BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE MATTER OF:

PARENTS ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

DAVIS JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

AND WOODLAND JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NUMBER 2025101199

ORDER DETERMINING DUE PROCESS COMPLAINT INSUFFICIENT AS TO WOODLAND JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

NOVEMBER 14, 2025

On October 30, 2025, Parents on behalf of Student filed a due process hearing request, called a complaint, with the Office of Administrative Hearings, referred to as OAH, naming Davis Joint Unified School District, called Davis Joint Unified, and Woodland Joint Unified School District, called Woodland Joint Unified. On November 13, 2025, Woodland Joint Unified filed a notice of insufficiency as to the complaint.

The IDEA affords parents and local educational agencies the procedural protection of an impartial due process hearing with respect to any matter relating to the identification, assessment, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a FAPE to the child. (20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(6) & (f); 34 C.F.R. § 300.511; Ed. Code, §§ 56501, 56502, and 56505; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 3082.) Special education due process hearing procedures extend to the parent or guardian, to the student in certain circumstances, and to "the public agency involved in any decisions regarding a pupil." (Ed. Code, § 56502, subd. (a).)

A "public agency" is defined as "a school district, county office of education, special education local plan area, a nonprofit public charter school that is not otherwise included as a local educational agency, or any other public agency under the auspices of the state or any political subdivisions of the state providing special education or related services to individuals with exceptional needs." (Ed. Code, §§ 56500 and 56028.5.) California law places the primary responsibility for providing special education to eligible children on the local educational agency, usually the school district in which the parents of the child reside. (See, e.g., Ed. Code, §§ 48200, 56300, 56340 [describing local educational agency responsibilities], and 56344, subd. (c).) A local educational agency may contract with another public agency to provide special education and related services to an individual with exceptional needs. (Ed. Code, § 56369.)

The named parties have the right to challenge the complaint's sufficiency. (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).

A complaint is sufficient if it: (1) describes the problem relating to the proposed change regarding the student's identification, evaluation, or educational placement, or providing the student a free appropriate public education, called FAPE; (2) includes facts about the problem; and (3) includes a proposed resolution 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 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 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, called 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 295799 [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.)

STUDENT'S COMPLAINT FAILS TO STATE SUFFICIENT FACTS RELATING TO THE IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT, OR EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT OF STUDENT, OR THE PROVISION OF A FAPE AS TO WOODLAND JOINT UNIFIED

Student's complaint alleges she was initially found eligible for special education by Woodland Joint Unified when Student was in preschool. The complaint further alleges that Student enrolled in Davis Joint Unified for the 2020-2021 school year pursuant to an interdistrict transfer and has been continually enrolled there through the 2024-2025 school year. Student alleges Davis Joint Unified notified Parent on August 13, 2025, that it had revoked the interdistrict transfer and disenrolled Student.

Student's complaint alleges one issue as to Woodland Joint Unified. Issue 1 seeks a determination from OAH about whether Davis Joint Unified or Woodland Joint Unified is responsible for offering Student a FAPE. Woodland Joint Unified argues the complaint is insufficiently pled because it fails to allege specific facts to put it on notice as to the allegations against it. Specifically, Woodland Joint Unified contends the complaint does not state facts describing any proposal or refusal by Woodland Joint Unified to initiate or change Student's identification, evaluation, educational placement or the provision of FAPE during the period at issue.

Other than conducting Student's initial special education assessment when Student was in preschool, the complaint does not allege facts demonstrating that Woodland Joint Unified was involved in any decision regarding Student's educational program after Student enrolled in Davis Joint Unified, if it developed the challenged IEPs, or the date or school years of the IEPs at issue. The complaint is devoid of facts suggesting Woodland Joint Unified was responsible for Student's educational program

and related services during the 2023-2024 school year through the date the complaint was filed. Therefore, Issue 1 lacks sufficient facts about the problem to permit Woodland Joint Unified to respond and participate in a resolution session and mediation and prepare for hearing. Issue 1 is insufficiently pled.

NO ADVISORY OPINIONS

Special education due process hearings are limited to an examination of the time frame pleaded in the complaint and as established by the evidence at the hearing and expressly do not include declaratory decisions about how the IDEA would apply hypothetically. (Gov. Code, § 11465.10-11465.60; Cal. Code Regs, tit. 5, § 3089; see also *Princeton University v. Schmid* (1982) 455 U.S. 100, 102 [102 S.Ct. 867, 70 L. Ed. 2d 855] ["courts do not sit to decide hypothetical issues or to give advisory opinions"]; *Stonehouse Homes v. City of Sierra Madre* (2008) 167 Cal.App.4th 531, 539-542 [court deemed the matter not ripe for adjudication because it was asked to speculate on hypothetical situations and there was no showing of imminent and significant hardship].)

Issue 1 suggests that Woodland Joint Unified was responsible for providing Student a FAPE during the period at issue because it was Student's district of residence. However, Issue 1 also states that Student will ask Woodland Joint Unified for an IEP in the event OAH determines Woodland Joint Unified "is the responsible party going forward." Student's Issue 1 seeks a declaratory judgment from OAH regarding whether Woodland Joint Unified is prospectively responsible for providing Student a FAPE. This issue is not ripe for adjudication. OAH does not have jurisdiction to decide hypothetical issues, or to give advisory opinions. For this additional reason, Issue 1 is insufficiently pled.

ORDER

1. Student's complaint is insufficiently pled as to Woodland Joint Unified under title 20 United States Code section 1415(c)(2)(D).
2. Student shall be permitted to file an amended complaint under title 20 United States Code section 1415(c)(2)(E)(i)(II). The amended complaint shall comply with the requirements of title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii), and shall be filed not later than 14 days from the date of this Order. The filing of an amended complaint will restart the applicable timelines for a due process hearing.
3. If Student fails to file a timely amended complaint, the complaint will be dismissed as to Woodland Joint Unified and the matter shall proceed as currently scheduled only as to Davis Joint Unified.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Jennifer Kelly

Jennifer Kelly
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings