



School discipline can impact students beyond the classroom, especially when students face disciplinary action for alleged behavior that may be considered criminal or involve law enforcement. Here's some advice from Chicago civil rights attorney Julian Johnson about how students can navigate these intimidating situations and assert their rights.

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1.

Assert your right to **remain silent**. Remember: anything you say can be used against you. Do not speak to a school official or law enforcement official without a parent, guardian, or lawyer.

2.

When a parent or guardian arrives at the school to meet with school administrators, encourage them to **ask questions**. If administrators request that a document be signed, parents and guardians should ask concrete questions: What is the document's purpose? Who can access it? Where will it be stored? How will it be enforced?

3.

If a parent or guardian feels uneasy with the process or unsure how a decision may affect your future, have them **request a lawyer** be present before going further. Even if the parent or guardian does not have access to a lawyer, it signals to the school administrator and any law enforcement present that the conversation must stop before moving forward, allowing time for a parent or guardian to make an informed decision.

4.

Do not sign any forms you do not understand or do not want to sign. Instead, have a parent or guardian review any documents or statements with a lawyer and assess whether the form may be used against you in any future criminal interactions or proceedings.

5.

Request alternative disciplinary measures such as restorative justice or healing circles, which allow for a meeting and conversation between the impacted students to speak their truth.



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