

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/u-s-justice-department-sues-meridian-ms-for-running-a-school-to-prison-pipeline>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

In August, I commented [here](#) about the U.S. Justice Departments Civil Rights Division putting school officials in Lauderdale County, Mississippi and the city of Meridian on notice that they were repeatedly and routinely violating the Fourth, Fifth and 14th Amendment rights of schoolchildren. At the time, Justice Department officials sent a findings letter the culmination of a lengthy investigation into allegations about school disciplinary policies in the jurisdiction outlining their concerns and asking local school and juvenile justice officials to negotiate remedies for the violations that the investigation confirmed.

After more than two months without movement toward meaningful negotiations by the Mississippi officials, the Justice Department [filed suit yesterday](#) against the city of Meridian, Lauderdale County, two Lauderdale County Youth Court judges, the Mississippi Department of Human Services, and DHSs Division of Youth Services for allegedly imposing harsh legal punishments for minor school disciplinary infractions. The suit says that Meridian schoolchildren have been systematically denied their due process rights and incarcerated. It goes on to allege that the practices disproportionately affect African-American children and children with disabilities.

A press release from the Civil Rights Division said:

The department is bringing this lawsuit to ensure that all children are treated fairly and receive the fullest protection of the law, said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. It is in all of our best interests to ensure that children are not incarcerated for alleged minor infractions, and that police and courts meet their obligations to uphold childrens constitutional rights.

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