

Cherry Creek teen may face bully in court

Adrian Ulm took the abuse for two years, and then it escalated.

By [Joey Bunch](#)
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CENTENNIAL — Adrian Ulm is the kind of kid whom school staff say they have to keep an eye on — a little heavy, a little different, the kind bullies will circle like coyotes, a security officer at West Middle School said.

But for two years, Adrian kept a secret from every adult he knew, even his father: The verbal abuse he says was heaped on him from other students. Bullies called him "Nazi," because he is from Germany, and "gay," because he is a musical-theater prodigy who stars in professional plays.

And despite what Cherry Creek Schools calls a proactive effort to curb bullying, including classroom discussions, plenty of kids knew Adrian was a target and nearly a dozen watched him get beaten up at a school-bus stop

in November. Adrian had bruises and a broken collarbone.

"They didn't lift a finger to help him," Heinz Ulm said of his 14-year-old son. "I can't understand that."

His attacker won't face criminal charges, because Adrian voluntarily took part in the fight, the Ulms were told. But a 2-year-old amendment to Colorado's hate-crime laws could make Adrian's assailant the first youth in Colorado to be sued for punitive damages on the basis of school bullying.

"I would definitely describe this as a hate crime," said Adrian's lawyer, Gregg McReynolds, who has not made a decision about a suit.

Adrian said Monday he had taken all the name-calling he could last

fall. On the school bus, the other boy made fun of his dad's paunchy stomach, asking when the baby was due, and said his father has yellow teeth.

"They found my weak point," Adrian recalled. "My dad is great."

The boy was expelled and has not applied for reinstatement, according to Cherry Creek Schools. But last week, three of his friends told Adrian the boy intended to deal him a worse beating when he returns.

As a result, those three were required to sign "contracts" that would lead to their expulsion if they harass Adrian again, said Cherry Creek Schools

In addition to extra attention from school security officers, a teacher checks in with Adrian daily, Amole said. Students in the district are taught from kindergarten how to respond to bullies, she said.

"The first we knew of this problem was after the fight," Amole said. "... We don't take bullying lightly. We take it very, very seriously."

David Finkelhor, director of the University of New Hampshire's Crimes Against Children Research Center, agrees it's important for schools to take bullying seriously.

"You need lots of options," he said Monday. "But first, you need a criminal-justice system and a school system that takes it serious."

But turning to lawsuits seems counterproductive, he said: "You aren't able to negotiate resolutions in good faith if you've got both sides governed by

lawyers who are concerned with damages."

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Kids and crimes

- Five percent of students ages 12 to 18 report being bullied at school in the prior six months.
- Juveniles make up 23 percent of all individual hate-crime victims, compared with 11 percent of all other crimes.
- Eighty-one percent of the juvenile victims of hate crimes are ages 12 to 17.
- Boys make up 69 percent of all juvenile hate-crime victims.
- Sixty-three percent of hate crimes against juveniles involve violent assaults, compared with 39 percent of hate crimes against adults.
- Twenty-one percent of hate crimes against juveniles occur at school.
- Sixty-four percent of those who commit hate crimes against juveniles are younger than 18.
- Fifty-six percent of juveniles who commit hate crimes know their victims, compared with 39 percent of adults who commit hate crimes.

Source: Crimes Against Children Research Center