

**BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**IN THE MATTER OF:
PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,**

v.

**WILLIAM S. HART UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT.
OAH CASE NUMBER 2019051269**

ORDER FOLLOWING PREHEARING CONFERENCE

On August 30, 2019, Administrative Law Judge Elsa H. Jones, Office of Administrative Hearings, held a telephonic prehearing conference. The Administrative Law Judge will be referred to as an ALJ. The Office of Administrative Hearings will be referred to as OAH. The prehearing conference will be referred to as a PHC.

Bryan Winn, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of Student and Parents, who will be referred to collectively as Student. Ian T. Wade, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of William S. Hart Union High School District. The PHC was recorded. Based upon discussion with the parties, the ALJ issues the following Order:

HEARING DATES, TIMES, AND LOCATION

DUE PROCESS HEARING

The hearing will take place on September 10 through September 12, 2019, and continue day to day at the discretion of the ALJ. 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.

HEARING LOCATION

The hearing will be held at the offices of Hart Union, located at 21380 Centre Pointe Parkway, Santa Clarita, California 91350.

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 was not properly notified of the hearing date or properly subpoenaed, as applicable.

Hart Union's 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 they provide comply with these laws.

Hart Union filed the required certification. Hart Union shall notify OAH within three business days of the date of this Order if it is unable to provide facilities that comply with the laws governing accessibility of government facilities to persons with disabilities.

Before the beginning of the hearing, Hart Union shall ensure, to the extent reasonably possible, that the hearing room is configured into a courtroom setting and it contains:

- a table for Student and his representatives;
- a table for Hart Union's representatives;
- a table for the witness;
- a table for the ALJ, near an electrical outlet with a chair that adjusts to an appropriate height for typing at the table provided; and
- water and tissue for the participants.

The same hearing room shall be used for each day of hearing and shall be available at least one hour before the beginning of the hearing each day, to the extent possible. The hearing room shall be locked following the hearing each night. Hart Union shall ensure that the hearing room and access to it are in compliance with the all laws governing accessibility of government facilities to persons with disabilities.

Hart Union shall also ensure that one parking space is available on each hearing day for each of the following: the ALJ, Parents, Student's attorneys, Hart Union's attorneys, and witnesses.

ISSUES AND PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

The issues at the due process hearing, and proposed resolutions, as alleged in the complaint and clarified by the parties and the ALJ during the PHC are:

ISSUES

1. Did Hart Union deprive Student of a free appropriate public education by failing to timely assess Student by failing to respond to Parents' requests, from December 2017 to May 2018, that Hart assess Student?
2. Did Hart Union violate the procedures of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Education Code in developing Student's September 11, 2018 individualized education program so as to deprive Student of a FAPE, by:
 - a. Failing to appropriately consider the family's input, recommendations, and concerns for Student's education;
 - b. Failing to consider relevant assessment data to meet Student's academic, developmental, and functional needs;
 - c. Failing to include an accurate statement of Student's present levels of performance;
 - d. Failing to state the frequency, duration, and type of Student's related services in the IEP?
3. Did the September 11, 2018 IEP fail to offer Student a FAPE in the least restrictive environment, by failing to offer Student the following:
 - a. A small highly structured classroom with intensive staff support;
 - b. A modified curriculum;
 - c. Instructional accommodations, specifically modeling of tasks, modeling of appropriate behaviors; consistent routines, and redirection and prompting?

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

The resolutions requested by Student include reimbursements for all tuition and costs related to Student's placement at Bridges Academy for the 2018-2019 school year, and the cost of a private assessment of Student conducted by Dr. Dana Chidekel.

Hart Union filed its response to Student's complaint on June 19, 2019. (*M.C. v. Antelope Valley Unified School Dist.* (9th Cir. 2017) 858 F.3d 1189, 1199-1200.)

EXHIBITS

BINDERS

Exhibits shall be pre-marked and placed in three-ring binders before the hearing. Exhibit binders shall include a tab for each exhibit. Each binder shall contain a detailed table of contents which clearly identifies the tabs and documents. The ALJ and witnesses must be able to easily turn to exhibit tabs and to turn pages in the binders. Multiple binders may be submitted if necessary.

TAB AND PAGE NUMBERS

The parties shall place a letter followed by a number on each tab to identify each exhibit. Student shall use the letter S before the number to identify Student's exhibits. Hart Union shall use the letter D before the number to identify Hart Union's exhibits. For example, S-1 means Student's exhibit tab 1 and D-1 means Hart Union's exhibit tab 1. Each page of each binder shall be numbered consecutively from the first page of the first exhibit to the last page of the last exhibit in the binder. Parties may use a Bates-stamp or similar system for numbering.

CONTENT

Each exhibit shall consist of one document. Separate documents may not be combined into one exhibit. Emails or letters may be consolidated into one exhibit if they are part of a single chain of messages. Documents offered as evidence to support a request for reimbursement must be separated by vendor and should be internally chronological where possible. Exhibits in the binders should be in chronological order.

Parties should include resumes or curriculum vitae for each witness who is expected to testify as to their professional credentials. Notwithstanding the requirements of Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7), the parties shall exchange resumes not later than 24 hours before the witness is scheduled to testify.

Hart Union's binder shall include a color copy of the school calendar for each school year in question and shall have witnesses available to explain the calendar if necessary.

COPIES OF BINDERS

The parties shall timely serve copies of their evidence binders on each other. This exchange is required by, and shall be made in accordance with, Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7). Each party shall bring two additional sets of the binders containing their exhibits to the hearing. One set will be used by the ALJ, and the other set will be used by witnesses. The parties may not serve exhibits on OAH before the hearing.

Except for good cause shown, or unless used solely for rebuttal or impeachment, any exhibit not timely exchanged shall not be admitted into evidence at the hearing unless the ALJ rules that it is admissible.

WITNESSES

Parties are responsible for producing their own witnesses unless otherwise ordered by the ALJ. Parties shall make witnesses under their control reasonably available. The parties shall schedule their witnesses to avoid delays in the hearing and to minimize or eliminate the need for calling witnesses out of order. Neither party shall be permitted to call any witnesses not timely disclosed in accordance with Evidence Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7), except for good cause shown, and at the discretion of the ALJ.

The ALJ has discretion to limit the number of witnesses who testify and the time allowed for witnesses' testimony. Education Code, section 56505.1, subd. (h), empowers the ALJ to set a reasonable limit on the length of the hearing after consideration of four factors. The first two factors are the issues to be heard and the complexity of facts to be proven. The second two factors are the ability of the parties or their representatives to present their respective cases and the parties' estimates of the time needed to present their cases.

MEET AND CONFER

The parties are encouraged to review and shorten their witness and exhibit lists before the hearing. Evidence will be excluded if it is repetitive, cumulative, or insufficiently probative to justify the time it would take to hear. The parties are ordered to meet and confer prior to the hearing to discuss the availability of witnesses, the order of witnesses, the length of witness testimony, and any other pertinent matters. The parties should attempt to eliminate duplicate exhibits from their binders. The parties should consider whether they can produce a written stipulation with respect to basic facts to shorten the length of time needed for the hearing.

EVIDENCE PRESENTATION

In an administrative proceeding, the burden of proof is ordinarily on the party requesting the hearing. (*Schaffer v. Weast* (2005) 546 U.S. 49, 62.) In this case, Student requested the hearing and Student's case-in-chief shall be presented first.

WITNESS LISTS

The parties shall give the ALJ a joint proposed witness list for the first day of hearing. The list should include dates and time estimates of expected testimony. In the event an agreement cannot be reached, each party shall prepare a separate written list. Hart Union shall have witnesses available in case there is no agreement. Before the hearing begins, the ALJ and the parties will discuss the length of time anticipated for direct and cross-examination of each witness and scheduling issues for individual witnesses. The ALJ will finalize the witness schedule. Parties shall be prepared at all times throughout the hearing to discuss the witnesses to be presented and the estimated time the testimony each witness is expected to take.

SCOPE OF WITNESS EXAMINATION

The parties should anticipate that each witness shall be called to testify only once, except for rebuttal purposes. All parties shall examine a witness on all issues when the witness is first called. Requiring a witness to appear only once takes precedence over the order in which the parties present their cases-in-chief.

TELEPHONIC TESTIMONY

Whether a witness may appear by telephone is a matter within the discretion of the ALJ. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 3082, subd. (g).) Any party seeking to present a witness by telephone shall request leave to do so before the hearing. The party offering

the witness shall provide the witness with a complete set of exhibit binders from all parties before the hearing. The binders must be exact paper copies of all of each party's exhibits. Electronic copies are not acceptable. The party presenting the witness shall ensure the witness testifies from a private location with no other persons present. The party offering telephonic testimony shall ensure that the witness has telephone equipment that allows clear testimony at a volume that allows clear transmission of what the witness is saying, allows for a clear recording of the testimony, and allows the witness to hear objections and rulings. Hart Union shall ensure that the hearing room has telephone speaker equipment that allows everyone in the room to hear the witness, and allows the witness to hear objections and rulings. No witness will be heard by telephone unless all these requirements have been fulfilled.

ELECTRONIC RECORDINGS

Audio Recording

A party may request permission to make an audio recording of the hearing. Permission to make an audio recording is subject to the ALJ's discretion and based upon certain conditions. Such requests are routinely granted on the following conditions:

- the OAH recording is the only official recording;
- the parties shall turn the recording device on and off at the same time that the ALJ is on and off the record to avoid recording conversations while off the record;
- the recording device will be removed by the party recording during any recess where the party leaves the room;
- operation of the party's recording mechanism will not be allowed to delay the hearing;

- a party's recording may not be used to prepare the testimony of a witness in the hearing;
- the recording shall not be shared with any non-party, possible witness, or through social media;
- The parties shall not use the recording in any subsequent due process hearing;
- the recording is subject to the same confidentiality as the due process hearing; and
- the parties shall dispose of the unofficial recording when the time for filing an appeal has passed or, in the event of an appeal, when the time for submission of the record on appeal has passed.

Neither party has made a request to audio record the hearing to date. Should either party seek to record the hearing, the request shall be made before the hearing.

Video Recording

No party, witness or anyone else may make any video recording of any part of the proceedings. Any person doing so shall be subject to sanctions.

COMPENSATORY EDUCATION OR REIMBURSEMENT

Any party seeking reimbursement for expenditures shall present admissible evidence of these expenditures, or a stipulation to the amount of the expenditures. A party seeking compensatory education should provide evidence regarding the type, amount, duration, and need for any requested compensatory education.

MOTIONS

No prehearing motions are pending or contemplated. Any motion that was not filed three business days before the PHC shall be supported by a declaration under penalty of perjury establishing good cause why the motion was not timely filed.

STIPULATIONS

Stipulations to pertinent facts, contentions or resolutions are encouraged. Any proposed stipulation shall be submitted to the assigned ALJ in writing.

CONDUCT OF COUNSEL AND HEARING ROOM DECORUM

Counsel, all parties, and all witnesses shall conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner at all times. Cellular phones, recorders, and other noisemaking electronic devices shall be shut off or placed on the vibrate setting during the hearing unless the ALJ grants permission otherwise. There shall be no texting or tweeting during the hearing, unless the ALJ grants permission. No food or drinks other than water or coffee will be permitted in the hearing room during the hearing, unless the ALJ grants permission.

There shall be no deadly or dangerous weapons in the hearing room, unless they are being carried by a city, county, state, or federal law enforcement officer on official business. A person lawfully entitled to carry such a weapon who is not a law enforcement officer must have the prior written permission to bring such weapon into the hearing room from the hearing ALJ's Presiding Administrative Law Judge. Under no circumstances shall any law enforcement officer bring a firearm or deadly or dangerous weapon into the hearing room if the officer is present as a party, party representative, or

witness, unless prior written permission to bring such weapon into the hearing room has been obtained from the hearing ALJ's Presiding Administrative Law Judge.

LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

No language interpreter or translator is required.

A party or participant to this case, such as a witness, requiring reasonable accommodation to participate in a mediation or hearing may contact OAH at (916) 263-0880, or send an email to OAHADA@dgs.ca.gov as soon as the need is known. The e-mail should have "Request for Accommodation" in the Subject Line. Additional information concerning requests for reasonable accommodation is available on OAH's website at: <https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OAH/Services/Page-Content/Office-of-Administrative-Hearings-Services-List-Folder/Accommodations-at-OAH>.

HEARING OPEN OR CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC

The hearing is closed to the public. Special Education hearings are closed to the public unless Student requests the hearing to be open to the public.

SETTLEMENT

The parties are encouraged to continue working together to reach an agreement before the due process hearing. The parties shall inform OAH in writing immediately if they reach a settlement or otherwise resolve the dispute before the scheduled hearing. In addition, if a settlement is reached 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. 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>.

If a full and final written settlement agreement is reached after 4:00 p.m. the day prior to 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.

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.

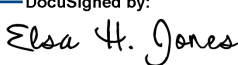
If the matter settles subject to board approval, in addition to a signed copy of the signature page of the settlement agreement, the parties shall provide the date of the next board meeting. The hearing dates will not be cancelled without this information.

FAILURE TO COMPLY

The failure to comply with this Order or with the provisions of Evidence Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7) may result in the exclusion of evidence or other sanctions.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

DATED: September 5, 2019

DocuSigned by:

Elsa H. Jones
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings