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Comptroller's Office Studies Informal Removal of Students with Disabilities from Schools

The Tennessee's Comptroller's Office of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) has released a new report examining the practice of informally removing students with disabilities from schools in Tennessee.

The practice of informal removal restricts or removes a student's access to a free appropriate public education, a primary right under the federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

One example of informal removal would be a school administrator having a parent of a student with a disability pick up their child from school early after a behavioral incident without accurately reporting the suspension.

The Comptroller's Office found that neither the state nor school districts nor schools collect data on informal removals. This makes it difficult to understand the frequency of informal removals, the number of students involved, and the reasons behind each situation. Despite the lack of data, OREA generated several insights into the practice such as how and why informal removals occur, who is most likely to be informally removed, and the role of teachers.



Informal removals are a problem for multiple reasons. They violate the law under IDEA, result in learning loss for affected students, create an incentive for students to misbehave to get out of school, and can strain the ability of parents, especially single and low-income parents, to hold employment to financially support their families.

OREA's report recommends that districts and schools examine their policies, procedures, and practices for disciplining students with disabilities; and OREA recommends that districts and schools properly document all removals and disciplinary actions taken against students with disabilities.

To read the full report and Snapshot, please visit the Comptroller's website at: tncot.cc/orea.

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