

January 5, 2018

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Earlier today, Carlos Bell, the former Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) instructional assistant charged with sexual abuse and other crimes against children, pleaded guilty in the Circuit Court for Charles County. Bell pleaded guilty to 27 charges today, including sexual abuse of a minor, child pornography, sexual assault and attempted transmission of HIV. He faces up to 190 years in jail.

Throughout the investigation, we have cooperated fully with the Charles County Sheriff's Office and the Charles County State's Attorney to ensure that justice was served. The charges against Bell are horrific and we are thankful for today's guilty plea. Children will now be spared from having to be part of court proceedings, and Bell will no longer be able to victimize children. His sentencing takes place in March.

Since first learning of the charges against Bell in June 2017, CCPS has implemented measures to strengthen our staff training and improve our procedures. CCPS staff have completed the Darkness to Light Stewards of Children training with the Center for Children to better prepare them to recognize and prevent child abuse.

We continue stringent background checks of all employees, including coaches, volunteers, substitutes and temporary employees, which include fingerprint-based criminal background checks and cross-referencing of state and national sexual and violent offender registries as part of our pre-employment process. CCPS staff continue to review curriculum regarding sexual assault and harassment for students, and to assess all schools and buildings for any additional safety and security measures.

Most importantly, we continue to partner with the Center for Children and the Charles County Department of Health to provide support to children and families who need counseling or other services. If you or someone you know is in need of counseling services, please call the Charles County Child Advocacy Center at 301-609-9887 and ask for Sara Ortiz, Victim Services Coordinator, to make an appointment.

The school system website at <http://www.cdboe.com/index.php/investigation-update-ql> provides resources for students, parents and community members as well as investigation information as it becomes known. On behalf of the school system, I thank you all for your support of our children.

Sincerely,

Kimberly A. Hill, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools