



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Thomas R. Bice
State Superintendent of Education

June 26, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: City and County Superintendents
FROM: Thomas R. Bice *TRB*
State Superintendent of Education
RE: Enrollment Procedures

Recently, I, along with many of you, received a letter from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) setting forth concerns about enrollment practices in many of our schools.

I met with the attorneys from the SPLC, and we had a very positive meeting. My communication to you will serve as our collective response to the concerns.

As you begin to plan for the 2014-2015 school year, I would like to ask that you adhere to the following enrollment procedures and ensure that this information is implemented consistently in all of your schools and on all public documents and school system Web sites. These enrollment procedures are consistent with the recent "Dear Colleague" letter issued by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education. A copy of the Dear Colleague letter is attached for your reference.

1. Beginning July 1, 2014, ALL schools and school systems in Alabama will use the attached Enrollment Form. Please discard all other forms currently in use in your system. Only those students entering Kindergarten or transferring from another state should be required to complete an Enrollment Form as all current students can be electronically transferred within our Statewide Student Management System INOW.
2. A Social Security Number (SSN) may be requested as part of the enrollment procedure but it is **NOT** required for enrollment and disclosure is voluntary. Any request for a student's SSN must (a) state that the disclosure of a SSN is voluntary, (b) provide the statutory or other legal authority under which it is seeking the number, and (c) explain the purpose for collecting the number. If a SSN is not provided, assign a temporary identification number and a request should be submitted for a Unique Student Identifier that will be used for all student information transfers and tracking of information.
3. A birth certificate is **NOT** required for enrollment. You may request a birth certificate for age verification, but other forms of documentation such as religious, hospital, or physician's documents showing date of birth; a baptismal certificate; an entry in a family Bible; an adoption record; an affidavit from a parent; previously verified school records; etc., should carry equal value. Further, no school system may deny a child enrollment if he/she possesses a document indicating a foreign place of birth.
4. An Alabama driver's license is **NOT** required for proof of residency. You may request a driver's license, but must accept other forms of documentation such as a utility bill or residential lease.
5. The SSN should not be a required field on any other school document, such as those utilized in conjunction with extracurricular activities, athletics, or other school purposes unless the SSN is otherwise required by law for participation in the activity or program. The presumption should always be that SSNs are **NOT** required.

Please be advised that you must make any necessary changes to all school materials immediately. No child is to be denied enrollment in any school or participation in school activities and programs based on the immigration of the child or the child's parents/guardians.

TRB:LAK
Attachments
FY14-1027

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APPLICATION FOR STUDENT ENROLLMENT
Must be completed by Parent/Legal Guardian

PLEASE PRINT

PLEASE PRINT

DATE _____ SCHOOL _____ GRADE _____

LAST NAME _____ FIRST NAME _____ MIDDLE NAME _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____ SEX- Circle One: MALE FEMALE HOME PHONE _____

STREET ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP CODE _____

RACE - Circle One: ASIAN BLACK HISPANIC AM. INDIAN MULTI WHITE PACIFIC ISLANDER

CHILD LIVES WITH - Circle One PARENTS MOTHER FATHER GUARDIAN:RELATION _____

*SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (voluntary) _____

PARENT(S) / GUARDIAN NAME: **if guardian, provide school with a copy of guardianship papers.**

MOTHER/GUARDIAN _____	Address _____
Email Address _____	Cell Phone _____
EMPLOYER _____	Work Phone _____

FATHER/GUARDIAN _____	Address _____
Email Address _____	Cell Phone _____
EMPLOYER _____	Work Phone _____

SPECIAL INFORMATION ABOUT CUSTODY _____

EMERGENCY CONTACTS: (PLEASE LIST NUMBERS OTHER THAN YOUR OWN...VERY IMPORTANT!!!)

EMERGENCY #1 CONTACT _____ ↓ Relation _____ Phone _____	EMERGENCY #2 CONTACT _____ ↓ Relation _____ Phone _____
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THESE PEOPLE HAVE PERMISSION TO CHECK MY CHILD OUT OF SCHOOL:		
1. _____	Relation _____	Phone _____
2. _____	Relation _____	Phone _____
3. _____	Relation _____	Phone _____
4. _____	Relation _____	Phone _____

NAME AND ADDRESS OF FORMER SCHOOL: _____

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

**Disclosure of your child's social security number (SSN) is voluntary. If you elect not to provide a SSN, a temporary identification number will be generated and utilized instead. Your child's SSN is being requested for use in conjunction with enrollment in school as provided in Ala. Admin. Code §290-3-1-.02(2)(b)(2). It will be used as a means of identification in the statewide student management system.*



U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
Office of the General Counsel



May 8, 2014

Dear Colleague:

Under Federal law, State and local educational agencies (hereinafter "districts") are required to provide all children with equal access to public education at the elementary and secondary level. Recently, we have become aware of student enrollment practices that may chill or discourage the participation, or lead to the exclusion, of students based on their or their parents' or guardians' actual or perceived citizenship or immigration status. These practices contravene Federal law. Both the United States Department of Justice and the United States Department of Education (Departments) write to remind you of the Federal obligation to provide equal educational opportunities to all children residing within your district and to offer our assistance in ensuring that you comply with the law. We are writing to update the previous Dear Colleague Letter on this subject that was issued on May 6, 2011, and to respond to inquiries the Departments received about the May 6 Letter. This letter replaces the May 6 Letter.

The Departments enforce numerous statutes that prohibit discrimination, including Titles IV and VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title IV prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin, among other factors, by public elementary and secondary schools. 42 U.S.C. § 2000c-6. Title VI prohibits discrimination by recipients of Federal financial assistance on the basis of race, color, or national origin. 42 U.S.C. § 2000d. Title VI regulations, moreover, prohibit districts from unjustifiably utilizing criteria or methods of administration that have the effect of subjecting individuals to discrimination because of their race, color, or national origin, or have the effect of defeating or substantially impairing accomplishment of the objectives of a program for individuals of a particular race, color, or national origin. See 28 C.F.R. § 42.104(b)(2) and 34 C.F.R. § 100.3(b)(2).

Additionally, the United States Supreme Court held in the case of *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982), that a State may not deny access to a basic public education to any child residing in the State, whether present in the United States legally or otherwise. Denying "innocent children" access to a public education, the Court explained, "imposes a lifetime hardship on a discrete class of children not accountable for their disabling status. . . . By denying these children a basic education, we deny

them the ability to live within the structure of our civic institutions, and foreclose any realistic possibility that they will contribute in even the smallest way to the progress of our Nation.” *Plyler*, 457 U.S. at 223. As *Plyler* makes clear, the undocumented or non-citizen status of a student (or his or her parent or guardian) is irrelevant to that student’s entitlement to an elementary and secondary public education.

To comply with these Federal civil rights laws, as well as the mandates of the Supreme Court, you must ensure that you do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin, and that students are not barred from enrolling in public schools at the elementary and secondary level on the basis of their own citizenship or immigration status or that of their parents or guardians. Moreover, districts may not request information with the purpose or result of denying access to public schools on the basis of race, color, or national origin. To assist you in meeting these obligations, we provide below some examples of permissible enrollment practices, as well as examples of the types of information that may not be used as a basis for denying a student entrance to school.

In order to ensure that its educational services are enjoyed only by residents of the district, a district may require students or their parents to provide proof of residency within the district. See, e.g., *Martinez v. Bynum*, 461 U.S. 321, 328 (1983).¹ For example, a district may require copies of phone and water bills or lease agreements to establish residency. While a district may restrict attendance to district residents, inquiring into students’ citizenship or immigration status, or that of their parents or guardians would not be relevant to establishing residency within the district. A district should review the list of documents that can be used to establish residency and ensure that any required documents would not unlawfully bar or discourage a student who is undocumented or whose parents are undocumented from enrolling in or attending school.

As with residency requirements, rules vary among States and districts as to what documents students may use to show they fall within State- or district-mandated minimum and maximum age requirements, and jurisdictions typically accept a variety of documents for this purpose. A school district may not bar a student from enrolling in its schools because he or she lacks a birth certificate or has records that indicate a foreign place of birth, such as a foreign birth certificate.

¹ Homeless children and youth often do not have the documents ordinarily required for school enrollment such as proof of residency or birth certificates. A school selected for a homeless child must immediately enroll the homeless child, even if the child or the child’s parent or guardian is unable to produce the records normally required for enrollment. See 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C)(1).

Moreover, we recognize that districts have Federal obligations, and in some instances State obligations, to report certain data such as the race and ethnicity of their student population. While the Department of Education requires districts to collect and report such information, districts cannot use the acquired data to discriminate against students; nor should a parent's or guardian's refusal to respond to a request for this data lead to a denial of his or her child's enrollment.

Similarly, we are aware that many districts request a student's social security number at enrollment for use as a student identification number. A district may not deny enrollment to a student if he or she (or his or her parent or guardian) chooses not to provide a social security number. See 5 U.S.C. §552a (note).² If a district chooses to request a social security number, it shall inform the individual that the disclosure is voluntary, provide the statutory or other basis upon which it is seeking the number, and explain what uses will be made of it. *Id.* In all instances of information collection and review, it is essential that any request be uniformly applied to all students and not applied in a selective manner to specific groups of students.

As the Supreme Court noted in the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), "it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he [or she] is denied the opportunity of an education." *Id.* at 493. Both Departments are committed to vigorously enforcing the Federal civil rights laws outlined above and to providing any technical assistance that may be helpful to you so that all students are afforded equal educational opportunities. As immediate steps, you first may wish to review the documents your district requires for school enrollment to ensure that the requested documents do not have a chilling effect on a student's enrollment in school. Second, in the process of assessing your compliance with the law, you might review State and district level enrollment data. Precipitous drops in the enrollment of any group of students in a district or school may signal that there are barriers to their attendance that you should further investigate.

We are also attaching frequently asked questions and answers and a fact sheet that should be helpful to you. Please contact us if you have additional questions or if we can provide you with assistance in ensuring that your programs comply with Federal law. You may contact the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Educational Opportunities Section, at (877) 292-3804 or education@usdoj.gov, the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at (800) 421-3481 or ocr@ed.gov or the Department of Education Office of the General Counsel at (202) 401-6000. You may also visit <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OCR/contactus.cfm> for the OCR enforcement office that serves

² Federal law provides for certain limited exceptions to this requirement. See Pub. L. No. 93-579, § 7(a)(2).

your area. For general information about equal access to public education, please visit our websites at <http://www.justice.gov/crt/edo> and <http://www2.ed.gov/ocr/index.html>.

We look forward to working with you. Thank you for your attention to this matter and for taking the necessary steps to ensure that no child is denied a public education.

Sincerely,

/s/

**Catherine E. Lhamon
Assistant Secretary
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education**

/s/

**Philip H. Rosenfelt
Deputy General Counsel
Delegated the Authority to
Perform the Functions and
Duties of the General Counsel
U.S. Department of Education**

/s/

**Jocelyn Samuels
Acting Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice**

Attachments