



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

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November 10, 2022

IN RESPONSE, PLEASE REFER TO: 03221359

Matt Robbins
Superintendent of Schools
Daviess County Public Schools
1622 Southeastern Parkway
Owensboro, Kentucky 42303

Sent via email only to: matt.robbs@daviess.kyschools.us

Dear Superintendent Robbins:

This is to notify you of the resolution of the complaint filed with the U.S. Department of Education (Department), Office for Civil Rights (OCR) against the Daviess County Public Schools (the District) alleging that the District discriminates on the basis of disability. Specifically, the complaint alleges that the District fails to provide individuals with mobility impairments with an accessible route to the Daviess County High School softball field.

OCR enforces Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and its implementing regulation at 34 C.F.R. Part 104, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the Department. OCR also enforces Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II) and its implementing regulation at 28 C.F.R. Part 35, which prohibit discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities by public entities, including public education systems and institutions, regardless of whether they receive Federal financial assistance from the Department. As a recipient of Federal financial assistance and a public entity, the District is subject to Section 504, Title II, and their implementing regulations.

Before OCR completed its investigation, the District expressed a willingness to resolve the complaint, pursuant to Section 302 of OCR's Case Processing Manual (CPM), by taking the steps set out in the enclosed Voluntary Resolution Agreement, which when fully implemented will resolve this complaint. The following is a discussion of the relevant legal standards and information obtained by OCR during the investigation that informed the development of the Voluntary Resolution Agreement.

Legal Standards

The Section 504 regulation, at 34 C.F.R. § 104.21, and the Title II regulation, at 28 C.F.R. § 35.149, provide that no qualified individual with a disability shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination in a recipient's programs or activities because the recipient's facilities are inaccessible to or unusable by individuals with disabilities.

The regulations implementing Section 504 and Title II each contain two standards for determining whether a recipient's programs, activities, and services are accessible to individuals with disabilities. One standard applies to facilities existing at the time of the publication of the regulations and the other standard applies to facilities constructed or altered after the publication dates. The applicable standard depends on the date of construction and/or alteration of the facility. Under the Section 504 regulation, existing facilities are those for which construction began prior to June 4, 1977; under the Title II regulation, existing facilities are those for which construction began prior to January 27, 1992. Facilities constructed or altered on or after these dates are considered newly constructed or altered facilities under Section 504 and Title II standards.

For existing facilities, the Section 504 regulation, at 34 C.F.R. § 104.22, and the Title II regulation, at 28 C.F.R. § 35.150, require a recipient to operate each service, program, or activity so that, when viewed in its entirety, it is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. The recipient may comply with this requirement through the reassignment of programs, activities, and services to accessible buildings, alteration of existing facilities, or any other methods that result in making each of its programs, activities and services accessible to persons with disabilities. In choosing among available methods of meeting the requirements, a recipient must give priority to methods that offer programs, activities and services to persons with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate.

With respect to newly constructed facilities, the Section 504 regulation, at 34 C.F.R. § 104.23(a), and the Title II regulation, at 28 C.F.R. § 35.151(a), require that the recipient design and construct the facility, or part of the facility, in such a manner that it is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. In addition, for new alterations that affect or could affect the usability of the facility, the Section 504 regulation, at 34 C.F.R. § 104.23(b), and the Title II regulation, at 28 C.F.R. § 35.151(b), require that, to the maximum extent feasible, the recipient alter the facility in such a manner that each altered portion is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

The new construction provisions of the Section 504 and Title II regulations also set forth specific architectural accessibility standards for facilities constructed or altered after particular dates. With respect to Section 504 requirements, facilities constructed or altered after June 3, 1977, but prior to January 18, 1991, must comply with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Standards (A117.1-1961, re-issued 1971). Facilities constructed or altered after January 17, 1991, must meet the requirements of the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS). Under the Title II regulation, recipients had a choice of adopting either UFAS or the 1991 Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) for facilities constructed or altered after January 26, 1992, and prior to September 15, 2010. For facilities where construction or alterations commenced on or after September 15, 2010, and before March 15, 2012, the Title II regulation provides that recipients had a choice of complying with either UFAS, ADAAG, or the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design (2010 Standards). The Title II regulation provides that recipients are required to comply with the 2010 Standards for construction or alterations commencing on or after March 15, 2012. While the Section 504 regulations have not been amended to formally adopt the 2010 Standards, a recipients may use the 2010 Standards as an alternative accessibility standard for new construction and alterations pursuant to Section 504. The 2010 Standards consist of 28 C.F.R. § 35.151 and the 2004 ADAAG, at 36 C.F.R. Part 1191, appendices B and D.

Factual Background/Analysis

The Complaint alleges that there is no accessible route to the Daviess County High School softball field for individuals with mobility impairments. Based on our investigation to date, OCR

has a compliance concern that there is not currently an accessible route, as alleged. However, the District advised that it is already in the process of modifying the Daviess County High School softball field to ensure accessibility for individuals with mobility impairments and provided documentation of the Board of Education's approval of the project. The District stated that this action was taken even before the Board received the August 10, 2022 notice of the pending OCR complaint. According to the Board, it is currently working with architect/engineer design professionals on plans and schematics to ensure that there is an accessible route from the softball field to the High School.

Resolution Agreement

Pursuant to Section 302 of OCR's *Case Processing Manual*, the District requested to resolve the case through a Voluntary Resolution Agreement on August 29, 2022. The District signed the enclosed Voluntary Resolution Agreement on November 7, 2022, which when fully implemented, will address the evidence obtained and the allegation investigated in this complaint. The provisions of the Agreement are aligned with the allegation raised by the Complainant and the information discussed above that was obtained during OCR's investigation, and are consistent with applicable law and regulation. OCR will monitor the District's implementation of the Agreement.

This concludes OCR's investigation of the complaint. This letter should not be interpreted to address the District's compliance with any other regulatory provision or to address any issues other than those addressed in this letter. This letter sets forth OCR's determination in an individual OCR case. This letter is not a formal statement of OCR policy and should not be relied upon, cited, or construed as such. OCR's formal policy statements are approved by a duly authorized OCR official and made available to the public. The Complainant may have the right to file a private suit in federal court whether or not OCR finds a violation.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release this document and related correspondence and records upon request. In the event that OCR receives such a request, we will seek to protect, to the extent provided by law, personally identifiable information, which, if released, could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

Please be advised that the District may not harass, coerce, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual because he or she has filed a complaint or participated in the complaint resolution process. If this happens, the Complainant may file another complaint alleging such treatment.

If you have any questions, please contact OCR attorney, Zachary Marshall at (215) 656-5829 or zachary.j.marshall@ed.gov; or, OCR investigator, Dale Leska at (215) 656-8562 or dale.leska@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Catherine C. Deneke
Supervisory Attorney
Philadelphia Office

Enclosure

cc: W. Cravens Priest, Counsel for the District, by email only: cpriest@elpolaw.com