

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. 2015021159

ORDER OF DETERMINATION OF
SUFFICIENCY OF DUE PROCESS
COMPLAINT

On February 19, 2015, Student filed a Due Process Hearing Request¹ (complaint) naming Torrance Unified School District.

On March 6, 2015, District filed a Notice of Insufficiency 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 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 facts alleged in Student’s complaint are sufficient to put the District on notice of the issues forming the basis of the complaint. Student alleges that he is a 14 year-old boy who moved to Torrance in 2011⁸ from Palos Verdes, where he was eligible for special education and related services. In April 2014, District assessed Student and found him to be ineligible for special education. However pursuant to an addendum individualized education program dated April 2, 2014, District did provide Student with services. Student alleges that his subsequent June and October 2014 IEP’s contained minimal academic support and speech and language services that were insufficient to address his academic and social/emotional needs. The complaint further alleges that Student’s father was pressured to

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 District argues that the home address listed on the complaint is in Manhattan Beach, and argues that there are no facts in the complaint by which his residency within District can be determined. This is a question of fact to be determined at the hearing. Special education law does not provide for summary judgment or for motion to dismiss based on disputed facts. The questions raised by District as to Student’s residency do not render the complaint insufficient.

sign an IEP addendum in October 2014, without the document being discussed or reviewed with the IEP team. It also alleges that Student's transition to high school has not been appropriately addressed. The complaint states four claims: that District failed to obtain informed consent on an IEP; that it failed to appropriately assess Student; that it failed to propose appropriate IEP goals, objectives, services and supports; and finally that it denied Student a free appropriate public education by failing to produce his educational records.

Student's complaint identifies the four 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 the 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: March 9, 2015

/s/
JUNE R. LEHRMAN
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings