Office of Equity and Civil Rights

Budget Language

$826,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2026 and $804,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2027 are provided solely for the implementation of chapter 240, Laws of 2010, including staffing the office of equity and civil rights

Proviso Purpose

OSPI's Equity and Civil Rights Office implements chapter 28A.642 RCW, which prohibits discrimination in Washington public schools on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, national origin, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, veteran or military status, disability, and the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability.

The Equity and Civil Rights Office works to ensure that each student has equal access to public education without discrimination by raising awareness of rights and responsibilities under civil rights laws, developing tools and resources to facilitate equal access to all school programs and activities, and monitoring school district and public charter school compliance with state and federal civil rights laws.[1]

Services Provided

The Equity and Civil Rights Office carries out the responsibilities required of OSPI under chapters 28A.640 and 28A.642 RCW and 392-190 WAC to monitor and enforce school district and public charter school compliance with civil rights laws and to eliminate discrimination in Washington public schools. Services include:

- Developing and implementing rules and guidelines for implementing civil rights protections in schools;
- Identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies, procedures, and practices within Washington public schools by conducting compliance reviews and investigating and resolving complaints;
- Providing clear and effective technical assistance, resources, tools, and support for parents, school districts, and other stakeholders regarding civil rights and discrimination;
- Informing families about their rights and facilitating effective resolutions to complaints; and

[1] Chapters 28A.640 and 28A.642 RCW and 392-190 WAC. The Equity and Civil Rights Office also monitors school districts' and public charter schools' compliance with federal civil rights laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act.

- Training school district staff regarding rights and responsibilities under civil rights laws, complaint and investigation procedures, and OSPI services.

Common civil rights issues addressed by the Equity and Civil Rights Office include:

- Accommodations and services for students with disabilities
- Discriminatory harassment
- Sexual harassment
- Language assistance services for limited-English proficient students and families
- Gender-inclusive schools and protections for transgender students
- Sex equity in athletics
- Equity in student discipline
- Equity in course and program enrollment, and equal access to all school courses and programs
- Dispute resolution and discrimination investigation technique

Criteria for Receiving Services/Grants

The services provided by the Equity and Civil Rights Office are available to anyone seeking information, technical assistance, or to file a complaint regarding civil rights or discrimination in Washington K–12 public schools, including students, families, school district employees, public charter school employees, and others.

OSPI's discrimination complaint procedure, provided in chapter 392-190 WAC, is available to anyone alleging that a school district or public charter school has engaged in discrimination based on sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, veteran or military status, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability.

Beneficiaries in the 2025-26 School Year

Number of School Districts:	N/A
Number of Schools:	N/A
Number of Students:	N/A
Number of Educators:	N/A

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2026	$826,000	$710,753
2025	$494,000	$493,924
2024	$494,000	$493,186
2023	$494,000	$386,190
2022	$494,000	$450,332

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2026	N/A
2025	N/A
2024	N/A
2023	N/A
2022	N/A

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

This proviso provided an increase in funding for the Equity and Civil Rights Office, which allowed OSPI to maintain staffing levels while other agency aministrative funds needed reallocation. Additionally, some temporary staffing vacancies resulted in less expenditures during the last fiscal year.

Program(s) Evaluation or Major Findings

The Equity and Civil Rights Office continues to notice a consistent need for training and technical assistance to school districts on nondiscrimination requirements. This is evidenced through high-turnover in district coordinators and regular requests for technical assistance from district staff or requests for intervention from families. The Equity and Civil Rights Office continues to consider how technical assistance and resources for districts can improve local capacity to prevent and respond to discrimination. OSPI also continues to participate in regular monitoring and enforcement of nondiscrimiantion requirements and is considering new approaches to ensuring the monitoring not only accurately identifies compliance gaps but also promotes meaningful improvements to local capacity to eliminate discrimination.

Additionally, the Equity and Civil Rights Office saw a continued high number of discrimination complaints filed with our office, which could be contributed both to an increase in public awareness of the discrimination complaint process and increased use of AI tools to draft complaints.

School districts and public charter schools could benefit from even more targeted and intensive technical assistance and training to support their equity and civil rights initiatives, such as improving equity in access to courses and programs, protections and services for students with disabilities, safe and supportive school climates, gender-inclusive schools, and language access for limited-English proficient families. While this office already monitors compliance and provides professional development and technical assistance to schools, additional capacity would help OSPI provide all districts the level of support they need to implement effective strategies to eliminate discrimination and opportunity gaps.

Major Challenges Faced by Program(s)

OSPI continues to face limited staffing to effectively accomplish this work statewide, given the breadth of legal obligations under chapters 28A.640 and 28A.642 RCW. Since E2SHB 3026 was passed in 2010, the Equity and Civil Rights office has experienced a steady increase in workload, including increased number and complexity of complaints, increased requests for technical assistance and trainings with school districts, and increased requests for engagement and training with community-based organizations.

The need for these services continues to grow, which is likely attributable to increasing awareness among families and district staff of civil rights responsibilities and OSPI services. Additionally, parents appear to be increasingly relying on AI tools to draft complaints, which tend to be now longer and more complex, requiring additional staff time to review.

Additionally, shifts federal law and administrative agency interpretation and enforcement priorities related to civil rights and education, as well as an increasing contentious and litigious environment, have impacted the Equity and Civil Rights Office's capacity and priorities. For example, the Equity and Civil Rights Office needed to update its technical assistance and training resources related to federal Title IX regulations as the regulations and related federal interpretation have changed multiple times.

Future Opportunities

The Equity and Civil Rights Office will continue to improve its guidelines, resources, and monitoring procedures to respond to new and challenging civil rights issues facing students and schools. As the Equity and Civil Rights Office continues this work, we will measure progress toward each of the following:

1. Increasing district compliance with civil rights requirements;
2. Improving timely resolutions to complaints and implementation of corrective measures in districts;
3. Increasing proactive and systemic efforts within school districts for improving equity; nondiscrimination; and safe, welcoming schools; and
4. Reducing disparities and opportunity gaps in all OSPI performance indicators, including in the use of suspensions and expulsions, and access to dual credit opportunities.

Other Relevant Information

While federal or other funds are not contingent on state funding related to this program, all federal funding to the agency, as well as to individual school districts, is contingent on OSPI's and school districts' compliance with civil rights laws. The services provided by the Equity and Civil Rights Office are necessary for OSPI to continue receiving federal funding and avoid costly complaints and litigation.

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2026 Fiscal Year.

Program Contact Information

Name: Sarah Albertson

Title: Director and Managing Attorney, Equity and Civil Rights

Phone: 360-725-6162

Email: sarah.albertson@k12.wa.us