

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: JULY 23, 2024

IN RESPONSE TO COMPLAINT BY DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW JERSEY, STATE INVESTIGATION FINDS TRENTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS FAILED STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES RETURNING FROM OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS.

TRENTON, NJ – On July 10, 2024, the New Jersey Department of Education (“NJDOE”) found Trenton Public Schools to be non-compliant with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”) and state regulations. As a result, the NJDOE requires Trenton Public Schools to complete a corrective action plan. The NJDOE’s complaint investigation report substantiates and confirms the issues Disability Rights NJ set forth in the formal complaint it filed on May 14, 2024. Furthermore, the Report finds that Trenton Public Schools denied students with disabilities the legally required free appropriate public education (“FAPE”) and must provide compensatory educational services to those students.

On May 14, 2024, Disability Rights NJ filed a complaint with NJDOE requesting an investigation into Trenton Public Schools’ process for reactivating/reenrolling students returning to the school district from out-of-home placements. Disability Rights NJ’s complaint centered on students with disabilities, in particular those returning home from youth detention centers. The complaint alleged that all students from out-of-home placements faced barriers and delays getting back in the classroom. Students with disabilities faced additional delays that lasted from weeks to years, sometimes while receiving no education at all. Trenton Public Schools systematically denied these returning students the FAPE guaranteed by the IDEA.

According to Disability Rights NJ Legal Director, Michael Brower, “Students with disabilities removed from their homes by the juvenile justice system are at high risk of being pulled into the School-to-Prison Pipeline. We thank the New Jersey Department of Education for its swift investigation and findings that school districts cannot shirk their legal and moral duty to these students when they return from out-of-home placements.”

Since 2020, Disability Rights NJ has assisted more than twenty students with disabilities returning to the district from out-of-home placements. Disability Rights NJ Managing Attorney Lisa Quartarolo added, “We look forward to robust enforcement of the corrective action from the Department. Disability Rights NJ and our Youth Practice Group will vigilantly ensure that Trenton Public Schools and other New Jersey school districts remain compliant with their obligations to our clients.”

Youth with disabilities returning to Trenton Public Schools from any out-of-home placement who experience(d) barriers returning to school or a loss of educational services should contact Disability Rights NJ at **(800) 922-7233**, email us at intakeunit@disabilityrightsnj.org, or complete the [online intake form](#) under Get Help at disabilityrightsnj.org.

[A copy NJDOE complaint investigation report can be viewed here.](#)

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About Disability Rights New Jersey:

As New Jersey's designated Protection and Advocacy system for people with disabilities, under federal law, Disability Rights NJ promotes self-determination, independence, and inclusion into all facets of community life. Disability Rights NJ advances the human, civil, and legal rights of people with disabilities through a wide array of advocacy services for individuals, their families, and other stakeholders. Accordingly, Disability Rights NJ also has statutory authority to pursue legal, administrative, and other appropriate remedies to ensure the protection of people with disabilities and adherence to the law.

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