

BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of:

PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

TORRANCE UNIFIED SCHOOL
DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NO. 2014050207

ORDER OF DETERMINATION OF
SUFFICIENCY OF DUE PROCESS
COMPLAINT

On May 02, 2014, Parents on behalf of Student filed a due process hearing request¹ (complaint) naming the Torrance Unified School District (District).

On May 16, 2014, District filed a timely 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 a complaint brought under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq. (IDEA)).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 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

The vast majority of Student’s complaint dwells on Student’s health and educational history from birth, and reports in excessive detail the results of assessments conducted from December 2012 through January 2014. However, amid the unfiltered allegations, Student articulates several claims within the two-year statute of limitations for IDEA claims in California,⁸ that is, that District denied Student a FAPE by: (1) failing to assess Student in all areas of suspected disability (auditory processing, attention, memory, behavior and the need for occupational therapy and assistive technology); (2) failing to provide Student with an educational program to meet her unique educational needs in the individualized education programs (IEP’s) of November 13, 2012, January 15, 2013, December 16, 2013 and February 3, 2014; FAPE; and (3) failing to implement the supports and services offered in those IEP’s. As remedies, Student seeks compensatory education, reimbursement for private placement and prospective placement at a nonpublic school of parent’s choice.

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 Ed. Code, § 56505, subd. (l); see also 20 U.S.C. § 1415(f)(3)(C).

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

Therefore, Student's statement of her three claims 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.

DATE: May 19, 2014

/s/
ALEXA J. HOHENSEE
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings