



Elwood, Indiana Superintendent Resigns

By Shawnta S. Barnes – February 6, 2019

The national spotlight came to Elwood, Indiana when Superintendent Casey Smitherman was charged with insurance fraud, identity deception, and official misconduct after using her son's insurance to take a student to a clinic. She also filled a prescription using the insurance. Friday, February 1, Smitherman resigned.

WTHR recently reported that "Smitherman told investigators that she worried about the student, had previously purchased clothing for him and cleaned his home. Smitherman said she didn't notify the Department of Child Services out of fear the teenager would be placed in a foster home." In Indiana, educators are mandatory reporters. Besides the criminal charges, she also ignored her obligations to report concerns. When you make a report, your job is not to worry about the investigation or the potential consequences. Educators are not trained to assess what the consequences might be; that is not our job. Our job is to report. Based on this admission and the criminal charges, resigning was the best option.

She crossed the line. There is nothing wrong with educators being concerned about their students, but we cannot step in and act as if we are our students' parents or guardians. When you are not a child's parent or guardian, you do not know the child's medical history. What if the child had an adverse reaction to the prescription she had filled for the student?

The worst part is she put someone else's child above her own. Although I don't believe she will serve any time in jail if she is convicted of her charges, we all know going to jail is a risk you take when you commit a crime. Why risk your freedom and risk being separated from your family by breaking the law?

I hope Smitherman uses this time to reflect upon why she made these choices, so she doesn't cross the line in the future. I encourage other educators to assess how involved they are in their students' lives. We don't need any other situations like this to happen in the future.