

## How School Districts Weaponize Child Protection Services Against Uncooperative Parents

Parents are increasingly required to obey, to conform to a school's demands even if they believe such orders may not be appropriate for their child.



By Kerry McDonald | Thursday, December 13, 2018

Schooling is adept at rooting out individuality and enforcing compliance. In his book, *Understanding Power*, Noam Chomsky writes: “In fact, the whole educational and professional training system is a very elaborate filter, which just weeds out people who are too independent, and who think for themselves, and who don’t know how to be submissive, and so on—because they’re dysfunctional to the institutions.”

This filtering process begins very early in a child’s schooling as conformity is rewarded and divergence is punished.

### Public Schooling Breeds Obedience

Most of us played this game as schoolchildren. We know the rules. The kids who raise their hands, color in the lines, and obey succeed; the kids who challenge the rules struggle. The problem now is that the rules are extending beyond the classroom. Parents are increasingly

required to obey, to conform to a school's demands even if they believe such orders may not be appropriate for their child.

In my advocacy work with homeschooling families across the country, I frequently hear stories from parents who decided to homeschool their kids because schools were pressuring them to comply with various special education plans, push medications onto their children, or submit to other restrictive procedures they felt were not in their child's best interest. Even more heartbreaking is the growing trend of school officials to unleash child protective services (CPS) on parents, homeschooling or not, who refuse to give in to a district's demands.

## **Weaponizing Child Protective Services**

An investigative [report](#) by *The Hechinger Report* and *HuffPost* released last month revealed that schools are increasingly using child protective services as a “weapon” against parents. It said:

Fed up with what they see as obstinate parents who don't agree to special education services for their child, or disruptive kids who make learning difficult, schools sometimes use the threat of a child-protection investigation to strong-arm parents into complying with the school's wishes or transferring their children to a new school. That approach is not only improper, but it can be devastating for families, even if the allegations are ultimately determined to be unfounded.

More troubling, these threats disproportionately target low-income and minority parents. According to the [report](#):

Such families also have fewer resources to fight back. When a family in a wealthy Brooklyn neighborhood learned roughly two years ago that their child's school had initiated an ACS [New York's Administration for Children's Services] investigation against them, they sued the city education department. Parents from lower-income, majority-black and Latino neighborhoods, few of whom can afford that option, say such investigations can be a regular, even expected, part of parenting.

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