



Protect the Rights of Students with Disabilities

Margaret Thornton, Rowan University

Once upon a time, a little-known agency within the U.S. Department of Education known as the Office of Special Education Programs was able to help students with disabilities whose access to schooling had been compromised. Agency officials would enforce the law and teach schools how to correct behaviors in an appropriate and supportive manner.

During the Obama Administration, for instance, when parents and advocates brought complaints that students with disabilities were being **improperly restrained** in their classrooms, agency staff worked with states to ensure that students with disabilities were receiving appropriate discipline, not abuse. But now that many of these officials have been fired, families are being left on their own to monitor rights violations of kids with disabilities, who comprise **nearly 15 percent** of all public education students.