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# Knowing Your Rights

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**A**s you may have noticed, *PAGE ONE* legal articles usually end with the phrase, “please contact the PAGE Legal Department as soon as possible.” As is often the case with such simple phrases, this one is often overlooked, but its importance cannot be underestimated.

This advice is perhaps the most important legal advice you may ever receive. Situations that require legal advice have a tendency to escalate quickly. Failure to consult an attorney before a situation escalates may have a long-lasting impact on both your current and future employment. If you fail to speak to an attorney, you may neglect to uphold your rights. When you are unaware of the rights you have, you may give up these rights without intending to do so. Speaking to an attorney is the quickest way to know what rights you have and how these rights can and should be enforced.

At every turn in your education career there are situations that require legal expertise. A few of those specific areas are employment, your rights when dealing with the Professional Standards Commission and criminal proceedings.

## EMPLOYMENT

Educators, because of their contracts, are in a unique position in the state of Georgia. Your contract guarantees you certain rights and protections that most “at will” employees do not have. All too often, educators do not take the time to read their contracts and don’t know what rights they have. This is highly problematic. Should your employer ever attempt to remove any of your contractually

guaranteed rights, you have the right to a hearing. If you are ever asked to give up any of these contractual rights, you should always contact the PAGE Legal Department. To make the best decision possible, always have an attorney look into your specific situation.

## THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMISSION

If you are ever investigated by the Professional Standards Commission (PSC), know that you have the right to representation. Upon receipt of a letter of investigation from the PSC, you should immediately call the PAGE Legal Department. Calling the PSC without first contacting an attorney may inadvertently result in the suspension or revocation of your teaching certificate. PSC matters are often easily remedied. Don’t make the mistake of calling the PSC without representation and risk making the problem worse. PAGE attorneys have years of experience dealing with the Professional Standards Commission; let us use that experience to your benefit.

## CRIMINAL ACTIONS

Should you ever be charged with committing a felonious criminal act, you have the right to legal representation. If you are ever questioned by the police regarding an alleged work-related crime, call the PAGE legal office immediately.

Remember, when in doubt, call the PAGE Legal Department. ♦

