

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

September 19, 2016

FACT SHEET: Ensuring Safe and Supportive Schools for All Students

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/19/fact-sheet-ensuring-safe-and-supportive-schools-all-students>

“Despite structural barriers of race and gender, women and girls of color have made real progress in recent years. The number of black women-owned businesses has skyrocketed. Black women have ascended the ranks of every industry. Teen pregnancy rates among girls of color are down, while high school and four-year college graduation rates are up. That’s good news. But there’s no denying that black women and girls still face real and persistent challenges.”

– President Barack Obama, Remarks at the Congressional Black Caucus Dinner, September 20, 2015

Today, The White House Council on Women and Girls, together with the U.S. Department of Education, the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, and The National Crittenton Foundation, is hosting a conference titled “Trauma-Informed Approaches in School: Supporting Girls of Color and Rethinking Discipline.” The Obama Administration is committed to promoting policies and practices that support the needs and potential of underserved populations, including marginalized girls, young women and their families. Despite progress made over the recent years in academic achievement, access and school support, girls -- and particularly girls of color -- still disproportionately face barriers in education. This convening will help participants focus on improving school systems’ discipline practices and developing approaches that better serve students who have experienced trauma.

All too often, girls of color experience **disproportionately high rates of school suspensions**. According to the U.S. Department of Education’s Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) black girls are 8 percent of enrolled students, but represent 14 percent of students receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions. By adopting supportive school discipline practices, schools foster success for all students and increase the likelihood that students will stay engaged and stay in school.

Trauma from sexual assault may also impede a young girl’s success in school. According to the **Centers for Disease Control**, approximately 8 percent or an estimated 10 million girls experienced rape or attempted rape during youth. When the trauma of sexual assault is not addressed, it can have a devastating effect on a girl’s physical and mental health, leading to serious problems in school. Like colleges and universities, K-12 school districts must comply with legal obligations under Title IX to

respond to allegations of sexual assault of a student. K-12 school districts must also provide support for student survivors of sexual assault to ensure they can receive equal educational opportunities. As part of today's conference, the White House is announcing additional supports from the U.S. Department of Education and the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault to help address sexual assault misconduct in schools:

- **Safe Place to Learn: Prevent, Intercede, and Respond to Sexual Harassment of K-12 Students:** Today, the U.S. Department of Education will release [Safe Place to Learn](#), an online, interactive resource package to support efforts to create a positive school climate and healthy learning environment. This package highlights strategies and instruments with which many schools are already working to create a school community committed to preventing discrimination based on sex and its most extreme corollary, sexual violence. The materials in the package aim to help three primary staff groups: administrative leadership; all building staff; and staff responsible for interceding and responding to students. The resource package contains guidance, e-learning training modules, and information about trauma sensitivity, resources to support current and ongoing conversations and efforts to prevent bullying, sexual harassment and violence, and provide safe, supportive learning environments for all students, in age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate ways.
- **Considerations for School District Sexual Misconduct Policies:** Today, the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault will release a [document highlighting issues for K-12 districts to consider](#) when bringing together a multi-disciplinary team to develop sexual misconduct policies as part of their overall response to sexual misconduct. By using this document as a guide, it will enable K-12 teams to include the essential components of a comprehensive sexual misconduct plan. The document covers reporting options, support services for victims, definitions, confidentiality, the grievance process, and other critical areas. It also provides links to Federal government resources for those wanting further detail on a particular topic.

In addition, the following external commitments are being made to support trauma-informed approaches to school discipline:

- **Online Community Support for Educators:** Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Connection network invites states to join the newly restructured ACEs in Education online community group to share resources on schools that want to become trauma informed. ACEs Connection Network has two parts: [ACEsTooHigh.com](#) is a news site for the general public that covers research about the consequences of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and how people, organizations, systems and communities are implementing practices based on ACEs science. It has a companion social network, [ACEsConnection.com](#), which has more than 10,000 members who are implementing trauma-informed and resilience-building practices based on ACEs science across sectors. [ACEsConnection.com](#) has several community groups, including [ACEs in Education](#), which has 300 members, mostly educators. ACEs in Education is the go-to place for trauma-informed, resilience-building education. It has resources, such as webinars, tutorials, books, articles, and lists of organizations that provide whole-school training for schools that want to become trauma-informed.

- **Fellowship focused on best practices in school discipline reform efforts:**The Communities for Just Schools Fund (CJSF) will announce a new fellowship, which will soon be accepting applications, jointly hosted by CJSF and the Southern Education Foundation, to develop a best practices institute to support school discipline reform efforts and remedy racial injustice in schools. *Education Anew Fellow* (EAF) will be housed at the Southern Education Foundation (SEF) for a 12-18 month fellowship period. The Fellow will work closely with CJSF staff and community partners, and with SEF's staff and fellows, including SEF's soon-to-be launched Racial Equity Fellow, to develop the CJSF Best Practices Institute (BPI) and to support conversations and collaborations between the community organizers CJSF supports and the educators with whom SEF works, all for the greater benefit of education justice advocates and school discipline reform efforts nationwide.
- **Georgetown Law Center on Poverty to launch follow-up effort on trauma-informed schools for girls of color:** The Center on Poverty will build on the momentum of this conference by pivoting from its role as co-host to serving school system reformers who seek to implement trauma-informed approaches that are responsive to the unique needs of girls of color. The Center will invite the state teams present at the conference and others to provide more in-depth information about their needs in creating trauma-informed schools, with the ultimate goal of serving as a central convener of these groups.

Today's conference will bring together educational teams from 15 States and 23 school districts around the country, as well as key researchers and experts in this topic, and nonprofit partners who have demonstrated a strong commitment to improving supports and outcomes for this vulnerable population.

Participating States and districts include:

- Colorado
 - Denver Public Schools
- District of Columbia
 - District of Columbia Public Schools
- Illinois
- Maryland
 - Baltimore City Public Schools
- Massachusetts
 - Reading Public Schools
- Michigan
 - Flint Community Schools
 - River Rouge School District
 - Detroit Public Schools Community District
- Minnesota
 - St. Paul Public Schools
- Montana
 - Billings Public Schools

- New Jersey
 - Lawrence Township Public Schools
- New York
 - NYC Department of Education
 - Rochester City School District
- Ohio
 - Youngstown City Schools
 - Cleveland Metropolitan School District
- Oregon
 - Portland School District
- Pennsylvania
 - School District of Philadelphia
 - School District of Lancaster
- Tennessee
 - Shelby County Public Schools
 - Metro Nashville Public Schools
- Virginia
 - Richmond City Public Schools
 - Norfolk City Public Schools
 - Petersburg City Public Schools

The conference builds on the Administration’s commitment to fostering school success for all youth, and reducing unnecessary exclusionary school discipline practices, including:

- This month, **the Department of Education and the Department of Justice released letters to states and school districts** encouraging communities to use school resource officers (SROs) only under appropriate circumstances and not for the administration of routine discipline. To assist school districts in the appropriate use of SROs, the Departments jointly released the Safe, School-based Enforcement through Collaboration, Understanding, and Respect (SECURE) Rubrics. These new resources can help education and law enforcement agencies revise SRO-related policies to better align with common-sense action steps that will lead to improved school safety and better outcomes for students.
- In follow-up to the Department of Education and the Department of Justice’s **school discipline guidance package** from 2014, the Department of Justice released new resources at a White House Conference in July 2015 to assist school leaders in reducing rates of exclusionary discipline, including: **Addressing the Root Causes of Disciplinary Disparities: An Educator’s Action Planning Guide** and Rethink School Discipline: Resource Guide for Superintendent Action. At the convening, the Department of Education launched its #RethinkDiscipline campaign and assembled leadership teams from more than forty school districts with each district committing to move away from exclusionary school discipline practices. As a part of the day the

Department of Education released **story maps**—disaggregated by race, gender, and disability status—highlighting the extent to which exclusionary discipline is used in certain parts of the country, particularly among students of color and students with disabilities

- In July 2015, the Department of Justice also launched the **National Resource Center for School Justice Partnerships**. This technical assistance portal is designed to assist juvenile courts, schools, and law enforcement agencies in supporting school discipline reform and addressing disparities.



Dr. Covington on the “THE BASICS: Core principles of Trauma-Informed Approaches and Gender and Cultural Responsiveness” panel.