



## Phoenix Union High School v. Sinclair (2025)

**Key Issue:** Does a school district owe a duty of care to a student who is injured while crossing a street off-campus?

This case involved a student who was hit by a car while crossing a public street located near, but not on, school property during their commute to school. The family sued the school district, arguing that because the school knew the intersection was dangerous and that students frequently used it, the district had a "duty" to provide crossing guards or other safety measures.

The Arizona Supreme Court ultimately ruled in favor of the school district. The Court held that a school's "duty of care" is generally limited to the time the student is physically on the school grounds or under the direct supervision of school employees (such as on a bus or at a school event). The Court was wary of expanding a school's legal liability to encompass every public street a student might traverse.

The ruling emphasized that the primary responsibility for maintaining public roads and ensuring traffic safety lies with the municipality (the city or county), not the school. Expanding this duty would create an impossible burden for school districts to manage safety in areas they do not own or control.

**Application:** This case clarifies the limits of "vicarious liability" and the "special relationship" doctrine for schools. For injury victims, it confirms that if an accident happens on a public street, the proper defendant is likely the driver or the government entity responsible for road design, rather than a nearby institution like a school.