



U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division



U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights



White House Initiative on
Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

Combating Discrimination Against AANHPI and MASSA Students

The U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division (CRT) and the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforce federal civil rights laws in public and federally funded schools at all educational levels. These laws protect all students, including Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) and Muslim, Arab, Sikh, and South Asian (MASSA) students, from discrimination based on race, color, and national origin (including language and shared ethnic characteristics). CRT also enforces prohibitions on religious discrimination in public schools. Schools must take immediate and appropriate action to respond to complaints of discrimination, including harassment or bullying based on race, color, national origin, or religion. The following are examples of action, or in some cases inaction, by school officials that could violate the laws enforced by CRT or OCR:

- *A Korean-American student tells her principal that a group of Korean students has repeatedly stolen her Asian history textbook and said that she is not a "real Korean" because she only speaks English. The principal tells her that because the students who are bothering her are also Korean, it was probably a misunderstanding among friends and takes no action.*
- *A Sikh student wears his turban to school. A teacher tells the student he needs to remove the turban for his own safety, given recent violence targeting Muslims in the region. The student informs the teacher that he is Sikh. When he refuses to remove his turban, he is suspended.*
- *A student from China receives an out-of-school suspension for violating the school's code of conduct. Before meeting with the assistant principal to discuss the suspension, the student's parent requests an interpreter, but school administrators do not arrange for one. When the parent arrives for the meeting, there is no interpreter and the assistant principal proceeds with the meeting.*
- *During a lesson about 9/11, classmates of a Muslim middle school student call him a terrorist and tell him to go back to his country. The teacher tells the class that only some Muslims are terrorists, and asks the student why Muslims have not denounced the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The student complains to a school official about the statements by his teacher and classmates, but the school official take no steps to respond.*
- *A high school provides English learner (EL) services only to EL students who speak Spanish. When Punjabi-speaking students inquire about EL services to assist them with their advanced placement (AP) classes, the principal tells them that they cannot both receive EL services and take AP classes.*
- *A group of Asian students is hit and taunted every week in gym class by other students who say, "Asians are supposed to be good at math—not basketball." When they complain to the teacher, they are told that the best response is to ignore the other students and to focus on doing better in gym class.*

Anyone with information about discrimination occurring in schools may file a complaint by contacting:

U.S. Dept. of Justice, Civil Rights Division
Educational Opportunities Section
Email: education@usdoj.gov
Telephone: 202-514-4092 or 877-292-3804
TTY: 800-514-0383

U.S. Dept. of Education, Office for Civil Rights
Email: ocr@ed.gov
Telephone: 202-453-6100 or 800-421-3481
TDD: 800-877-8339
Language Assistance: 800-USA-LEARN (800-872-5327)

OCR also offers technical assistance to the public and will respond to inquiries about schools' obligations and the rights of students and parents under the laws that OCR enforces.

For more information about the laws that CRT and OCR enforce, including those prohibiting discrimination based on disability and sex (including gender identity and nonconformity with sex stereotypes), please visit us at www.justice.gov/crt/edo and www.ed.gov/ocr.