



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Secretary DeVos Announces New, Proactive Civil Rights Compliance Center within Office for Civil Rights

‘OPEN Center’ will focus on Outreach, Prevention, Education and Non-discrimination to Promote Equal Access in Education

WASHINGTON— U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos announced today that the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Education will launch the *Outreach, Prevention, Education and Non-discrimination (OPEN) Center* to focus on proactive compliance with federal civil rights laws. The OPEN Center will provide assistance and support to schools, educators, families, and students to ensure better awareness of the requirements and protections of federal non-discrimination laws.

“The creation of the OPEN Center is yet another example of this Department’s focus on supporting school districts, colleges, and those closest to students,” said Secretary DeVos. “The OPEN Center underscores OCR’s efforts to support all schools and provide technical assistance to help them come into compliance with federal civil rights law *prior* to the filing of a complaint. This agency will continue supporting school districts and colleges by working with them cooperatively to ensure that every child has access to a quality education.”

While OCR typically enforces federal civil rights laws through the traditional complaint-resolution process, OCR will, through the provision of targeted support to recipient institutions and the public, also be able to work more proactively—prior to the filing of complaints—to ensure that schools are aware of their obligations under federal civil rights law. By investing resources in technical assistance and public education, OCR will provide not only much-needed assistance to recipients, but also better support students, families, and stakeholders.

“The OPEN Center is all about strengthening civil rights compliance through voluntary, proactive activities,” said Assistant Secretary Kenneth L. Marcus. “Instead of waiting for violations to occur before responding, OCR will get in front of the problem, partnering with educators and other

institutions to better protect students. As the name implies, we want to be a better resource, more welcoming and supportive of students, families, educators, and communities.”

The OPEN Center, established within OCR headquarters, will provide OCR with a dedicated team that focuses on education, prevention, and outreach. It will also provide for improved technical assistance to recipients and the public through a dedicated team to ensure that technical assistance is high-quality, accurate, thorough, and legally sound. The OPEN Center will be staffed by OCR civil rights attorneys and will be led by Acting Director, Christian Corrigan. OPEN Center inquiries can be sent to OPEN@ed.gov.