




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education 

DATE: May 19, 2016

SUBJECT: Guidance for Districts Regarding Transgender Students and Refugees

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is committed to supporting your efforts to ensure that every student has access to a high-quality education in a safe, supportive and welcoming school environment.

Today I am sending you two documents that provide important guidance on two very different issues, but with the common theme of ensuring we do everything in our power to meet the unique needs of our students and to serve all of our families. Connecticut has a long history of standing up for the rights of all children and we are committed to continuing that tradition into the future.

The first document is a joint letter from the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, offering guidance to school districts on civil rights protections for transgender students under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. You may have received this letter already, but I wanted to share it with all of our superintendents to make sure every district is in receipt of this guidance and to underscore the importance of making sure our schools offer safe, supportive and non-discriminatory learning environments for all students, including our transgender students. If you have not already, please read the letter and share with your Board of Education and administrative team.

We are in the process of reviewing the federal guidance and thinking about ways the state can continue to support school districts in creating and implementing policies that ensure protections for all students, including transgender students.

Protecting the rights of transgender students is not a new idea in Connecticut. [Legislation passed in 2011](#) that added gender identity and expression to the state's antidiscrimination statute. It may be helpful to refer to this legislation when responding to questions from parents and members of the public about the new guidelines.

The second document is also a joint letter from the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice that provides guidance to school districts about ensuring we have fair and equitable enrollment processes that make all families, including immigrant and refugee families, feel welcome when they register their children for school. The letter is from 2014, but its relevance is just as pertinent today as it was two years ago. We must continue to provide all children equal access to public education regardless of citizenship or immigration status.

I thank you for your attention and urgency in making sure all of Connecticut's children and families feel welcome, respected and valued in our schools.