

BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of:

PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY OFFICE OF
EDUCATION AND RIVERSIDE COUNTY
PROBATION DEPARTMENT.

OAH Case No. 2014041107

ORDER OF DETERMINATION OF
SUFFICIENCY OF DUE PROCESS
COMPLAINT

On April 22, 2014, Student, through his legal counsel, filed a Due Process Hearing Request¹ (complaint) with the Office of Administrative Hearings naming the Riverside County Office of Education and Riverside County Probation Department. On May 5, 2014, Probation, through its legal counsel, timely filed a Notice of Insufficiency (NOI) 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.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 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

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).

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

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 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 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’s complaint contains three issues for hearing, with only Issue 2 being pled against Probation, which alleges that Probation failed to permit Student’s assessors access into Juvenile Hall so they may observe Student. In Issue 2, Student alleges sufficient facts to put Probation on notice of when the purported refusal to allow the private assessors access into Juvenile Hall was denied. Therefore, Student alleged sufficient facts to put Probation on notice as to this issue for hearing.⁸

Student’s proposed resolutions only request relief against County and not against Probation. A complaint is required to include proposed resolutions to the problem, to the extent known and available to the party at the time. (20 U.S.C. §1415(b)(7)(A)(ii)(IV).) The proposed resolutions stated in Student’s complaint are not well-defined requests and do not meet the statutorily required standard of stating a resolution to the extent known and available to Student at the time regarding Probation.

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).

⁸ Probation’s contention that it is not a responsible public agency cannot be addressed in an NOI, and Probation will need to file a motion to dismiss as to that issue.

ORDER

1. Student's complaint is insufficiently pled as to Probation under section title 20 United States Code 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).⁹
3. 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.
4. If Student fails to file a timely amended complaint, the complaint will be dismissed as to Probation, and proceed only against County.
5. All dates previously set in this matter as to Probation are vacated. This matter shall proceed as scheduled against County.

DATE: May 12, 2014

/s/

PETER PAUL CASTILLO
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings

⁹ The filing of an amended complaint will restart the applicable timelines for a due process hearing.