



U.S. Department of Education

## **OCR's Call To Action: Education Leaders Must Confront and Address Racial Discrimination**

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## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

June 26, 2020

Dear Education Leader:

We have been deeply affected by the recent events that have contributed to racial discord and strife throughout our country. Like so many of you, we continue to be concerned about the impact of these events on our children and on the future of our country. Racism has no place in our nation or in our schools. In each generation, ordinary Americans have fought to secure equality in our laws and in our lives. Their hard-earned victories enshrined equal protection in our Constitution and banned discrimination in our schools, workplaces, and public facilities. Next week, on July 2nd, we commemorate one of those landmark achievements as we celebrate the 56th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This anniversary is a timely reminder to mark our society's progress and to strengthen our resolve to realize the law's full promise: racial equality for all.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) prohibits entities receiving federal funds, including our nation's schools, from discriminating based on race, color, or national origin. For decades, the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has worked to investigate race discrimination faced by students. Each day, we work to ensure all students have equal educational opportunities regardless of race, color, or national origin. Now, more than ever, OCR is committed to ensuring that no student is treated differently because of the color of their skin. In the last three fiscal years alone, OCR has entered into 520 resolution agreements requiring schools to make changes to address racial discrimination concerns (a 16% increase as compared to the three prior fiscal years). Of these resolution agreements, 164 addressed racial harassment (a 27% increase as compared to the three prior fiscal years), and 50 resolved racial bias in school discipline (a 108% increase as compared to

the three prior fiscal years).

OCR's resolution agreements have required recipients to implement procedures to timely and effectively address incidents of race-based harassment and to provide training focused on preventing a racially hostile environment. In the context of school discipline, OCR has required recipients to revise policies and provide training to ensure a safe and orderly educational environment and the fair and equitable treatment of all students, consistent with the requirements of Title VI. OCR will continue to vigorously enforce Title VI to ensure that no student is discriminated against based on their race, color, or national origin. For additional information on OCR's increased activity enforcing Title VI, see OCR's latest [annual report](#).

As a nation, we must do better for our children and for all students. Racial discrimination is both wrong and illegal. As education leaders, you must confront and address race discrimination in your schools. We encourage you to speak up for equal treatment, promptly address discrimination, and work proactively to promote educational excellence for all students in our schools.

Schools alone cannot end racism, and neither can the Department of Education. But creating a safe and inclusive learning environment is a key step towards making equality more powerful and permanent for all Americans.

For more information, please contact OCR ([OPEN@ed.gov](mailto:OPEN@ed.gov), 800-421-3481), or visit [www.ed.gov/ocr](http://www.ed.gov/ocr).

Sincerely,

/s/

Betsy DeVos

Secretary of Education

/s/

Kenneth L. Marcus

Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights