BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of: SAN DIEGUITO UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, v. PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT.	OAH CASE NO. 2013080189 ORDER OF DETERMINATION OF SUFFICIENCY OF DUE PROCESS COMPLAINT

On August 5, 2013, the San Dieguito Union High School District (District) filed with the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) a Due Process Hearing Request[1] (complaint) naming Parent on behalf of Student (Student)as respondent. The complaint was re-served on Student pursuant to an OAH order dated August 26, 2013. The complaint alleges two issues. The first issue is whether the District appropriately assessed Student in the areas of speech and language and physical therapy prior to July 2013. In the second issue, the District alleges that its offer of placement and services at the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meetings would provide Student with a free appropriate public education.

On September 11, 2013, Student filed a Notice of Insufficiency (NOI) as to the District's complaint.

APPLICABLE LAW

The named parties to a due process hearing request have the right to challenge the sufficiency of the complaint.[2] 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 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 (FAPE) to the child; (2) facts relating to the problem; and (3) a proposed

[1] A request for a due process hearing under Education Code section 56502 is the due process complaint notice required under Title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A).

[2] 20 U.S.C. § 1415(b) & (c).

resolution of the problem to the extent known and available to the party at the time.[3] 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.[4]

The complaint provides enough information when it provides "an awareness and understanding of the issues forming the basis of the complaint."[5] 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.[6] Whether the complaint is sufficient is a matter within the sound discretion of the Administrative Law Judge.[7]

DISCUSSION

Student contends that the complaint is confusing and does not describe parental participation in the IEP process. Student also contends that the facts alleged in the complaint are false, which amounts to Student's defense to the complaint. In the NOI, Student also gives a detailed factual defense to the complaint, which demonstrates that the complaint is not confusing. The complaint lays out in specific language the facts underlining the District's issues.

The facts alleged in District's complaint are sufficient to put the Student on notice of the issues forming the basis of the complaint. The District's complaint identifies the issues and adequate related facts about the problem to permit Student to respond to the complaint and participate in mediation.

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[3] 20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii)(III) & (IV).

[4] See, H.R.Rep. No. 108-77, 1st Sess. (2003), p. 115; Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, 1st Sess. (2003), pp. 34-35.

[5] Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, *supra*, at p. 34.

[6] *Alexandra R. v. Brookline School Dist*. (D.N.H., Sept. 10, 2009, No. 06-cv-0215-JL) 2009 WL 2957991 at p.3 [nonpub. opn.]; *Escambia County Board 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, No. 8:04CV2657T24EAJ) 2005 WL 2850076 at p. 3[nonpub. opn.] ; but cf. *M.S.-G. v. Lenape Regional High School Dist.* (3d Cir. 2009) 306 Fed.Appx. 772, at p. 3[nonpub. opn.].

[7] Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children With Disabilities, 71 Fed.Reg. 46540-46541, 46699 (Aug. 14, 2006).

Therefore, District's complaint is sufficient.

ORDER

1. The complaint is sufficient under Title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii).

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

Dated: September 11, 2013

/s/

ROBERT HELFAND
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings