



A JOINT ADVISORY FROM THE CTA LEGAL DEPARTMENT and COMMUNICATIONS AND RESEARCH DEPARTMENT (CRD)

INTERNAL ADVISORY: Online Harassment & “Doxxing” of Educators (September 2025)

In these highly polarized times, educators are increasingly being targeted online for who we are and what we post on social media. In a troubling recent development, some members of our union are being added to publicized blacklists for their speech outside of work. These lists are being compiled by extremists who seek to bully, intimidate and attack educators and others with whom they disagree. Some educators have been “doxxed” (had their personal information posted to the Internet with malicious intent), potentially putting them and their families in danger.

It’s important to remember that nothing posted on social media is truly private. Enemies of public education and unions are watching on Facebook, Instagram and all major social media networks, ready to capture comments out of context and broadcast them to massive audiences to incite harassment and cause fear.

While off-duty speech on a matter of public concern should be protected by the First Amendment, members should be aware that employers may seek to place them on leave or even discipline or terminate them if their off-duty speech disrupts the education environment.

Any CTA member or local who experiences an attack online should *reach out immediately to their Primary Contact Staff*, who will consult with CTA member-leaders and staff to assess the threat and work together to develop a strategic response.

After an online attack, or to prevent being targeted in the first place, be sure to take precautions to prevent harassment:

- Maximize privacy settings for any personal social media accounts and do the same with the accounts of immediate family members. The [CTA Social Media & Privacy Guide](#) provides tips to follow right away.
- Let any unknown cell phone calls go to voicemail.
- If reporters call or email, notify the Primary Contact Staff and CTA Communications. Do not respond to the media without consulting CTA staff.
- Change existing passwords and turn on 2-factor authentication on social media, email and other online accounts.
- Set social media accounts to private (locked) and remove any bad actors who may have followed you.
- Remove your personal contact information from public websites.
- Members who have been doxxed are encouraged to [consult this guide](#) to remove information from sites on the Internet as well as the [Anti-Doxing Guide for Activists Facing Attacks from Equality Lab](#).

Members attacked online or who face adverse employment action for their private speech may be able to use various legal protections. Primary Contact Staff will work with the CTA Legal Department to



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assess individual cases and determine if an attorney referral is appropriate. Applicable legal protections may include:

- Permanent Status Protections – Permanent status employees are protected from having unfair employment action taken against them and must receive due process in any case involving serious discipline, including discharge. Although educators are held to a high standard of professionalism, a permanent status employee is protected in many cases from being punished for speech that is not work-related and does not create serious disruption at school.
- Collective Bargaining Agreement Protections:
 - Collective bargaining agreements often have provisions related to less serious discipline, such as reprimands or brief suspensions. These provisions frequently prohibit discipline without “just cause.” In general, off duty speech that is not work related and does not disrupt school operations is not sufficient “cause” for discipline. Check your collective bargaining agreement for provisions related to discipline.
 - Collective bargaining agreements may also have provisions that can protect members facing harassment, particularly at the workplace. Provisions related to workplace safety, such as anti-bullying or anti-harassment articles, may be used to encourage an employer to take steps to assist employees facing harassment or threats at their workplace or through their work email/phone. School board policies or workplace violence prevention plans may also contain provisions related to employee safety.
 - Some of our collective bargaining agreements may have protections for “Academic Freedom” that protect a wider array of educator speech.
- Workplace Safety Protections - Under Labor Code § 6400, employers are required to provide employees with a safe workplace. School board policies or workplace violence prevention plans may contain provisions related to employee safety that could be used to ensure employers are supporting members facing threats in the workplace. In California, an employer may seek a workplace restraining order on behalf of an employee facing credible threats of violence at the workplace. (See California Code of Civil Procedure § 527.8.)
- California Criminal Statutes- A report to law enforcement may be appropriate in serious cases where harassment may violate California’s Penal Code.
 - Penal Code § 422 prohibits threatening others with violence.
 - Penal Code § 71 states that it is a public offense to cause or attempt to cause any school employee to do, or refrain from doing their duties, by directly communicating a threat to injure their person or property, where the person threatened reasonably believes that such threat could be carried out.



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- Penal Code § 653.2 makes it a misdemeanor to engage in electronic harassment of another individual. It prohibits sending electronic communications (such as texts or social media posts) about an identifiable person with the intent to place a person in reasonable fear for their safety and for purposes of causing that person unwanted physical contact, injury, or harassment.
- Penal Code § 653m makes it a misdemeanor to make “annoying” or “threatening” phone calls or electronic communications that use obscene or threatening language with the intent to harass.
- First Amendment Protections – The First Amendment (and its counterpart under the California Constitution) protects public employees who speak on matters of public concern as private citizens. If speech results in disruption to the workplace, however, such speech—even in private—may be unprotected and potentially result in discipline or dismissal. Educators should take steps to ensure that their private comments cannot easily be misconstrued as statements of their employer. For example, avoid using your school’s name or logo in personal postings that could lead readers to believe you are speaking for the school. In addition, speech on a matter of public concern is more likely to be protected – and less likely to cause disruptions at school -- when it involves respectful political debate.

Whether and the extent to which these and other legal protections apply depends heavily on the factual circumstances. Members should contact their union representatives promptly when they experience any harassment or doxxing that is affecting – or threatening to affect -- their employment.