BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of: PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT, v. BLACK OAK MINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT AND EL DORADO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION.	OAH Case No. 2017120779 ORDER OF DETERMINATION OF SUFFICIENCY OF DUE PROCESS COMPLAINT

On December 18, 2017, Student filed a Due Process Hearing Request[1] (complaint) with the Office of Administrative Hearings naming Black Oak Mine Unified School District and El Dorado County Office of Education. On January 11, 2018, El Dorado filed a Notice of Insufficiency as to Student's complaint.

APPLICABLE LAW

The named parties to a due process hearing request have the right to challenge the sufficiency of the complaint. (20 U.S.C. § 1415(b) & (c).) The party filing the complaint is not entitled to a hearing unless the complaint meets the requirements of title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A).

The complaint is deemed sufficient unless a party notifies the Office of Administrative Hearings and the other party in writing within 15 days of receiving the complaint that the party believes the complaint has not met the notice requirements. (20 U.S.C. § 1415(c)(2)(C); Ed. Code, § 56502, subd. (d)(1).)

A complaint is sufficient if it contains: (1) a description of the nature of the problem of the child relating to the proposed initiation or change concerning the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child; (2) facts relating to the problem; and (3) a proposed resolution of the problem to the extent known and available to the party at the time. (20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii)(III) & (IV).) These requirements prevent vague and confusing complaints, and promote fairness by providing the named parties with sufficient information

[1] A request for a due process hearing under Education Code section 56502 is the due process complaint notice required under title 20 U.S.C. section 1415(b)(7)(A).

to know how to prepare for the hearing and how to participate in resolution sessions and mediation. (See H.R.Rep. No. 108-77, 1st Sess. (2003), p. 115; Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, 1st Sess. (2003), pp. 34-35.)

The complaint provides enough information when it provides "an awareness and understanding of the issues forming the basis of the complaint." (Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, *supra*, at p. 34.) The pleading requirements should be liberally construed in light of the broad remedial purposes of the IDEA and the relative informality of the due process hearings it authorizes. (*Alexandra R. ex rel. Burke v. Brookline School Dist.* (D.N.H., Sept. 10, 2009, CIV. 06-CV-0215-JL) 2009 WL 2957991[nonpub. opn.]; *Escambia County Bd. of Educ. v. Benton* (S.D. Ala. 2005) 406 F.Supp.2d 1248, 1259-1260; *Sammons v. Polk County School Bd.* (M.D. Fla., Oct. 28, 2005, 8:04CV2657T24EAJ) 2005 WL 2850076 [nonpub. opn.]; but cf. *M.S.-G v. Lenape Regional High School Dist. Bd. of Educ.* (3d Cir. 2009) 306 Fed.Appx. 772, 775 [nonpub. opn.].) Whether the complaint is sufficient is a matter within the sound discretion of the Administrative Law Judge. (*Assistance to States for the Educ. of Children with Disabilities & Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities* (Aug. 14, 2006) 71 FR 46,540-46541, 46699.)

DISCUSSION

Student's complaint was filed on December 18, 2017. On December 20, 2017, Student submitted a proof of service to OAH that indicated Student served the complaint on El Dorado on December 18, 2017. El Dorado indicates in its NOI that it received Student's complaint on December 18, 2017. El Dorado's NOI was dated, filed with OAH, and served on January 11, 2018, which is more than 15 days after it received Student's complaint. El Dorado alleges that, although it received Student's complaint on December 18, 2017, it did not receive a copy of the proof of service with the complaint.

El Dorado further alleges that OAH did not accept Student's complaint as properly filed until December 28, 2017. El Dorado does not provide any argument or authority as to this assertion. OAH sent a scheduling order to all parties on December 28, 2017, however the date OAH sends a scheduling order does not determine the date OAH received the complaint. Here, OAH received Student's complaint on December 18, 2017, and received a proof of service on December 20, 2017, indicating El Dorado was served on December 18, 2017.

El Dorado's NOI was not filed within the statutorily required timeline. Therefore, Student's complaint is deemed sufficient.

ORDER

1. The complaint is deemed sufficient under title 20 United States Code section 1415(c)(2)(C) and Education Code section 56502, subdivision (d)(1).

2. All prehearing conference and hearing dates in this matter are confirmed.

DATE: January 12, 2018

DocuSigned by:
Linda Johnson
5092A92341544B9...

LINDA JOHNSON
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings