

BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE MATTER OF:

PARENTS ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

TORRANCE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NUMBER 2021070408

ORDER FOLLOWING PREHEARING CONFERENCE FOR

HEARING BY VIDEOCONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

On September 20, 2021, Administrative Law Judge Laurie Gorsline, Office of Administrative Hearings, held a prehearing conference by videoconference. The Administrative Law Judge is called an ALJ. The Office of Administrative Hearings is called OAH. The prehearing conference is called a PHC.

Devan Brothers, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of Student. Sundee Johnson, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of Torrance Unified 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 28 through 30, 2021 and continue day to day at the discretion of the ALJ. The hearing shall begin at 9:30 AM each day and generally end at 3:30 PM, unless otherwise ordered. The parties anticipate it will take seven days to complete the hearing. Additional hearing dates will be discussed with the ALJ during the hearing.

HEARING LOCATION

OAH is authorized to conduct due process hearings by videoconference or telephone. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 3082, subd. (g).) Based on state and federal guidance to address safety procedures due to the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, OAH will conduct the due process hearing by videoconference using the Microsoft Teams application. Unless otherwise ordered, participants are required to appear by videoconference using a webcam and Microsoft Teams.

The parties shall immediately notify all potential witnesses of the hearing dates and shall subpoena witnesses, if necessary, to ensure that the witnesses will appear to testify. A party's failure to notify or subpoena a witness to testify will not be considered good cause to continue the hearing. Instructions for issuing and responding to subpoenas and optional forms for subpoenas can be found on the website at <https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OAH/Case-Types/Special-Education/Forms/Subpoenas?search=special%20education%20subpoena>.

DISMISSAL OF CLAIMS OUTSIDE OF OAH JURISDICTION

The purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et. seq.) is to “ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education,” and to protect the rights of those children and their parents. (20 U.S.C. § 1400(d)(1)(A), (B), and (C); see also Ed. Code, § 56000.) A party has the right to present a complaint “with respect to any matter relating to the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education to such child.” (20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(6); Ed. Code, § 56501, subd. (a) [party has a right to present a complaint regarding matters involving proposal or refusal to initiate or change the identification, assessment, or educational placement of a child; the provision of a free appropriate public education to a child; the refusal of a parent or guardian to consent to an assessment of a child; or a disagreement between a parent or guardian and the public education agency as to the availability of a program appropriate for a child, including the question of financial responsibility].) The jurisdiction of OAH is limited to these matters. (*Wyner v. Manhattan Beach Unified School. Dist.* (9th Cir. 2000) 223 F.3d 1026, 1028-1029.)

Student claims include alleged violations based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq.), specifically, the claims labeled as 1i and 2i on pages 40 and 41 of the due process complaint. OAH does not have jurisdiction to decide claims based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq.). Accordingly, Student’s claims labeled as 1i and 2i on pages 40 and 41 of the due process complaint are dismissed. The hearing shall proceed to hearing on the remaining issues set forth below.

ISSUES AND PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

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

ISSUES

1. Did Torrance deny Student a FAPE during the 2019-2020 school year by:
 - a. Failing to properly and timely identify Student for special education and related services in violation of its child find obligations?
 - b. Failing to provide Parent with a timely assessment plan following Parent's October 30, 2018 written request?
 - c. Failing to properly and timely assess Student in all areas of suspected disability following Parent's October 30, 2018 written request?
 - d. Failing to assess Student in all areas of suspected disability, specifically psychoeducational testing, speech and language development, fine motor and sensory processing, social emotional development including anxiety, executive functioning and assistive technology?
 - e. Failing to conduct an appropriate timely assessment in the areas of psychoeducation, occupational therapy, assistive technology and speech and language following Parent's consent to evaluate in February 2020?
 - f. At the March 26, 2020 individualized education program, called IEP, team meeting, failing to make an appropriate determination of eligibility for special education based on Student's educational file and recent comprehensive testing, including consideration of

eligibility criteria for other health impairment, specific learning disability and emotional disturbance?

- g. Failing to develop an IEP which was reasonably calculated to enable Student to make appropriate progress, addressing Student's deficits in math, reading, writing, anxiety, attention, social emotional development, executive functioning skills, fine motor and sensory processing skills and socialization during the 2019-2020 school year?
- h. Failing to timely hold an IEP team meeting within 60 days of the signed assessment plans, dated February 13, 2020 and February 21, 2020?
- j. Significantly impeding the opportunity of Parents to participate in the decisionmaking process regarding the provision of a FAPE to Student by failing to conduct appropriate timely evaluations necessary to develop an appropriate IEP during the 2019-2020 school year?
- k. Significantly impeding the opportunity of Parents to participate in the decisionmaking process regarding the provision of a FAPE to Student by failing to find Student eligible for special education and related services based on significant information in the Student's educational file? and
- l. Significantly impeding the opportunity of Parents to participate in the decisionmaking process regarding the provision of a FAPE to Student by failing to timely respond to Parent's April 2020 request for Student's entire educational record?

2. Did Torrance deny Student a FAPE during the 2020-2021 school year by:

- a. Between the start of the 2020-2021 school year and the December 16, 2020 IEP team meeting, failing to conduct an appropriate timely assessment in the areas of psychoeducation, occupational therapy, assistive technology, and speech and language following Parent's consent to evaluate in February 2020?
- b. Failing to make an appropriate determination at the December 16, 2020 IEP team meeting regarding special education eligibility by inappropriately considering the eligibility criteria for specific learning disability and emotional disturbance?
- c. Failing to timely hold an IEP team meeting within 60 days of the signed assessment plans dated February 13 and February 20, 2020?
- d. Failing to ensure an appropriate IEP was in place at the start of the 2020-2021 school year?
- e. Between the start of the 2020-2021 school year and the December 16, 2020 IEP team meeting, failing to develop an IEP reasonably calculated to enable Student to make appropriate progress, addressing Student's deficits in math, reading, writing, anxiety, attention, social emotional development, executive functioning skills, fine motor and sensory processing skills, and socialization?
- f. In the December 16, 2020 IEP, failing to develop an IEP reasonably calculated to enable Student to make appropriate progress, addressing Student's deficits in math, reading, writing, anxiety, attention, social emotional development, executive functioning skills, fine motor and sensory processing skills and socialization by, specifically:

- i. For each of the three goals offered at the IEP, failing develop baselines which were accurate and based on measurable data?
- ii. Failing to develop appropriate goals; specifically,
 - a) Developing inappropriate goals in areas targeted by the three goals offered? and
 - b) Failing to develop goals in all areas of need, specifically, reading (accuracy, comprehension, inferencing), math, writing content, inattention, executive functioning deficits (participation in group work, task behavior, planning, following instructions, independent work production) and self-advocacy?
- iii. Failing to offer appropriate services, specifically,
 - a) Failing to offer services to address Student's specific learning disability, specifically, intensive reading and math intervention and individualized support for reading, writing and math?
 - b) Failing to offer assistive technology consultation?
 - c) Failing to offer formal social skills training?
 - d) Failing to offer behavioral consultation for social skills? and
 - e) Failing to offer consultation between home (Parents and private counselors) and school mental health professionals?
- iv. Failing to offer an appropriate placement, specifically, failing offer a placement to address Student's need for intensive

intervention and individualized support in writing, reading, and math?

- g. In the April 27, 2021 IEP amendment, failing to develop an IEP reasonably calculated to enable Student to make appropriate progress, addressing Student's deficits in math, reading, writing, anxiety, attention, social emotional development, executive functioning skills, fine motor and sensory processing skills and socialization by, specifically:
 - i. Failing develop accurate and measurable baselines, specifically,
 - a) Failing to correct the problems with the baselines for each of the three goals offered in the December 2020 IEP, specifically, baselines which were accurate and based on measurable data? and
 - b) Developing the new sensory processing goal without an accurate and measurable baseline?
 - ii. Failing to develop appropriate goals, specifically,
 - a) Failing to correct the problems with the three goals offered in the December 2020 IEP?
 - b) Failing to offer goals in all areas of need, specifically, reading (accuracy, comprehension, inferencing), math, writing content, inattention, executive functioning deficits (participation in group work, task behavior, planning, following instructions, independent work production) and self-advocacy?

- c) Offering a new handwriting goal which was more of a baseline than a goal? and
 - d) Offering a new sensory processing goal which was vague and unclear?
- iii. Failing to offer appropriate services, specifically,
 - a) Failing to offer services to address Student's specific learning disability, specifically, intensive reading and math intervention and individualized support for reading, writing and math?
 - b) Failing to offer assistive technology consultation?
 - c) Failing to offer formal social skills training?
 - d) Failing to offer behavioral consultation for social skills?
 - e) Failing to offer consultation between home (Parents and private counselors) and school mental health professionals?
 - f) Failing to offer appropriate occupational therapy services, specifically failing to offer individual services?
- iv. Failing to offer an appropriate placement, specifically, failing offer a placement to address Student's need for intensive intervention and individualized support in writing, reading, and math?
- h. In the June 2, 2021 IEP amendment, failing to develop an IEP reasonably calculated to enable Student to make appropriate progress, addressing Student's deficits in math, reading, writing, anxiety, attention, social emotional development, executive

functioning skills, fine motor and sensory processing skills and socialization by, specifically:

- i. Failing develop accurate and measurable baselines, specifically,
 - a) Failing to correct the problems with the baselines for each of the three goals offered in the December 2020 IEP, specifically, baselines which were accurate and based on measurable data? and
 - b) Failing to correct the problem with the sensory processing goal at the April 2021 IEP, specifically, developing a sensory processing goal without an accurate and measurable baseline?
- ii. Failing to develop appropriate goals, specifically,
 - a) Failing to correct the problems with the three goals offered in the December 2020 and April 2021 IEPs? and
 - b) Failing to offer goals in all areas of need, specifically, reading (accuracy, comprehension, inferencing), math, writing content, inattention, executive functioning deficits (participation in group work, task behavior, planning, following instructions, independent work production) and self-advocacy?
- iii. Failing to offer appropriate services, specifically,
 - a) Failing to offer services to address Student's specific learning disability, specifically, intensive reading and

- math intervention and individualized support for reading, writing and math?
- b) Failing to offer assistive technology consultation?
- c) Failing to offer formal social skills training?
- d) Failing to offer behavioral consultation for social skills?
- e) Failing to offer consultation between home (Parents and private counselors) and school mental health professionals? and
- f) Failing to offer appropriate occupational therapy services, specifically failing to offer individual services?
- iv. Failing to offer an appropriate placement, specifically, failing offer a placement to address Student's need for a smaller class size and intensive intervention and individualized support in writing, reading, and math?
- j. Significantly impeding the opportunity of Parents to participate in the decisionmaking process regarding the provision of a FAPE to Student by failing to find Student eligible for special education and related services prior to December 16, 2020 and by failing at the December 16, 2020 IEP team meeting to find Student eligible under the categories of other health impairment, specific learning disability and emotional disturbance, based on significant information in Student's educational file?
- k. At the December 16, 2020 IEP team meeting, significantly impeding the opportunity of Parents to participate in the decisionmaking process regarding the provision of a FAPE to Student by failing to

properly consider Student's discrepant testing scores and/or pattern of strengths and weaknesses which led to an improper denial of specific learning disability eligibility? and

- I. Significantly impeding the opportunity of Parents to participate in the decisionmaking process regarding the provision of a FAPE to Student by failing to timely respond to Parent's January 2021, May 2021 and June 2021 requests for Student's entire educational record?

A party must immediately file a written objection if the issues as stated in this Order do not reflect that party's understanding of the issues as clarified at the PHC.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

The resolutions requested by Student include placement at a non-public school which meets the needs of students with specific learning disabilities and emotional disturbance, compensatory educational services, including academic tutoring, occupational therapy to address fine motor and sensory processing, and social skills training. Student also seeks reimbursement for counseling services, the cost of Dr. Ann Simun's neuropsychological evaluation, and educational expenses incurred during distance learning.

Torrance filed its response to Student's complaint on July 22, 2021. (*M.C. v. Antelope Valley Unified School Dist.* (9th Cir. 2017) 858 F.3d 1189, 1199-1200.)

EXHIBITS

The parties shall upload their exhibits electronically according to the Order Setting Procedures for Filing Exhibits Electronically.

The parties shall serve their exhibits on each other in compliance with Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7). Timely uploading electronic hearing exhibits five business days before the first day of hearing constitutes that party's timely exchange of evidence on each other in compliance with Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7).

Except for good cause shown, or unless used solely for rebuttal or impeachment, any exhibit not timely exchanged as required by Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7) shall not be admitted into evidence at the hearing unless the ALJ rules that it is admissible.

IDENTIFYING EXHIBITS AND PAGE NUMBERS

Each exhibit must be identified by a letter and number. Student must use the letter S before the number to identify Student's exhibits. Torrance must use the letter D before the number to identify its exhibits. For example, S-1 means Student's exhibit 1 and D-1 means Torrance's exhibit 1. A cover sheet with this identifying letter and number should be the first page of each exhibit. The electronic evidence program will automatically number the exhibits and additional page numbering or bates stamping should not be added.

CONTENT

Each exhibit must 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. Exhibits should be in chronological order.

Parties should include resumes or curriculum vitae for each witness who is expected to testify as an expert.

Torrance's exhibits must include a copy of the school calendar for each school year in question.

Electronic copies of exhibits filed with OAH shall be filed by 5:00 PM at least five business days before the first day of hearing. Please refer to the General Order OAH issued with the Scheduling Order that contains the Order Setting Procedures for Filing Exhibits Electronically. It includes instructions for how to file exhibits electronically. Beginning three business days before the hearing, the electronic evidence system will not allow parties to upload exhibits unless permitted by the ALJ during the hearing at the ALJ's discretion.

WITNESSES

The parties shall serve their list of witnesses on each other in compliance with Education Code section 56505. No party shall be permitted to call any witnesses not timely disclosed except for good cause shown, supported by written declaration under penalty of perjury, and at the discretion of the ALJ.

Parties are responsible for ensuring that all participants are familiar with and follow the Instructions for Joining the Online Due Process Hearing provided with this Order. Participants that have not previously used the MS Teams platform, may also find informative videos available like the one at this link from Microsoft:

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/join-a-teams-meeting-078e9868-f1aa-4414-8bb9-ee88e9236ee4>.

The parties are responsible for ensuring that witnesses join the virtual hearing room at the designated date and time to testify. Witnesses are required to join the due process hearing by computer and appear by videoconference unless they do not have the necessary computer equipment. If a witness does not have the necessary

equipment, the ALJ may permit the witnesses to appear by audio only or by telephone. "Audio only" means using a computer without webcam. Witness ability to attend the hearing by videoconference will be discussed at the start of the hearing.

The 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 must schedule their witnesses to avoid delays in the hearing and to minimize or eliminate the need for calling witnesses out of order. Neither party will be permitted to call any witnesses not timely disclosed except for good cause shown, and at the discretion of the ALJ.

The ALJ has discretion to limit the number of witnesses and the time allowed for witnesses' testimony. Education Code, section 56505.1, subdivision (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 may be excluded if it is repetitive, cumulative, or insufficiently probative to justify the time it would take to hear such evidence.

The parties are ordered to meet and confer no later than September 22, 2021 at 4:00 PM to discuss scheduling witnesses and how much time each witness will take. The parties shall discuss any issues related to counsel and witnesses appearing by videoconference for hearing and electronically viewing exhibits during the hearing, or

subpoenas, if any. The parties should attempt to eliminate duplicate exhibits from their hearing exhibits. The parties shall discuss whether they can produce a written stipulation as to pertinent facts, contentions, resolutions and authenticity and admissibility of documents to shorten the length of time needed for the hearing.

As part of the meet and confer process, Torrance shall inform Student which proposed witnesses are school district employees. Torrance shall also identify the witnesses on Student's list that require a subpoena. Torrance may agree to accept service for witnesses under its control or provide Student with the witness' most recent contact information.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

Both parties have an ongoing obligation to ensure that OAH has current information on the Participant Information Form filed with OAH and shall file an updated Form as necessary. The Participant Information Form is not served upon the opposing party. The ongoing obligation to ensure that the Participant Information Form filed with OAH is current does not change the parties' statutory obligation to timely disclose their witnesses to the other party(s) at least five business days prior to hearing. The parties must file an updated Participant Information Form to inform OAH of any changes, additions, or deletions, including the required information no later than 5:00 PM at least two business days before the first day of hearing.

Any contact information provided shall be used for the limited purpose of issuing subpoenas or for contacting the witness(es) for purposes of attending the hearing and shall not be disclosed to any other person(s).

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 bears the burden of proof. Student's case-in-chief shall be presented first, followed by Torrance, unless otherwise ordered.

WITNESS LISTS

The parties must provide a joint proposed witness list to the ALJ on the first day of hearing. The list should include the first and last name of the witness, which party(s) are calling the witness to testify, and include dates and time estimates of each witness' expected testimony. In the event an agreement cannot be reached, each party shall prepare a separate written list. Both parties must have witnesses available in case there is no agreement.

At the beginning of the hearing, the ALJ and the parties will discuss the length of time anticipated for each witness and scheduling issues for individual witnesses. The ALJ will finalize the witness schedule. Parties must be prepared at the end of each day to discuss the witnesses to be presented the next day and the estimated time for the testimony each witness.

SCOPE OF WITNESS EXAMINATION

Each witness will be called to testify only once, except for rebuttal purposes. All parties must examine witness on all issues when the witness is first called. Requiring a witness to appear only once takes priority over the order in which parties present their case in chief.

AUDIO ONLY OR TELEPHONIC TESTIMONY

Whether a witness may appear by audio only or telephone instead of videoconference 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 audio only or telephone shall request permission to do so before the hearing. Any party seeking to present a witness who cannot access exhibits electronically must inform the ALJ at the beginning of the hearing.

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. The conditions are:

1. the OAH recording is the only official recording;
2. participants shall not use Teams to record the hearing;
3. the parties shall turn their 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;
4. operation of the party's recording mechanism will not be allowed to delay the hearing;
5. a parties' recording may not be given, provided or played to a witness, or potential witness; and
6. the recording is subject to the same confidentiality as the due process hearing;

7. use of the chat function in the videoconference is prohibited and shall not be part of the official record;
8. participants shall not take screenshots of the videoconference or share or publish any portion of the videoconference or audio recording.

Student's request to audio record the hearing is granted. Both parties shall be permitted to audio record the hearing subject to these conditions and as explained at the PHC.

VIDEO RECORDING

No party, witness or anyone else may make any video recording of any part of the proceedings or stream live through any means.

RECORDINGS AS EXHIBITS

Student proposes to introduce all or part of a recording of an individualized education program team meeting. Recordings may not be uploaded electronically without the ALJ's permission. The ALJ has discretion to admit or exclude evidence in the form of a recording. Any request to submit a recording shall be considered at the time of hearing.

The ALJ may grant or deny the request or grant the request subject to certain conditions. The party offering the recording must establish that all or a part of the recording is relevant. The ALJ may request a transcript of the portion of the recording requested or have the party offering the recording to provide an exact identifiable portion of the recording the party seeks to admit. The identities of any person speaking on the portion of the tape being introduced must be established. An ALJ may allow the opposing party to offer additional portions of a recording to establish the context, or to rebut, the recording.

During the PHC Student's counsel was unable to satisfactorily articulate the reasons why recordings as exhibits might be necessary when weighed against considerations including but not limited to an undue consumption of time. Nor was Student's counsel able to estimate of the length of the recordings Student intended to use at hearing. Student shall timely provide to opposing counsel, the entirety of the recordings, specifically identifying in writing the portions of those recordings Student intends to use at hearing, and promptly provide transcripts of the recordings to Torrance prior to the hearing so that it can verify them for accuracy and counter-designate portions of the recordings, if any, for context or rebuttal.

Student shall be required to make an offer of proof regarding the need for recordings as exhibits, which offer of proof shall address whether the recordings are repetitive or cumulative of other evidence, or insufficiently probative to justify the time it would take to listen to the recordings in real time, and why oral testimony from the witnesses and other documentary evidence, including a transcript of the recording, is not sufficient. Student shall not upload the recordings into Caselines until the ALJ grants permission to do so.

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. Documents offered as evidence to support a request for reimbursement must be separated by vendor.

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, resolutions and authenticity and admissibility of documents are encouraged. Any proposed stipulation shall be submitted to the assigned ALJ in writing prior to the start of the hearing.

CONDUCT OF COUNSEL AND HEARING ROOM DECORUM

All participants to the videoconference should observe the same decorum as in an in-person due process hearing. Counsel, all parties, and all witnesses must conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner at all times. Cellular phones, telephones and computer notifications must be shut off or set to silent during the hearing unless the ALJ grants permission otherwise. Counsel, parties, and witnesses should appear from a private location, unless otherwise ordered. Participants should take reasonable efforts to minimize background noise and maintain adequate room lighting. Use of virtual background images are at the discretion of the ALJ. Witnesses are prohibited from reading exhibits, documents, notes, text messages, telephones or computers while testifying, unless permitted to do so by the ALJ. Parties, counsel and witnesses are prohibited from passing notes to, exchanging electronic messages with, or signaling the witness in any way while the witness is testifying.

LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Neither party requested an interpreter or other accommodations. A party or participant in 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 TO THE PUBLIC

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

An ALJ may restrict attendance because of the physical limitations of the hearing facility or take other action to promote due process or the orderly conduct of the hearing. (Cal. Code Regs., Tit. 1, § 1030.) Government Code, section 11425.20 empowers the ALJ to order an open hearing to be closed or make other protective orders to the extent necessary or proper to ensure a fair hearing in the circumstances of the case. Currently, amid COVID-19 concerns, all hearings are being conducted via videoconference without observers present or participating in the videoconference. OAH will provide the hearing recording upon request.

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 PM 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 and processed 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 may result in the exclusion of evidence or other sanctions.

ORDER INCLUDES ALL RULINGS

This Order includes all rulings made at the prehearing conference. Any discussion and conversation not referenced in this Order is not binding on the ALJ conducting the hearing and may not be relied upon by the parties. The parties should be aware that, at hearing, the ALJ conducting the hearing has discretion to reconsider any part of this Order.

IT IS SO ORDERED.



Laurie Gorsline

Administrative Law Judge

Office of Administrative Hearings