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MAY 18, 2026

Lawsuit Filed Against Santa Barbara Unified Over Alleged Abuse of a Special-Education Student

Complaint alleges eight causes of action including sexual battery, negligent hiring, and violation of the California constitutional right to privacy.

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. A teenage student at Dos Pueblos High School in Goleta was sexually abused at school by people the Santa Barbara Unified School District paid to care for him, according to a civil complaint filed in Santa Barbara Superior Court. The complaint, filed by attorneys Steven A. Kronenberg and Anthony L. Label of The Veen Firm, LLP, brings eight causes of action including sexual battery, battery, negligent hiring and supervision, invasion of privacy, and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

The student, identified in court filings only as John Doe to protect his identity as a minor, has developmental and communication disabilities and is enrolled in the special education program at Dos Pueblos. The complaint alleges he was repeatedly abused by three former paraeducators while being assisted with toileting and hygiene in restrooms and other secluded areas of the campus, places his caregivers were trusted to be alone with him.

The named defendants are former Dos Pueblos special education employees Andrew Grimes, Andrew Mitchell, and Miguel “Michael” Angel Juarez. On May 8, 2025, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Office arrested Juarez in a separate matter involving an adult victim and issued a public call for additional survivors and witnesses.

“Three adults were trusted to be alone with a child who could not speak for himself, and they used that access to hurt him. These predators do this because they know it is hard for these children to be heard. That is exactly why we are speaking up.”

Steven A. Kronenberg, The Veen Firm

One day after Juarez was arrested, Sheriff’s detectives arrested Shaun Donald Hertlein, then a walk-on assistant football coach at Dos Pueblos and a youth pastor in Goleta. Hertlein pleaded guilty in October 2025 to felony possession of more than six hundred images of child sexual abuse material. He is not a defendant in the Doe matter.

“Two former employees of the same school arrested for sex crimes in the same week is not a coincidence. It is a system that was not paying attention.”

Anthony L. Label, The Veen Firm

Counsel of record are Steven A. Kronenberg, Anthony L. Label, and Bryan Ceglio. The Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Office continues to seek additional survivors related to the May 2025 arrest of defendant Juarez at (805) 681-4171. Confidential support is available 24 hours a day from Standing Together to End Sexual Assault at (805) 564-3696, in English and Spanish. Families who believe a relative may have been harmed at Dos Pueblos may contact The Veen Firm, or learn more at veenfirm.com/sexual-assault.

ABOUT THE VEEN FIRM LLP

Founded in 1975, The Veen Firm LLP is a San Francisco trial firm representing plaintiffs in catastrophic injury, wrongful death, and complex civil cases throughout California. The firm has recovered more than one billion dollars on behalf of injury victims. Past results do not guarantee, warrant, or predict future outcomes, and each case is evaluated on its own facts. Additional information is available at www.veenfirm.com.

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