

**THE KENTUCKY STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE
U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS**

PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
September 13, 2011**

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**Kentucky State Advisory Committee Issues Report on
Racial Disparities in School Discipline**

Washington DC - The Kentucky State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has issued its report on school discipline, *School Discipline in Kentucky—An examination of school discipline in the Jefferson County Public School district*. The study was undertaken by the Kentucky State Advisory Committee (SAC) in conjunction with studies of school discipline by other state advisory committees in Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The report is available on the Commission's website at www.usccr.gov.

The SAC's analysis of the disciplinary practices of the Jefferson County Public School System found African American students disproportionately affected by school discipline practices. The study by the Kentucky SAC further found that the system's policy of disciplinary exclusion, including out-of-school suspension, alternative school placement, and expulsion, contributes to a higher risk of school dropout; and dropping out of school has been shown to be a high risk-factor for future incarceration. This policy also has large, measureable costs for the greater community. In Kentucky, the annual cost to educate a child is about \$10,000; the annual cost to house an inmate in prison approaches \$30,000. In addition to the direct burden to the taxpayers, the incomplete education attained by students who leave school diminishes the productive capacity of society as a whole.

In the Jefferson County Public School District, African American students are just one-third of the total student body, yet they receive nearly two-thirds of all discipline referrals. As the Kentucky SAC notes in its report, although this disproportionate discipline rate by itself does not imply intentional discriminatory treatment on the part of the Jefferson County Schools, it nevertheless highlights the need for vigilance by the district in order to help these students succeed.

The Kentucky SAC noted in its report that multiple factors outside the control of school districts may play a role in a student's ability to function and succeed in school such as poverty, racially isolated schools, neighborhood environment, and home environment. These disadvantages disproportionately affect African American children in Jefferson County, making their prospects for academic success less likely than that for other children.

This report by the Kentucky SAC was conducted in collaboration with state advisory committees in other parts of the South since other similarly-sized school districts have similar racial disparities in school discipline and face similar educational challenges. The Kentucky SAC finds that "clearly something is terribly amiss in the nation's societal structure for this tragedy to so severely and disproportionately affect African American students throughout the country."

Dr. J. Blaine Hudson, Chairman of the Kentucky State Advisory Committee, stated, “With concerted efforts, schools have the opportunity to do better intervening and preventing many children who come from difficult, disadvantaged circumstances from dropping out of school and too often following an inevitable path to prison. It is not the job of the school district alone to do this, however. It is up to the general community to support the public school system in providing the necessary support services to allow children from disadvantaged circumstances to succeed in school.”

The Chairman of the Kentucky State Advisory Committee is Dr. J. Blaine Hudson, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Louisville. Other members of the Kentucky State Advisory Committee are: Rosa Alvarado (Shelbyville); Charles Badger (Berea); Juliet Banks (Bowling Green); Richard H. C. Clay (Louisville); Patrick Delahanty (Louisville); Betty Griffin (Frankfort); Vickie Maley (Paducah); Linda McCray (Bowling Green); Osi Onyekwuluje (Bowling Green); William Summers, V. (Louisville); Christopher Thacker (Winchester); Eugenia Toma (Lexington); and Jim Waters (Bowling Green).

The report is the work of the Kentucky State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. The State Advisory Committee reports to the Commission may rely on studies and data generated by third parties and are not subject to an independent review by Commission staff. The views expressed in reports are those of a majority of the State Advisory Committee members and do not necessarily represent the views of the Commission or its individual members, nor do they represent the policies of the U.S. government.

Congress has directed the United States Commission on Civil Rights to establish state advisory committees (SACs) in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to study issues and forward advisory reports to the Commission on matters within the agency’s jurisdiction that reflect the views of the majority of SAC members producing the report.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Martin Castro, and Commissioners Roberta Achtenberg, Todd Gaziano, Gail Heriot, Peter Kirsanow, David Kladney, Abigail Thernstrom, and Michael Yaki. The Commission’s website is <http://www.usccr.gov>.