

January 16, 2018

Jeff Beauregard Sessions,  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Elizabeth DeVos,  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

**U.S.D.O.E. Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide  
for Improving School Climate and Discipline (2014)**

Dear Mr. Sessions and Mrs. DeVos:

I write to you today as the Executive Director of Strategies for Youth, a national training and policy organization that supports improving police/youth interactions.

It has recently been reported that you are rescinding federal agencies' guidance statements developed by the prior Administration. We respectfully request that you not pursue this course of action with the *Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline* ("the Resource Guide").

The Resource Guide was developed with the input of educators, law enforcement, education attorneys, advocates, and families. Its recommendations reflect best practices for addressing the conduct of students of all ages, and the conduct of the adults who must care for them in the nation's public schools.

The Resource Guide gives law enforcement and education agencies a road map for making implementing the axiomatic understanding articulated by the International Association of Chiefs of Police: *"Keeping young people connected to school is indispensable to achieve positive outcomes for individual youth and public safety as a whole."*

Law enforcement chiefs do not want to see their officers on the front page of newspapers cuffing traumatized eight year olds above the elbow for crying, arresting an autistic 10 year old for being unable to control his stimming motions, or pepper-spraying a teen girl for crying. And yet, there is a steady stream of such incidents reported by the media. The

impact on law enforcement when it is depicted treating students this way is harmful to maintaining the legitimacy of law enforcement. When this happens, law enforcement becomes vulnerable to legal challenges, and otherwise loses the trust of the youth and communities it must police.

The Resource Guide's focus on the need to clarify the role of and train law enforcement helps avoid this unfortunate outcome.

SFY trains patrol and school resource officers, school security guards, and administrators. In more than seven years of providing such training to law enforcement, the one thing we hear from all law enforcement officers is, "I wish I had this training in the Academy." Unfortunately, today less than 1% of law enforcement academy training addresses how to work with youth; no American law enforcement academy training equips officers to work with students.

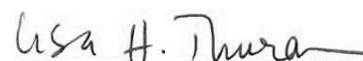
Officers of all political stripes living in locations as diverse as Idaho and Virginia, Maine and L.A., see the value of being trained to work with youth, learn techniques to de-escalate situations and make arrest a last resort. They are especially grateful for training that teaches them how to work with students who have individual educational plans due to emotional, behavioral disabilities.

The Resource Guide provides a model of how to best incorporate law enforcement into the nation's schools while keeping youth in school. In addition to recommending routine, rigorous, and regularly updated training for officers, it documents both *how* to define the role of law enforcement and how to convey that information to students, families, and the school community in publically available MOUs. MOUs make transparent and less subject to bias what consequences are triggered by student conduct, including when the community should expect officers to use force, restraints and arrest.

The Resource Guide has helpfully offered local law enforcement and education agencies key guidelines that embody common sense path to serve the twin goals of public safety and positive student outcomes without exposing either institution to legal challenges and loss of "face" in the public eye.

For these reasons, we urge you to maintain use of the Resource Guide. The Guide's goals are supported by law enforcement across the country's diverse communities, and helps keep our students in school heading towards positive outcomes.

Very truly yours,



Lisa H. Thureau  
Executive Director