

## The Office for Civil Rights or OCR



### What is the OCR and how does it protect students?

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforces five federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance from the Department of Education (ED).

These civil rights laws extend to all state education agencies, elementary and secondary school systems, colleges and universities, and virtually any agency that receives federal financial assistance from ED.



### When should I file an OCR complaint?

Anyone who believes that an educational institution that receives federal financial assistance has discriminated against someone on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age can file a complaint. The person or organization filing the complaint need not be a victim of the alleged discrimination, but may complain on behalf of another person or group. A complaint must be filed within 180 calendar days of the date of the alleged discrimination! Exceptions are rare.



### Do I have to use the school's grievance process?

**NO.** A complainant is not required by law to use the institutional grievance process before filing a complaint with OCR. If a complainant uses an institutional grievance process and also chooses to file the complaint with OCR, the complaint must be filed with OCR within 60 days after the completion of the institutional grievance process.

## How do I submit a complaint?



**ONLINE** at <https://ocr cas.ed.gov>



**EMAIL** a letter to [ocr@ed.gov](mailto:ocr@ed.gov)



**MAIL** a letter to your regional OCR branch

### For more detailed info

about what to include in your complaint, please call the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-421-3481

**OR**

visit online at <http://ww2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/howto.html>