



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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U.S. Department of Education Releases Webinar, Fact Sheet for Protecting Students' Civil Rights During COVID-19 Response

WASHINGTON – The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Education released today a [webinar](#) on ensuring web accessibility for students with disabilities for schools utilizing online learning during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. In addition, OCR published a [fact sheet](#) for education leaders on how to protect students' civil rights as school leaders take steps to keep students safe and secure. These resources will assist education leaders in making distance learning accessible to students with disabilities and in preventing discrimination during this Administration-wide response effort.

As more schools across the nation shift to distance learning, OCR's webinar reminds decisionmakers of their responsibility in making distance learning accessible to students with disabilities, unless equally effective alternate access is provided. Online learning tools must be accessible to students with disabilities, and they must be compatible with the various forms of assistive technology that students might use to help them learn. The webinar advises school leaders to routinely test their online activities to ensure accessibility.

“OCR's accessibility webinar is intended to remind school leaders at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels of their legal obligations to ensure that all students, including students with disabilities, can access online and virtual learning programs,” said Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Kenneth L. Marcus. “Students with disabilities must have access to educational technology utilized by schools, and OCR will continue to work to ensure that no student is excluded from utilizing these important tools.”

In addition, the new fact sheet released by OCR presents information on the rights of students with disabilities during school closures and includes tips for preventing incidents of discrimination. It also includes information on ensuring that no student is discriminated against based on race, color, or national origin. The document reminds schools of their legal obligation to comply with non-discrimination obligations under civil rights laws, including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and provides tools to assist schools in facilitating distance learning for all students.

These communications follow a [previous letter](#) from Assistant Secretary Marcus to education leaders on preventing and addressing potential discrimination associated with COVID-19. The Department continues to update www.ed.gov/coronavirus with information for students, parents, educators and local leaders.

For additional resources from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

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