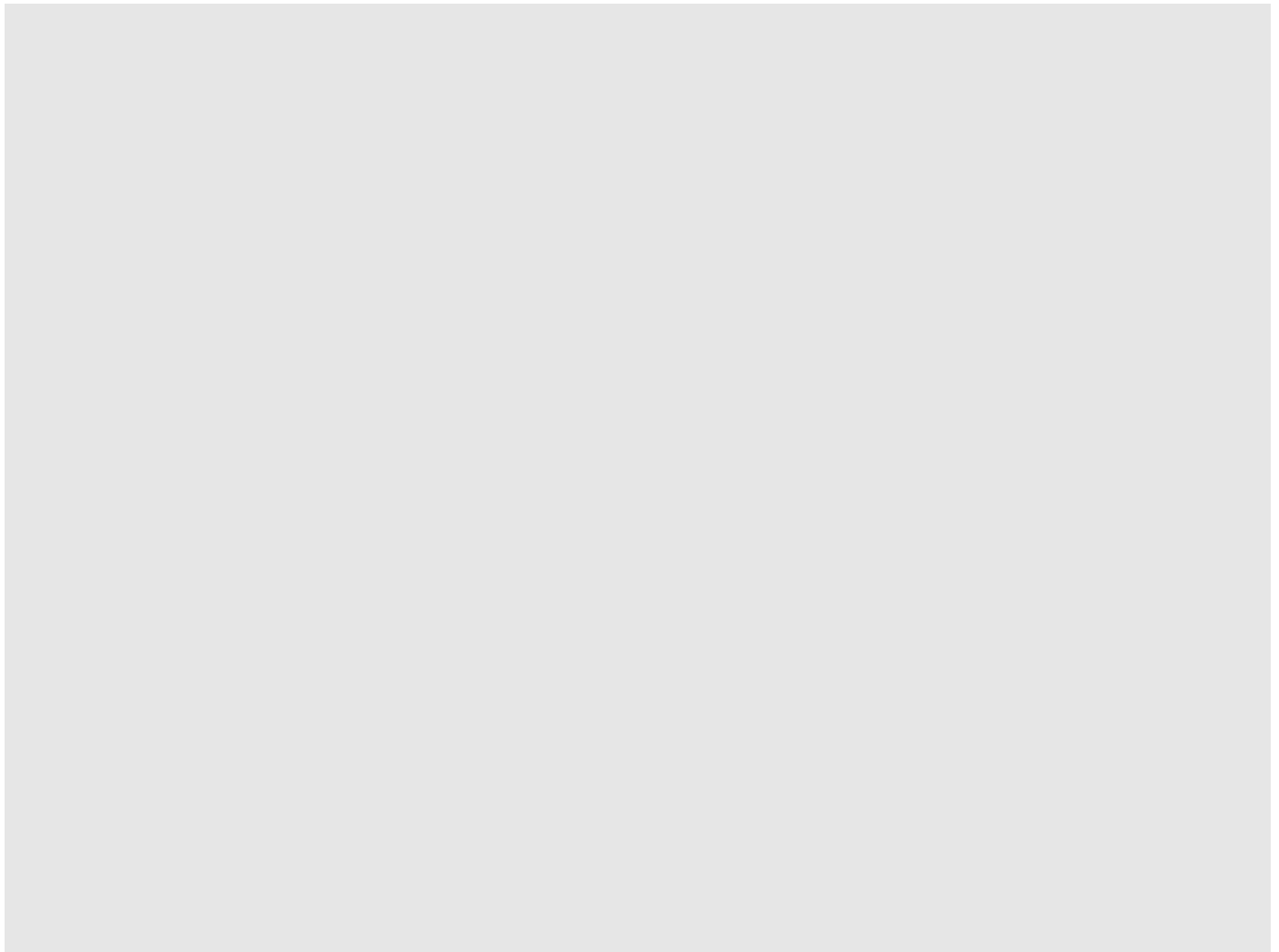
Evans also told Roth one of the students had decided with her family not to move



forward with a restraining order or any police action, according to Ryan. He said Roth was asked by the police department not to speak with the students until they had finished their investigation.

Ryan said information on the affidavit for the June 4 protective order “was not part of the report that was made to the school in March,” and that, upon seeing the additional information, Roth conducted another investigation, which found the claims “were not factual.”

“To my knowledge, HPD interviewed 3 students in their investigation but ultimately no charges were pressed against the accused,” Ryan wrote on July 28.



A sign for the superintendent’s office on July 28 at the Hinsdale School District office in Hinsdale.

Bailey Stover / Sentinel Staff



During a May 13 school board meeting, Timothy O’Neil told board members and

administrators he was “aware of multiple student safety concerns that were reported to administration through proper channels [and] did not receive the response they’ve warranted.

“... When student safety reports are reaching outside agencies because internal channels failed, the board has both the authority and the obligation to find out why,” he said. “If you’ve not been briefed on what was reported and how it was handled, you should be asking for that briefing tonight.”

The board did not respond to O’Neil’s comments during the meeting. Neither board Chair April Anderson nor Vice Chair Kaylah Hemlow could be reached Thursday for comment about whether the board asked for more information.

The O’Neils are involved in a separate dispute with the district related to Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations. They both filed complaints about alleged failures by the district to comply with ADA law, were later placed on administrative leave, and neither of their contracts were renewed for the coming school year. Ryan told Timothy O’Neil via a letter O’Neil shared with The Sentinel his administrative leave was to give the district time to investigate alleged unprofessional conduct.

Timothy O’Neil is facing a misdemeanor charge for allegedly “placing his hand on Ryan’s shoulder in a manner that resembled a slap,” according to the complaint filed in 8th Circuit Court District Division. He pleaded not guilty.

Having worked in public schools in several states, Timothy O’Neil said he thinks the problems he’s flagged at Hinsdale are indicative of a systemic issue that makes it difficult for young women and people of color to speak up and be protected at school.

“This isn’t just a New Hampshire problem,” he said. “I saw the same thing in Vermont, I saw the same things in Florida. This is a U.S. education problem. We’ve created a situation where administrations are so scared that they’re much more



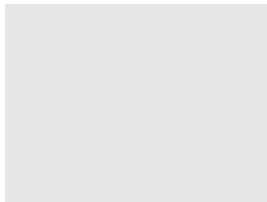
concerned about covering their own butts than they are about taking care of the children in their care.”

As for the girl with the protective order, her mother said she is going back to Hinsdale Middle/High School when classes start up again later this month, despite feeling anxious about doing so.

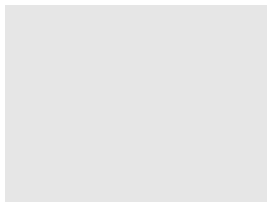
At the same May school board meeting where Timothy O’Neil spoke, the mother brought her concerns to board members and administrators.

“This is unacceptable,” she told them during the meeting. “Our children are in your care during the school day — they deserve to be protected.”

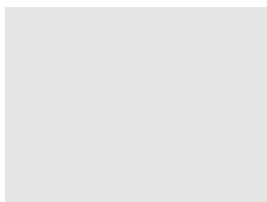
The Sentinel is not identifying the teenager in this article because she is a minor, and is not naming the employee because, to The Sentinel’s knowledge, he has not been charged with a crime. The Sentinel is not identifying the mother to avoid identifying her daughter.



Parents say school failed to protect their daughters
By Noah Diedrich Sentinel Staff 📖 3 min to read



'I saw history repeating itself'
By Noah Diedrich Sentinel Staff 📖 9 min to read



'It was so unsafe for her at that school'
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Noah Diedrich can be reached at 603-355-8569, or ndiedrich@keenesentinel.com.

Noah Diedrich

Education and Business Reporter

