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Education Department Releases Guidance on Gender Equity in Career and Technical Education

As part of the Administration's United State of Women Summit, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and Office of Adult, Career, and Technical Education released a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) today to make clear that all students, regardless of their sex, must have equal access to the full range of career and technical (CTE) programs offered.

"As the father of two daughters, I want my girls - and all young women in this country - to have access to the careers of their dreams, no matter the path," said U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. "Career and technical education is not just about preparing some students for successful lives and careers, it's about giving all students the tools to succeed."

Ensuring that all students have access to high-quality secondary and postsecondary CTE programs is central to achieving equity required in law. The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act requires states to meet negotiated targets for participation and completion rates of males and females in programs that are nontraditional for their sex. Despite efforts to increase enrollment of male and female students in fields that are non-traditional for their sex, disparities persist in certain fields.

The letter clarifies the legal obligations under the civil rights laws that OCR enforces to ensure equitable access to CTE programs, and provides examples of issues that may raise concerns regarding compliance with these obligations. While the DCL focuses on discrimination based on sex in CTE programs, the Department is focused on working with schools to ensure that their CTE programs are free from all forms of unlawful discrimination.

"We anticipate that this guidance will improve equitable access, participation, completion and post-program outcomes in CTE by discouraging discriminatory practices and encouraging school communities to take proactive steps to expand participation of students in nontraditional fields, and thus expand both access to and success in high-growth fields for both men and women," said Johan E. Uvin, acting assistant secretary for Career, Technical, and Adult Education. "While this DCL focuses primarily on gender, it reminds us that other considerations such as race, ethnicity,

English language status, and disability are important characteristics in examining CTE access, participation, completion and outcomes."

Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Catherine E. Lhamon, underscored this sentiment, noting, "Ensuring equitable access to CTE programs by eliminating sex discrimination supports a pathway to high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand jobs for all learners, free from stereotype and consistent with our nation's civil rights laws."

Building on this guidance, the Department's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education is developing an advancing equity in CTE toolkit. This toolkit will highlight resources and strategies to support state and local education agencies, academic staff, school administrators and counselors, parents and equity coordinators to develop and implement equitable high-quality CTE programs, services and learning practices.

The DCL clarifies schools' legal obligations to prevent and remedy sex discrimination in CTE programs. It includes:

- Information on requirements and relevant data under the Perkins Act related to participation in non-traditional fields.
- An overview of the applicable legal obligations under the relevant laws that OCR enforces (Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the *Vocational Education Program Guidelines for Eliminating Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of Race, Color, National Origin, Sex, and Handicap.*)
- Practical examples of issues that may raise concerns regarding compliance with these legal obligations.

As part of the Obama Administration's focus on improving outcomes for women and girls, the White House is convening the The United State of Women Summit. The Summit covers key gender equality issues, including educational opportunities and economic empowerment for women and girls. This guidance is being announced during a Summit-related CTE event sponsored by the Department. ED's event, "Shattering Stereotypes: Creating Opportunities for Women and Girls in Non-Traditional Career and Technical Education Fields" will showcase CTE programs that are improving outcomes for non-traditional students and give students the opportunity to share how participation in CTE has impacted their educational and career trajectories.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in all education programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. The Department is also stepping up efforts to reauthorize the Perkins Act, which provides just over one billion dollars annually to improve CTE.

In 2010, President Obama established the National Equal Pay Task Force to address issues related to the gender pay gap, including breaking down discriminatory barriers that exclude women from traditionally male-dominated occupations, which tend to pay more than traditionally female dominated occupations.

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