

The Civil Rights Project



Proyecto Derechos Civiles

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Contact: Daniel Losen
781-274-6575

Civil Rights Project Hails New Federal Guidance on School Discipline *Current Practices Disparately Impact Students of Color*

--LOS ANGELES--The Department of Justice and the Education Department today jointly released guidance to public schools that should help curb what many call the school-to-prison pipeline, which often begins when students are excluded from school and too often ends with incarceration as adults, a pattern very disproportionately impacting students of color.

“The Civil Rights Project has been deeply concerned with breaking this cycle,” commented CRP Co-Director Gary Orfield. “We are thrilled that the administration’s strong action not only calls on schools across the nation to eliminate unnecessary exclusions from school, but also highlights practices and resources they can use to solve more problems within classrooms and schools and preserve the future of the students.”

The Civil Rights Project has been working on the school discipline issues since 1999, under the leadership of Daniel Losen. Research from CRP’s [Center for Civil Rights Remedies \(CCRR\)](#) finds that far too many districts suspend students in droves, while many others have little or no racial disparities and adhere to the common sense philosophy that suspensions, expulsions and arrests are strictly measures of last resort.

The new federal guidance confirms this well-grounded philosophy, provides a package of resources, and offers examples of best practices that encourage districts to attend to discipline disparities in a constructive fashion. The guidance also includes useful suggestions to ensure the appropriate use of law enforcement.

“This guidance represents a huge boost to the efforts of advocates across the nation,” states CCRR’s Losen, “and contributes to the growing understanding that dramatic racial disparities are found most often in minor offense categories that are not justifiable.”

The guidance provides districts with ways to improve behavior, and create safe and orderly learning environments, but it also puts districts with large disparities on notice, so that they can be held accountable if they rely excessively on harsh practices. Under

the current administration, the Office for Civil Rights has reached 88 substantive agreements with districts and opened 25 investigations into others, including two based on complaints jointly filed by CCRR and local advocates. In fact, inappropriate school policing is of tremendous concern in some districts and will be the subject of a complaint CCRR and advocates file next week.

Educators and advocates can find [detailed reports and policy briefs on the CRP website](#), documenting disparities in discipline and providing strong evidence of less discriminatory alternatives. In particular, schooldisciplinedata.org is a new webtool that gives educators and advocates the ability to compare discipline practices and disparities in districts nationwide.

Losen points out, “This guidance, combined with stepped-up pressure from civil rights advocates, eventually will encourage public schools to adopt approaches to discipline and relationships with police that not only reduce the disparities but improve outcomes for all kids.”

To receive announcements from the Civil Rights Project, sign up [here](#).

About the Civil Rights Project at UCLA

Founded in 1996 by former Harvard professors Gary Orfield and Christopher Edley Jr., the Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles* is now co-directed by Orfield and Patricia Gándara, professors at UCLA. Its mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the United States. It has commissioned more than 400 studies, published 15 books and issued numerous reports from authors at universities and research centers across the country. The Center for Civil Rights Remedies is dedicated to improving educational opportunities and outcomes for children from subgroups who have been discriminated against historically due to their race/ethnicity, and who are frequently subjected to exclusionary practices such as disciplinary removal, over-representation in special education, and reduced access to a college-bound curriculum.

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