



## Civil Rights Department

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### SoCal Preschool to Pay \$200,000 After Retaliating Against Teacher's Aide for Speaking Spanish

*Civil Rights Department settlement to provide direct relief for educators at two separate locations and end school's "English-only" policy*

**SACRAMENTO** – The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today announced a settlement with Leaps and Bounds, a Southern California preschool, over claims that management retaliated against a teacher's aide for speaking Spanish at work, based on an alleged "English-only" policy at the school's Fontana and Escondido locations.

"Educators deserve to feel celebrated for their heritage, but instead Leaps and Bounds' alleged language ban fostered a hostile work culture that made staff feel unvalued and unwelcome," **said CRD Director Kevin Kish**. "By taking action to end this discriminatory policy, the school is showing it's possible to change course and build a culture of inclusion that benefits staff and the communities they serve. No matter the language you speak or where you come from, you are welcome in California."

#### Accused of Gossiping

In 2023, CRD began investigating Leaps and Bounds, after getting a complaint from a teacher's aide at the school's Fontana location who said she was forced to quit because of the retaliation she faced for speaking Spanish while helping a coworker. According to the complaint, the aide alleged that:

- Her coworker simply asked her for a pen when another coworker overheard their conversation and accused them of gossiping.
- Instead of thoroughly evaluating the situation, management allegedly required the teacher's aide to sign an agreement to never speak Spanish at work, unless necessary to communicate with a parent who didn't know English.
- After that, her hours were allegedly cut by nearly half and she felt discriminated against because of her cultural background.

#### "English-Only" Policies Can Violate State Law

State civil rights laws prohibit employers from discriminating against staff because of their national origin, race, or ethnicity. This includes limiting or banning the use of any language at work, unless justified by a business necessity like ensuring safe or efficient operations. Workers are also protected

against being fired, harassed, treated worse than coworkers with the same job, and more based on the language they speak. Examples of [this type of unlawful discrimination and other related protections](#) are available on CRD’s website.

### **Settlement Brings Direct Relief and Policy Change to Leaps and Bounds**

After investigating the complaint, CRD was able to bring the parties together through mediation and get the school to end its “English-only” policy. The settlement includes:

- An end to the preschool’s “English-only” policy.
- Training on California’s civil rights laws and how they protect staff.
- A settlement fund of \$200,000 for staff impacted by the unlawful policy, including \$35,000 for the teacher’s aide who filed the complaint with CRD.

### **About CRD’s Mediation Program**

CRD resolves hundreds of discrimination complaints a year through its free [dispute resolution program](#). An alternative for parties that don’t want to go to court, the program offers neutral, trauma-informed mediation for civil rights disputes. These mediations result in millions of dollars in direct relief to Californians and policy change that helps prevent against future discrimination.

If you or someone you know has been the victim of employment discrimination, CRD may be able to assist you through its [complaint process](#). The department also [provides general information and factsheets online](#) about civil rights protections for members of the public.

The settlement announced today was supported by Associate Chief Counsel Tony Lawson and Staff Counsel Miriam Rofael of CRD’s Legal Division and investigated by CRD’s Enforcement Division. It was mediated by Attorney Mediator Mary Leichliter.

A copy of the settlement is available [here](#).

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*The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) is the state agency charged with enforcing California’s civil rights laws. CRD’s mission is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state-funded programs and activities, and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit [calcivilrights.ca.gov](http://calcivilrights.ca.gov).*

