BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE CONSOLIDATED MATTERS INVOLVING:

PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

and

WEST COVINA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NUMBER 2025090487

OAH CASE NUMBER 2025090130

ORDER FOLLOWING PREHEARING CONFERENCE FOR HEARING BY VIDEOCONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 25, 2025

On November 21, 2025, Administrative Law Judge Robert G. Martin, Office of Administrative Hearings, held a prehearing conference by videoconference. The Administrative Law Judge is called an ALJ. The Office of Administrative Hearings is called OAH. The prehearing conference is called a PHC.

Attorney Ryan Song appeared on behalf of Student. Attorney Rebecca Buchsbaum appeared on behalf of West Covina Unified School District. The PHC was recorded. Based upon discussion with the parties, the ALJ issues the following order:

HEARING DATES, TIMES, AND LOCATION

HEARING DATES AND TIMES

The hearing will take place on December 2, 3 and 4, 2025, continuing day to day thereafter at the discretion of the ALJ. The hearing shall begin at 9:30 AM each day and generally end at 3:30 PM, unless otherwise ordered. The parties anticipate it will take four to eight days to complete the hearing. If needed, additional hearing dates will be discussed with the ALJ during the hearing.

The parties must immediately give potential witnesses the hearing dates, and must subpoena witnesses, if necessary, so they are available to testify. Failing to properly notify or subpoena a witness is not good cause to delay the hearing.

HEARING LOCATION

OAH is authorized to conduct due process hearings by videoconference or telephone. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 3082, subd. (g).) OAH will conduct the due process hearing by videoconference using the Zoom application. Unless otherwise ordered, participants are required to appear by videoconference using computer or device with video capability and Zoom.

The parties shall immediately notify all potential witnesses of the hearing dates and shall subpoena witnesses, if necessary, to ensure that the witnesses will appear to testify. A party's failure to notify or subpoena a witness to testify will not be considered good cause to continue the hearing. Instructions for issuing and responding to subpoenas and optional forms for subpoenas can be found on the website at https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OAH/Case-Types/Special-Education/Forms/Subpoenas?search=special%20education%20subpoena.

ISSUES AND PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

In this Order, an individualized education program is called an IEP, and a free appropriate public education is called a FAPE. The issues at the due process hearing, and proposed resolutions, as alleged in the complaint and clarified by the parties and the ALJ during the PHC, are:

STUDENT'S ISSUES

1. Did West Covina's November 15, 2024 IEP deny Student a FAPE by:
    a. predetermining Student would be offered placement at Bliss Academy, thereby significantly impeding Parents' opportunity to participate in the decision-making process regarding the provision of a FAPE to Student;
    b. failing to offer Student placement in the least restrictive environment appropriate for Student;
    c. failing to offer Student appropriate behavioral supports, including a dedicated one-to-one aide;
    d. failing to offer Student an appropriate behavior intervention plan;
    e. failing to offer Student appropriate speech and language services; and
    f. failing to offer Student appropriate augmentative and alternative communication services?
2. Did West Covina's May 20, 2025 Amendment IEP deny Student a FAPE by:
    a. predetermining Student would be offered placement at Bliss Academy, thereby significantly impeding Parents' opportunity to participate in the decision-making process regarding the provision of a FAPE to Student;

b. failing to offer Student placement in the least restrictive environment appropriate for Student;

c. failing to offer Student appropriate behavioral supports, including a dedicated one-to-one aide;

d. failing to offer Student an appropriate behavior intervention plan;

e. failing to offer Student appropriate speech and language services; and

f. failing to offer Student appropriate augmentative and alternative communication services?

3. Did West Covina's August 29, 2025 Amendment IEP deny Student a FAPE through the filing of Student's due process hearing request on September 12, 2025, by:

a. predetermining Student would be offered placement at Bliss Academy, thereby significantly impeding Parents' opportunity to participate in the decision-making process regarding the provision of a FAPE to Student;

b. failing to offer Student placement in the least restrictive environment appropriate for Student;

c. failing to offer Student appropriate behavioral supports, including a dedicated one-to-one aide;

d. failing to offer Student an appropriate behavior intervention plan;

e. failing to offer Student appropriate speech and language services; and

f. failing to offer Student appropriate augmentative and alternative communication services?

WEST COVINA'S ISSUE

Did West Covina's May 20, 2025, IEP offer Student a FAPE in the least restrictive environment appropriate for Student?

A party believing that an issue has been misstated or improperly omitted shall promptly file a notice in writing, before the first day of hearing, stating its concern and referring to supporting portions of the complaint.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Student's requested resolutions include a decision finding Student the prevailing party on all of Student's issues, and an order directing West Covina to offer Student continued placement in a West Covina-operated autism special day class with mainstreaming opportunities, with a one-to-one aide and board certified behavior analyst supervision from a nonpublic agency, sensory supports, counseling, increased behavior services, and monthly parent training in addressing Student's speech and language needs. Student also requested the order direct West Covina to conduct a new functional behavioral assessment and develop a new behavior intervention plan for Student, and to fund compensatory education including specialized academic instruction, speech-language therapy, expanded speech services, augmentative alternative communication devices, counseling, educationally related social-emotional services, and social work services. Student also requested the order direct West Covina to implement a formalized progress monitoring plan using standardized assessment tools and consistent data.

West Covina requests an order that its May 20, 2025, IEP offer Student a FAPE in the least restrictive environment appropriate for Student.

West Covina filed its response to Student's complaint on September 29, 2025. (*M.C. v. Antelope Valley Union High School Dist.* (9th Cir. 2017) 858 F.3d 1189, 1199-1200.)

EXHIBITS

The parties shall serve their exhibits on each other in compliance with Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7). The parties shall upload their exhibits electronically according to the Order Setting Procedures for Filing Exhibits Electronically. Timely uploading electronic hearing exhibits five business days before the first day of hearing constitutes that party's timely exchange of evidence in compliance with Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7). If further assistance is needed, please contact OAH at OAHSEOps@dgs.ca.gov.

Except for good cause shown, or unless used solely for rebuttal or impeachment, any exhibit not timely exchanged as required by Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7) shall not be admitted into evidence at the hearing unless the ALJ rules that it is admissible.

IDENTIFYING EXHIBITS AND PAGE NUMBERS

Each exhibit must be identified by a letter and number. Student must use the letter S before the number to identify Student's exhibits. West Covina must use the letter D, for district, before the number to identify West Covina's exhibits. For example, S-1 means Student's exhibit 1 and D-1 means West Covina's exhibit 1. A cover sheet with this identifying letter and number should be the first page of each exhibit. The electronic evidence program will automatically number the exhibits and additional page numbering or bates stamping should not be added.

CONTENT

Each exhibit must consist of one document. Separate documents may not be combined into one exhibit. Emails or letters may be consolidated into one exhibit if they are part of a single chain of messages. Exhibits should be in chronological order.

Parties should include resumes or curriculum vitae for each witness expected to testify as an expert.

West Covina's exhibits must include a copy of the school calendar for the 2024-2025, and 2025-2026 school years.

Electronic copies of exhibits filed with OAH shall be filed by 5:00 PM at least five business days before the first day of hearing. Please refer to the General Order OAH issued with the Scheduling Order that contains the Order Setting Procedures for Filing Exhibits Electronically. It includes instructions for how to file exhibits electronically. Beginning three business days before the hearing, the electronic evidence system will not allow parties to upload exhibits unless permitted by the ALJ during the hearing at the ALJ's discretion.

WITNESSES

The parties shall serve their list of witnesses on each other in compliance with Education Code section 56505. No party shall be permitted to call any witnesses not timely disclosed except for good cause shown, supported by written declaration under penalty of perjury, and at the discretion of the ALJ.

Parties are responsible for ensuring that all participants are familiar with and follow the Instructions for Joining the Online Due Process Hearing provided with this Order. Participants who have not previously used the Zoom application, may find

informative instructions by visiting Getting Started with Zoom at https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697.

The parties are responsible for ensuring that witnesses join the virtual hearing room at the designated date and time to testify. Witnesses are required to join the due process hearing by computer and appear by videoconference unless they do not have the necessary computer equipment. If a witness does not have the necessary equipment, the ALJ may permit the witnesses to appear by audio only or by telephone. "Audio only" means using a computer without video.

The parties are responsible for producing their own witnesses unless otherwise ordered by the ALJ. Parties shall make witnesses under their control reasonably available. The parties must schedule their witnesses to avoid delays in the hearing and to minimize or eliminate the need to call witnesses out of order.

West Covina has agreed to make its current employees available as witnesses without the need for subpoenas. West Covina is ordered to inform Student at or before the meet and confer of the attorneys in this matter if any witness identified by Student as a West Covina employee is not currently employed by West Covina and must be subpoenaed to appear at the hearing. West Covina may either agree to accept service of a subpoena for such witnesses, or provide Student with the witness' most recent contact information.

Any contact information provided shall be used for the limited purpose of issuing subpoenas or for contacting a witness to attend the hearing. No contact information shall be disclosed to any other person.

The ALJ has discretion to limit the number of witnesses, and the time allowed for testimony. Education Code, section 56505.1, subdivision (h), empowers the ALJ to set a

reasonable limit on the length of the hearing after consideration of four factors. The first two factors are the issues to be heard and the complexity of facts to be proven. The second two factors are the ability of the parties or their representatives to present their respective cases and the parties' estimates of the time needed to present their cases.

MEET AND CONFER

The parties are encouraged to review and shorten their witness and exhibit lists before the hearing. Evidence may be excluded if it is repetitive, cumulative, or insufficiently probative to justify the time it would take to hear such evidence.

The parties are ordered to meet and confer on November 25, 2025 at 4:00 PM to discuss scheduling witnesses and how much time each witness will take to testify. Student's attorney shall place the call to West Covina's attorney to start the meet and confer. The parties shall discuss any issues related to counsel and witnesses appearing by videoconference for hearing, electronically viewing exhibits during the hearing, and subpoenas, if any. The parties should attempt to identify any duplicate exhibits in their hearing exhibits and decide which of the duplicates both sides will use at hearing. The parties shall discuss whether they can produce a written stipulation as to pertinent facts, contentions, resolutions and the authenticity and admissibility of documents to shorten the length of time needed for the hearing.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

Both parties have an ongoing obligation to ensure that OAH has current information on the Participant Information Form filed with OAH, and shall file an updated form as necessary. The Participant Information Form is not served upon the opposing party. The ongoing obligation to ensure that the Participant Information Form filed with OAH is current does not change the parties' statutory obligation to timely

disclose their witnesses to the other party(s) at least five business days prior to hearing. The parties must file an updated Participant Information Form to inform OAH of any changes, additions, or deletions, including the required information no later than 5:00 PM at least two business days before the first day of hearing.

EVIDENCE PRESENTATION

In an administrative proceeding, the burden of proof is ordinarily on the party requesting the hearing. (*Schaffer v. Weast* (2005) 546 U.S. 49, 62.) In these consolidated cases, Student bears the burden of proof on Student's issues, and West Covina bears the burden of proof on its issue. Student's case has been designated as primary. Student's case-in-chief shall be presented first, followed by West Covina's, unless otherwise ordered or agreed.

WITNESS SCHEDULE

The parties must provide a joint proposed witness schedule to the ALJ on the first day of hearing. The list should include the first and last name of the witness, the witness' title, which party is calling the witness to testify, and include dates and time estimates of each witness's expected testimony. In the event an agreement cannot be reached, each party shall prepare a separate written schedule. The parties must have witnesses available in case there is no agreement.

At the beginning of the hearing, the ALJ and the parties will discuss the length of time anticipated for each witness and scheduling issues for individual witnesses. The ALJ will finalize the witness schedule. Parties must be prepared at the end of each day to discuss the witnesses to be presented the next day and the estimated time for the testimony of each witness.

SCOPE OF WITNESS EXAMINATION

Each witness will be called to testify only once, except for rebuttal purposes. All parties must examine a witness on all issues when the witness is first called to testify. Requiring a witness to appear only once takes priority over the order in which parties present their case-in-chief.

AUDIO ONLY OR TELEPHONIC TESTIMONY

Whether a witness may appear by audio only or telephone instead of videoconference is a matter within the discretion of the ALJ. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 3082, subd. (g).) Any party seeking to present a witness by audio only or telephone shall request permission to do so before the hearing. Any party seeking to present a witness who cannot access exhibits electronically must inform the ALJ at the beginning of the hearing.

ELECTRONIC RECORDINGS

AUDIO RECORDING

The attorneys for both parties requested permission to make an audio recording of the hearing for their personal note taking purposes. Permission to make an audio recording is subject to the ALJ's discretion and based upon the following conditions:

1. The OAH recording is the only official recording.
2. The parties shall turn their recording device on and off at the same time that the ALJ is on and off the record to avoid recording conversations while off the record.

3. Operation of the party's recording mechanism will not be allowed to delay the hearing.
4. A party's recording may not be given, provided, or played to a witness, or potential witness.
5. The recording is subject to the same confidentiality as the due process hearing.
6. Participants shall not take screenshots of the videoconference nor share or publish any portion of the videoconference or audio recording.

The parties' requests to make an audio recording of the hearing are granted. Each party's attorney may make an audio recording of the hearing for personal note-taking purposes, subject to the conditions above and any other orders made at the hearing. The parties are prohibited from using artificial intelligence to either record the hearing or transcribe the recording.

VIDEO RECORDING

No party, witness, or anyone else may videorecord any part of the proceedings or stream live through any means.

RECORDINGS AS EXHIBITS

Recordings may not be uploaded electronically without the ALJ's permission. The ALJ has discretion to admit or exclude evidence in the form of a recording. Any request to submit a recording shall be considered at the time of hearing.

The ALJ may grant or deny the request or grant the request subject to certain conditions. The party offering the recording must establish that all or a part of the recording is relevant. The ALJ may request a transcript of the portion of the recording requested or have the party offering the recording to provide an exact identifiable

portion of the recording the party seeks to admit. The identities of any person speaking on the portion of the tape being introduced must be established. An ALJ may allow the opposing party to offer additional portions of a recording to establish the context, or to rebut, the recording.

COMPENSATORY EDUCATION OR REIMBURSEMENT

Any party seeking reimbursement for expenditures shall present admissible evidence of these expenditures, or a stipulation to the amount of the expenditures. A party seeking compensatory education should provide evidence regarding the type, amount, duration, and need for any requested compensatory education. Documents offered as evidence to support a request for reimbursement must be separated by vendor.

MOTIONS

No prehearing motions are pending. West Covina indicated it was contemplating a prehearing motion objecting to the statement of Student's Issues 2. and 3. Any motion that was not filed three business days before the PHC must be supported by a declaration under penalty of perjury establishing good cause why the motion was not timely filed.

STIPULATIONS

Stipulations to pertinent facts, contentions, resolutions and authenticity and admissibility of documents are encouraged. Any proposed stipulation shall be submitted to the assigned ALJ in writing prior to the start of the hearing.

CONDUCT OF PARTICIPANTS AND HEARING ROOM DECORUM

All participants in the videoconference hearing should observe the same decorum as in an in-person due process hearing. Participants must conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner. Cellular phones, telephones and computer notifications must be shut off or set to silent during the hearing unless the ALJ grants permission otherwise. Participants should appear from a private location, unless otherwise ordered. Participants should make reasonable efforts to minimize background noise and maintain adequate room lighting. Use of virtual background images are at the discretion of the ALJ. Witnesses are prohibited from reading exhibits, documents, notes, text messages, telephones or computers while testifying, unless permitted to do so by the ALJ. The parties, their representatives and witnesses are prohibited from passing notes to, exchanging electronic messages with, or signaling the witness in any way while the witness is testifying.

LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Neither party requested a language interpreter or accommodation.

A party or participant in this case, such as a witness, requiring reasonable accommodation to participate in a mediation or hearing may contact OAH at (916) 263-0880, or send an email to OAHADA@dgs.ca.gov as soon as the need is known. The email should have "Request for Accommodation" in the Subject Line. Additional information concerning requests for reasonable accommodation is available on OAH's website at: https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OAH/Services/Page-Content/Office-of-Administrative-Hearings-Services-List-Folder/Request-Reasonable-Accommodations-for-OAH-Legal-Proceedings. 0880, or send an email to OAHADA@dgs.ca.gov as soon as the need is known. The e-mail should have "Request for Accommodation" in the

Subject Line. Additional information concerning requests for a reasonable accommodation is available on OAH's website at: https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OAH/Services/Page-Content/Office-of-Administrative-Hearings-Services-List-Folder/Request-Reasonable-Accommodations-for-OAH-Legal-Proceedings.

HEARING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

The hearing is open to the public. Special education hearings are closed to the public unless a student requests the hearing to be open to the public.

An ALJ may restrict attendance because of the physical limitations of the hearing facility or take other action to promote due process or the orderly conduct of the hearing. (Cal. Code Regs., Tit. 1, § 1030.) Government Code, section 11425.20 empowers the ALJ to order an open hearing to be closed or make other protective orders to the extent necessary or proper to ensure a fair hearing in the circumstances of the case.

SETTLEMENT

The parties are encouraged to continue working together to reach an agreement before the due process hearing. The parties shall inform OAH in writing immediately if they reach a settlement or otherwise resolve the dispute before the scheduled hearing. In addition, if a settlement is reached within five days of the scheduled start of the due process hearing, the parties shall also inform OAH of the settlement by telephone at (916) 263-0880. At the same time, the parties should send the signature page of the signed agreement or a letter withdrawing the case to OAH by visiting OAH Secure e-file at https://www.applications.dgs.ca.gov/oah/oahsftweb.

If a full and final written settlement agreement is reached after 4:00 PM the day prior to hearing, the parties shall leave a voicemail message regarding the settlement at (916) 274-6035. The parties should also leave contact information such as cellular phone numbers of each party or counsel for each party.

Dates for hearing will not be cancelled until the letter of withdrawal or signature page of the signed agreement has been received and processed by OAH. If an agreement in principle is reached, the parties should plan to attend the scheduled hearing unless different arrangements have been agreed upon by the assigned ALJ. The assigned ALJ will check for messages before the hearing.

If the matter settles subject to board approval, in addition to a signed copy of the signature page of the settlement agreement, the parties shall provide the date of the next board meeting. The hearing dates will not be cancelled without this information.

FAILURE TO COMPLY

The failure to comply with this Order may result in the exclusion of evidence or other sanctions.

ORDER INCLUDES ALL RULINGS

This Order includes all rulings made at the prehearing conference. Any discussion and conversation not referenced in this Order is not binding on the ALJ conducting the hearing and may not be relied upon by the parties. The parties are advised that, at hearing, the ALJ conducting the hearing has discretion to reconsider any part of this Order.

IT IS SO ORDERED.



Robert G. Martin
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings