



Department of Justice

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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT REACHES SETTLEMENT WITH SCHOOL DISTRICT IN PEER HARASSMENT CASE

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Under a settlement reached yesterday, a Tennessee school district will compensate two students who were harassed by other students and will take significant steps to prevent and eliminate harassment on the basis of race, color and national origin.

The proposed consent order, filed with the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee, also settles a lawsuit filed by the victims. That lawsuit, and a separate complaint filed by the Justice Department, alleged that the Sullivan County Board of Education violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by failing to respond appropriately to complaints that the victims were being harassed by other students on the basis of race. The complaint alleged that, due to the school district's failure to put an end to the harassment, one victim completed high school through a home-schooling program and the other victim transferred to another school district.

“No student should have to endure harassment while receiving an education,” said Ralph F. Boyd, Jr., Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. “This case demonstrates the Department's commitment to protecting the civil rights of all Americans to receive equal educational opportunities.”

Under the terms of the consent order, the Sullivan County Board of Education, which denies the allegations, has agreed, among other things to:

- retain an expert to evaluate the district's policies and procedures for preventing, identifying, and remedying harassment and discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin;
- conduct a school climate assessment regarding student-to-student and teacher-to-student interactions to determine whether circumstances warrant school-specific actions;
- develop a comprehensive plan to prevent, identify, and remedy harassment and discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin;
- provide an education and training program to inform and instruct teachers, staff, and students about the school district's policies prohibiting harassment and discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin;
- maintain written records of each harassment allegation received, investigation conducted and corrective action taken by the district to ensure a consistent and effective review of allegations.

The consent order will be monitored through reports the school board is required to submit to the Department of Justice for review.

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