



Equity, Opportunity, and Inclusion for People with Disabilities since 1975

August 14, 2014

Assistant Secretary Catherine Lhamon
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Civil Rights
400 Maryland Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20202-1475

Dear Assistant Secretary Lhamon,

We want to take this opportunity to thank you for your recent Letter of Findings (Case 11-13-1058) issued to the Prince William County Schools addressing the alleged discrimination of students with disabilities in two primary areas: improper restraint and seclusion practices and the disparate impact of those practices on African American and Hispanic students as evidenced by their disproportionate representation. The leadership and action of your office's team lead, Kay Bhagat, in applying the USDOE issued guidance supports best practices that will reduce the use of restraint and seclusion with all students. Your response in this particular case also acknowledges the importance of the proper and appropriate management of students who display challenging behaviors in the school setting.

TASH commends you for examining and scrutinizing the district's restraint and seclusion policy and its misalignment with practices that were occurring within the two schools. This type of analysis requires schools to revisit policies that directly impact their most significant and complex student populations. We believe the Resolution Agreement will lead to systemic changes that include policy analysis and proactive professional development.

Your letter of findings sends a powerful message to school districts that all students are entitled to and will be provided a Free Appropriate Public Education regardless of socioeconomic background race, placement, disability or gender. Your response also underscores the need for better policies and training in school districts so that schools ensure students' rights are not violated. You have affirmed the importance of FAPE for students with disabilities.

TASH continues to work with our membership, legislators, and policy influencers toward creating, revising and aligning policy that promotes equitable access and opportunity for students with disabilities. We believe stakeholder engagement is critical in order to obtain and preserve good policy and practice for students with disabilities.

Thank you again for your leadership and action on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara R. Trader".

Barbara R. Trader
Executive Director