

April 2020

NEWSLETTER

Disability Rights of West Virginia



Cameras in the Classroom

By Erin Snyder, DRWV Staff Attorney

Working with parents of special education students, I many times hear that they wish they could see what was happening inside of their child's classroom. This is particularly true for parents of nonverbal students. In response to some stories regarding abuse in the classroom, the West Virginia legislature passed a law allowing for cameras to be placed in self contained classrooms.

According to the new law parents, teachers, or school officials can request that a camera be placed in a self-contained classroom. Self- contained classrooms are classrooms designated for students with severe disabilities and often focus more on teaching life skills. The footage from the camera can then be requested in order to review and reported or suspected incidents which occur in the classroom. The cameras will then remain in the classroom for the remainder of the school year. Parents must then request that the cameras be in the classrooms each year.

This may be a good tool to help investigate reported abuse, but I would caution parents to consider all outcomes before doing so. Some disability advocates are concerned that the cameras could push abuse to occur outside the purview of a camera, and thus any other watchful eyes. Also, parents may be convinced to place their children in self contained classrooms for perceived safety, or the recording used as justification to expel students.

There are many things to take into consideration when requesting cameras in the classroom. If you would like additional information on requesting a camera be placed in your child's classroom, please contact Disability Rights. Additionally, Disability Rights of West Virginia has a sample request form parents may use. (see page 2)

Sample Request Form for requesting cameras in classroom.



Date

Your Name and Address

School District or Charter School's Name and Address

EXAMPLE:

Spring Branch Middle School – Special Education Department
2100 Shadowdale Drive
Charleston, WV 23456

Or, Email the principal at your school

Re: Parent request for cameras in the classroom.

To Whom This May Concern:

I am a parent of a student receiving special education services at _____ School. My child is _____ and in the _____ program.

This is my formal written request for equipment, including video cameras and audio recording devices, to be placed in the self-contained classrooms in each school in the district or each charter school campus in which my child receives special education services.

Sincerely,
