



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Office of Justice Programs

Office for Civil Rights

On behalf of the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ or Department), I have the privilege of welcoming you to our news distribution list. Going forward, this update service will share important news on the civil rights work that the Department has entrusted to OCR.

I would also like to update you on three important initiatives OCR is spearheading.

First, OCR launched last year the Women in Law Enforcement initiative to review how state law enforcement agencies recruit, select, and retain female sworn law enforcement officers. Opened under the nondiscrimination provision of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (Safe Streets Act), the Women in Law Enforcement reviews reflect OCR's commitment to conducting disparate-impact employment investigations. Thus far, OCR has initiated five Women in Law Enforcement reviews, and we plan to launch additional reviews in 2016.

Second, OCR recently initiated a compliance review program to address what many legal practitioners and social service providers call the "School-to-Prison Pipeline," the disparate impact school discipline has on minority students, often leading to disproportionate encounters with the juvenile justice system. The compliance review program, which aligns with the Inter-Departmental Supportive School Discipline Initiative (SSDI), examines whether selected law enforcement agencies with School Resource Officer programs are in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 when serving schools.

Third, in 2013, Congress reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) including for the first time a nondiscrimination grant condition, which prohibits organizations that receive funding under the statute from discriminating on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability. The addition of sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes in VAWA prompted OCR to convene an intra-Departmental working group to formulate guidance to prospective recipients, beneficiaries, and members of the public on the significance of the new grant condition. In April, 2014, the working group published guidance in the form of [Frequently Asked Questions](#), which provides information about the meaning of the protected classes, the scope of the grant condition, how the grant condition affects State Administering Agencies, how recipients might operate sex-segregated or sex-specific programs, how recipients should treat transgender beneficiaries, and how aggrieved parties can file an administrative complaint. Since the publication of the guidance, the OCR has been providing training to recipients of VAWA funding on their obligations under the new grant condition and engaged in outreach to beneficiaries and their advocates to educate them on the new civil rights protections in the statute.

These new initiatives, along with OCR's longstanding limited-English proficiency reviews and complaint work, are a testament to OJP's commitment to work with recipients of federal financial assistance to improve their compliance with the federal civil rights law that OCR enforces. We are proud of the work that OCR has done in the past, and we look forward to sharing with you information on new initiatives to ensure federal funds do not support unlawful, discriminatory behavior. Please encourage your colleagues and friends to join our news service. Information on how to join is available at our [website](#).

Sincerely,

Michael L. Alston,

Director