BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE MATTER OF:

PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

BELLFLOWER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NUMBER 2019110836

ORDER FOLLOWING PREHEARING CONFERENCE GRANTING REQUEST FOR CONTINUANCE AND SETTING AND SETTING MEDIATION, PREHEARING CONFERENCE AND DUE PROCESS HEARING DATES

MARCH 16, 2020

On March 16, 2020, Administrative Law Judge Deborah Myers-Cregar, Office of Administrative Hearings held a telephonic prehearing conference. The Administrative Law Judge will be referred to as an ALJ. The prehearing conference will be referred to as a PHC. Marcia P. Brady, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of Bellflower Unified School District. David M. Grey, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of Student. The PHC was recorded. Based upon discussion with the parties, the ALJ issues the following order:

HEARING DATES, TIMES, AND LOCATION

On March 12, 2020, the parties jointly moved to continue the prehearing conference and due process hearing based first on the parties requesting a mediation to assist in settling the case; and second, based on a scheduling conflict with another matter which is likely to proceed to a hearing next week, OAH case number 2019060636. This is the second request for a continuance. The motion was timely filed three days prior to the prehearing conference.

Additionally, the current COVID-19 pandemic health guidelines dictate specific measures of social distancing, and local education agencies have ordered public facility closures and the elimination of non-essential job functions for the protection of public health. This has a direct impact on the availability of facilities, staff, and witnesses for mediation and due process hearings.

A due process hearing must be conducted and a decision rendered within 45 days of receipt of the due process notice unless an extension is granted for good cause. (34 C.F.R. § 300.515(a) & (c) (2006); Ed. Code, §§ 56502, subd. (f), 56505, subd. (f)(3); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 1, § 1020.) As a result, continuances are disfavored. Good cause may include the unavailability of a party, counsel, or an essential witness due to death, illness or other excusable circumstances; substitution of an attorney when the substitution is required in the interests of justice; a party's excused inability to obtain essential testimony or other material evidence despite diligent efforts; or another significant, unanticipated change in the status of the case as a result of which the case is not ready for hearing. (Ed. Code, § 56505, subd. (f)(3); Cal. Rules of Court, rule 3.1332(c).) OAH considers all relevant facts and circumstances, including the proximity of the hearing date; previous continuances or delays; the length of continuance requested; the availability of other means to address the problem giving rise to the request; prejudice

to a party or witness as a result of a continuance; the impact of granting a continuance on other pending hearings; whether trial counsel is engaged in another trial; whether the parties have stipulated to a continuance; whether the interests of justice are served by the continuance or imposing conditions on the continuance; and any other relevant fact or circumstance. (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 3.1332(d).)

The request for continuance is granted for good cause. All previously scheduled dates are vacated. The case shall proceed as follows:

Mediation: April 7, 2020 at 9:30 AM.

Mediation Location: 16703 South Clark Avenue, Bellflower, CA 90706

OAH may order a conversion to a telephonic mediation. THE PARTIES SHALL CONTACT OAH if the location is not available due to school closure or submit the attached Coronavirus, COVID-19, certification form, by noon on April 2, 2020. The parties shall review the OAH website for COVID-19 guidance for mediation and hearing date changes. https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OAH/Case-Types/Special-Education/Resources/SE-Coronavirus-Update#@ViewBag.JumpTo

Prehearing Conference: May 4, 2020 at 1:00 PM

All other prehearing matters shall be addressed at the May 4, 2020 prehearing conference. All prehearing motions must be filed three business days before the PHC.

Due Process Hearing: May 19, 2020 through May 21, 2020

The hearing shall begin at 9:30 AM on the first day of the hearing and at 9:00 AM on all other days, unless otherwise ordered. The hearing shall continue day to day at the discretion of the ALJ.

Hearing Location: Bellflower Unified School District 16703 South Clark Avenue, Bellflower, CA 90706

The ALJ may order a continuance, or a conversion to a telephonic hearing.

District facilities shall fully comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794 et seq.), the Unruh Civil Rights Act (Civ. Code, § 51 et seq.), and all laws governing accessibility of government facilities to persons with disabilities. Districts are required to file written certification with OAH that the facilities District provides comply with these laws. District shall file the required certification with 10 days of this order and provide facilities that comply with these laws.

The parties shall immediately notify all potential witnesses of the hearing dates, and shall subpoena witnesses if necessary, to ensure that the witnesses will be available to testify. A witness will not be regarded as unavailable for purposes of showing "good cause" to continue the hearing if the witness is not properly notified of the hearing date or properly subpoenaed.

SETTLEMENT

The parties shall immediately inform OAH in writing if they reach a settlement or otherwise resolve the dispute before the scheduled hearing. If the parties reach a settlement 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.

If a full and final written settlement agreement is reached after 5:00 PM the day before the 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. At the same time, the parties

should send the signature page of the signed agreement or a letter withdrawing the case to OAH at https://www.applications.dgs.ca.gov/oah/oahsftweb.

Dates for hearing will not be cancelled until the letter of withdrawal or signature page of the signed agreement has been received 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

Failure to comply with this order may result in the exclusion of evidence or other sanctions.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

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Deborah Myers-Cregar
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Deborah Myers-Cregar
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings