




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



SERIES: 2010-2011

CIRCULAR LETTER: C-5

TO: Superintendents of Schools
Executive Directors of State-Approved Nonpublic Special Education Programs
Executive Directors of Regional Educational Service Centers (RESC)
State Education Resource Center (SERC)

FROM: Mark K. McQuillan 
Commissioner of Education

DATE: December 1, 2010

SUBJECT: Guidance Targeting Harassment Outlines Local and Federal Responsibility

On October 26, 2010, the United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights issued a very significant "Dear Colleague" letter. This letter emphasized "*that some student misconduct that falls under a school's anti-bullying policy also may trigger responsibilities under one or more of the federal antidiscrimination laws enforced by the Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR)... by limiting its response to a specific application of its anti-bullying disciplinary policy, a school may fail to properly consider whether the student misconduct also results in discriminatory harassment.*"

The letter responds to recent, high-profile instances of bullying and harassment that led to student suicides and OCR's year long review of federal antidiscrimination statutes, regulations and case law. The letter warns that school districts that fail to appropriately identify, thwart and remedy bullying and harassment risk violating federal civil rights laws and losing federal funds. The full text of this letter, along with a fact sheet, can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201010.html>.

I urge you to ensure that your school personnel are fully informed of this guidance. For further information and resources, please go to <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/>. Under Quicklinks, click on "Bullying and Harassment." If you have any questions, please contact Dr. William A. Howe at 860-713-6752 or by e-mail at william.howe@ct.gov or Dr. Jo Ann Freiberg by e-mail at joann.freiberg@ct.gov or by telephone at 860-713-6598.

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