

Report: Abuse Found At Chicago Public Schools

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CHICAGO (CBS) - Hundreds of students have allegedly been beaten by teachers, coaches and staff at Chicago Public Schools.

CBS 2 Investigators continue an ongoing investigation involving the illegal use corporal punishment. Investigative reporter Dave Savini's findings have city officials promising to investigate.

Treveon Martin, 10, is afraid of a teacher at his school.

"I've seen him hit five of them in the classroom," Martin said.

Martin says he and others have been hit, grabbed and even struck with a belt.

"He's threatened almost all the kids in his classroom," Martin said.

He says it happened at Robert Emmet Academy in November but a Chicago Public School investigator didn't talk to him until last week - 70 days after the case was reported, and not until after we started asking questions.

"He holded my arms and he picked my body up, and then he just slammed me on the desk," Martin said.

An exclusive CBS 2 investigation discovered Treveon Martin is one of at least 818 Chicago Public School students, since 2003, to allege being battered by a teacher or an aide, coach, security guard, or even a principal. In most of those cases - 568 of them - Chicago Public School investigators determined the children were telling the truth.

"I'm thinking that I don't really feel safe," Martin said.

The 2 Investigators found reports of students beaten with broomsticks, whipped with belts, yard sticks, struck with staplers, choked, stomped on and pushed down stairs. One substitute teacher even fractured a student's neck.

But even more alarming, in the vast majority of cases, teachers

found guilty were only given a slap on the wrist.

CBS 2 informed former Chicago Public School CEO Arne Duncan of our investigative findings shortly before he was promoted to U.S. Secretary of Education.

"If someone hits a student, they are going to be fired. It's very, very simple," Duncan said.

Before heading to Washington, he vowed to take action.

"Any founded allegation where an adult is hitting a child, hitting a student - they're going to be gone," Duncan said.

But that's not what happened under Duncan's watch. Of the 568 verified cases, only 24 led to termination. Records show one teacher who quote "battered students for several years" was simply given a "warning" by the Board of Education.

And another student was given "100 licks with a belt." The abuse was substantiated, but the records show the teacher was not terminated.

Alderman Pat O'Connor is on the City Council Education Committee. He wants all these cases re-examined including the way Treveon Martin's was handled.

"I'll tell you what it is - it's deplorable," O'Connor said. "I really believe that the Board has dropped the ball in this instance."

He says this information was never brought to the committee's attention until now.

"You rely on them to follow the law, and clearly here, it doesn't appear that they have," O'Connor said.

There is a state law that bans corporal punishment. But as our 2 Investigators first exposed in September - students are being hit by coaches too. Paddles were confiscated, and we exposed this gym security tape at Simeon Career Academy showing a coach paddling volleyball players reportedly for missing serves.

Martin says the teacher injured him after he got into a scuffle with a classmate over an eraser.

"My back really hurted, and then at the end of the day, I had to go the hospital," Martin said.

His mother, Courtney Smith, says he was taken by ambulance and treated for a contusion on his back. It is children around his age who appear to be most at risk. The 2 Investigators found the students with the most complaints are in Kindergarten through 8th grade.

"He doesn't have very much faith in anyone at his school," Smith said.

"He hurt my feelings," Martin said.

So why did it take over two months to look into Martin's case? School officials say it's because they have many cases to investigate. But just a few hours ago, an investigator determined the allegations against the teacher were unfounded. We are also told only two students were interviewed.

Incoming Chicago Public Schools CEO Ron Huberman is troubled by all these cases, including the case of Treveon Martin and promises to further review them, and that includes the process by which they are examined and investigated.

Alderman O'Connor is drafting a resolution and will bring our findings to the attention of the entire City Council this week.

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