



Civil Rights Department

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Sonoma Valley Unified School District to Pay \$100K to Former Teacher After Complaint of Anti-Black Discrimination

Settlement requires school district to conduct thorough review of discrimination policies

SACRAMENTO – The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today announced a \$100,000 settlement involving the Sonoma Valley Unified School District over claims that the district unlawfully suspended a teacher and forced them to quit because of their race and a disability.

“We all deserve equal treatment on the job,” **said CRD Director Kevin Kish.** “No matter the circumstances, employers have to do their part to ensure work decisions are not colored by bias or discrimination. At the Civil Rights Department, we’ll keep doing our part to protect workers in our state.”

Unequal Treatment

In 2023, CRD began investigating the Sonoma Valley Unified School District after receiving a complaint from a former teacher at the district who said they were forced to quit because of their race and a disability. According to the complaint, the teacher was suspended after a work-related injury for using an outside school account to make purchases for student extracurricular activities even though another non-Black teacher who did the same thing was not. The teacher says the district ultimately determined there was no misconduct, but still decided to not renew their teaching contract and then hired someone else full time to do the extracurricular part of their job.

Settlement Brings Change

After conducting an initial investigation into the complaint, CRD helped the teacher and the school district voluntarily resolve the complaint through mediation. As a result of the settlement, the school district will:

- Conduct a thorough review of its anti-discrimination policies and procedures.
- Amend any policies as necessary to ensure compliance with state civil rights law.
- Report on its compliance with the terms of the agreement within 180 days.
- Pay \$100,000 to the teacher to resolve the alleged harms.

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 each year 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 mediated by Attorney IV Mediator Mary M. Leichter. It was investigated by Robin Blackwell with CRD's Enforcement Division.

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.

