

## WHAT IS THE WILLIAMS V. CALIFORNIA SETTLEMENT?

On May 17, 2000, civil rights organizations filed a lawsuit against the State of California because of the terrible conditions in many of its public schools (the *Williams v. California* case). Students, parents, and teachers argued that the State is failing to provide thousands of public school students, particularly those in low-income communities and communities of color, with the basic necessities required for an education.

They argued that the State's failure to provide these bare minimum necessities to all public school students in California violates the state's constitution, as well as state and federal requirements that students be given equal access to public education without regard to race, color, or national origin.

In August 2004, a settlement (legal agreement) was announced. The settlement requires that all students have books and that their schools be clean and safe. It takes steps to make sure that students have qualified teachers and that schools deliver these important resources to students. As a result of the settlement, a new California law was passed establishing the Uniform Complaint Process for reporting a school's or school district's failure to provide these resources. Cal. Educ. Code Section 35186.

## FAQS

### Q: WHO CAN FILE A COMPLAINT?

*A: Anyone! A student, parent, teacher, organization, or any other person concerned about a school.*

### Q: HOW WILL THE EDUCATION EQUITY PROJECT HELP ME?

*A: The Education Equity Project will help you file a complaint, follow up, and communicate with the district on your behalf.*

### Q: WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

*A: Simply contact the Education Equity Project at 415-543-9444 if your school is not providing you with sufficient books, safe school facilities, or qualified teachers.*

### Q: DO I HAVE TO PUT MY NAME ON MY COMPLAINT?

*A: No, the Education Equity Project will file for you whether or not you choose to identify yourself to your school or district.*

### Q: DO I NEED TO PAY FOR THESE LEGAL SERVICES?

*A: No, the Education Equity Project provides free legal services without charge.*

Lawyers' Committee for  
**CIVIL RIGHTS**  
of the San Francisco Bay Area



### Education Equity Project

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## Education Equity Project

### Implementing *Williams*

### STUDENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

**Books to Use in Class and to Take Home**



**Clean and Safe Schools**



**Qualified Teachers**

THIS BROCHURE EXPLAINS THE EDUCATION EQUITY PROJECT AND THE PROCESS TO ENFORCE THESE RIGHTS.



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Through the Education Equity Project, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area, the ACLU Foundation of Southern California, and participating law firms provide free legal assistance and possible representation in the filing of *Williams* complaints through the Uniform Complaint Process.

Anyone can file a complaint when a school fails to provide the following basic resources:

### BOOKS

Books or instructional materials in decent condition for each student to use in class - without having to share - and to take home;

### BUILDINGS

Safe school buildings and facilities that do not create any urgent threats to the health or safety of students or staff; and

### TEACHERS

A permanent teacher in every classroom who is qualified to teach the subject and the students in the class.

The *Williams* settlement applies to all school districts in the state of California. The Education Equity Project focuses on providing assistance with *Williams* complaints in four Bay Area school districts: San Francisco, Oakland, East Side Union, and West Contra Costa.

## PROJECT PROCEDURE

The Education Equity Project seeks to implement the *Williams* settlement by educating the public about the Uniform Complaint Process and providing quality legal services to ensure that students have sufficient textbooks and instructional materials, safe school facilities, and qualified teachers.

If you are a student or know of a student who does not have sufficient **books**, goes to school in unsafe facilities or **building(s)** or does not have a permanent or qualified **teacher**, contact the Education Equity Project at 415-543-9444. Education Equity Project staff will provide you with information and assistance.

If you agree to our representation, our volunteer attorneys will complete and file a *Williams* Uniform Complaint on your behalf and take steps to ensure the satisfactory resolution of your complaint. By working with the Education Equity Project, you will be able to file complaints with the assistance of committed attorneys.



## COMPLAINT TIMELINE

**Within 30 working days** after receiving the complaint, the school should resolve your complaint. (If the principal forwards your complaint to the district, the district should resolve your complaint within **40 working days**).



**Within 45 working days** the Education Equity Project should receive a response to your complaint from the principal or district official, and we will pass the response on to you.



**If you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint**, the Education Equity Project will assist you by further advocating on your behalf either before the school board (for textbook and teacher complaints) or the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (for facilities complaints).

If you wish to file a complaint yourself, please visit: [www.decentschools.org/settlement\\_action.php](http://www.decentschools.org/settlement_action.php)

