

PRESS RELEASE

Covington - The Covington Independent Public Schools agreed to a settlement which will better serve the needs of students with behavior problems, and end the use of school resource officers responding to incidents at elementary schools. School resource officers or other law enforcement officers will only step in if the child poses an imminent risk and substantial threat to physical safety or a serious crime. Any agreements made with law enforcement agencies must limit their powers as such.

The agreement was reached today with the U.S. Department of Justice, which launched an investigation into the District's disciplinary practices, including the use of police to deal with routine student misbehavior. That investigation was launched after the Children's Law Center in Covington sued the Kenton County Sheriff's Department in 2015, alleging it used excessive force in handling young school children who have disabilities within the Covington schools.

That lawsuit remains pending in U.S. District Court in Covington. The school system was not a party to that lawsuit.

"The District's agreement to these terms is encouraging and requires working to change the culture within its system to one which should promote better outcomes for all children. Reliance on more punitive measures has been ineffective and harmful to kids. We think this Agreement is a great step in the right direction," notes Kim Tandy, Executive Director of the Children's Law Center.

The Agreement requires the district to take effective steps to ensure its disciplinary policies and practices are not discriminatory. That includes the use of restraint and seclusion, exclusionary discipline, and law enforcement response to student conduct. Instead, it will initiate a district wide intervention procedure to better identify and meet the needs of students with disabilities who may need added support.

Covington will amend its code of conduct before the 2017-18 school year begins to emphasize the use of positive behavior supports, and incorporate other interventions to deal with student behavior rather than exclusionary discipline. Additional data collection, reporting and training will also be enforced.

The parties anticipate the agreement will be in place through the 2019-2020 school year. A full copy of the Settlement Agreement can be found at www.childrenslawky.org/

For more information, contact Kim Tandy or Rickell Howard at 859-431-3313.