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Olin teacher accused of sexual misconduct was also charged in 2008

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The teacher accused of sexually exploiting a freshman female student at Olin High School faced similar charges less than two years ago when he was a teacher and coach in Oskaloosa.

The Olin school board hired Jeremy Chamberlin, 32, as a special-education teacher and volleyball coach in July. That was less than a month after he resigned from a job as a junior high teacher and varsity boys' basketball coach in the Oskaloosa district.

He's at least the fifth Eastern Iowa teacher or administrator charged with sexual misconduct with a student or a juvenile since Jan. 1.

The rash of ugly arrests raises questions about how schools vet the educators they hire, especially in the case of Chamberlin, whose problems in Oskaloosa and suspension

from his job went undetected in a background check by the Olin administrators who hired him.

Carol Greta, an attorney with the Iowa Department of Education, has noticed the recent spike in sex charges against teachers and said students and families may be getting savvier about the 2002 law that makes it impossible to argue a sexual relationship between a teacher and student is consensual.

"Heightened awareness and better reporting may be the only reasonable answer," she said.

Also, fewer qualified teachers are available, meaning it's possible some vetting is compromised, she said.

"As we have fewer and fewer educators in the pipeline, schools are forced to hire someone they may not have hired a few years ago," Greta said.

In Chamberlin's case, he was charged in August 2008 in Mahaska County District Court with assault with intent to commit sexual abuse. He was accused of grabbing a 16-year-old female student's breast and trying to put his hands down her pants during her birthday party in September 2006, according to court records. The school district suspended him.

Chamberlin pleaded down to simple assault for the incident and resigned from the Oskaloosa district in April 2009, effective at the end of that contract year.

In the spring of 2009, before his resignation at Oskaloosa was final, Chamberlin started as a substitute in Olin , said Jeff Nance, Olin High School principal. On July 28, less than a month after his official resignation from Oskaloosa, the Olin school board hired him full-time to teach and coach girls' volleyball and basketball.

Almost immediately, Chamberlin struck up an intimate relationship with a 15-year-old girl for whom he was a teacher and coach, the Jones County Sheriff's Office is charging. The charges say he touched her, sent her nude pictures of his groin area and persuaded her to send nude pictures of herself to his phone between August and January, when he was put on paid administrative leave.

Chamberlin made his initial court appearance Wednesday morning in Jones County District Court, with a preliminary hearing set for April 9. He posted \$10,000 bond and was released Wednesday afternoon.

Superintendent Jayne Richardson said she hopes to have Chamberlin fired by the end of April.

Richardson and Principal Nance are new this school year to the district, which has 208 students. They said they asked the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation to run a background check on Chamberlin, as required by law. The DCI's report did not show the sex abuse allegation from Mahaska County, Richardson said, although it appears on Iowa Courts Online.

"I don't think it was probably adequate," Richardson said of the background check.

The assault conviction was a simple misdemeanor, and Chamberlin explained it as a "family matter," Richardson said.

The Iowa Board of Educational Examiners checks a teacher's background when he or she applies for a teaching license. School districts must get background checks from the DCI when a teacher moves from one district to another. The DCI checks court records and sends fingerprints to the FBI, which cross-references national databases.

The report sent to schools shows initial charges and convictions in Iowa and elsewhere, said Dave Jobes, special agent in charge of background checks at the DCI.

"Typically, the record will show what they were charged with and then, ultimately, what they were convicted of, so it would show that difference," Jobes said.

Nance said he checked two references Chamberlin gave him -- a guidance counselor named Emory Stewart and an athletics director named Kevin Pederson. Both had only good things to say.

John McGlothlen, Dave Franzman and Jonathon Gregg contributed to this report.