

BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE MATTER OF:
PARENTS ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

NORTHERN HUMBOLDT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NUMBER 2021110695

ORDER FOLLOWING PREHEARING CONFERENCE
GRANTING REQUEST FOR CONTINUANCE

FEBRUARY 25, 2022

On February 25, 2022, Administrative Law Judge Brian H. Krikorian, Office of Administrative Hearings, held a telephonic prehearing conference. The Administrative Law Judge will be referred to as an ALJ. The prehearing conference will be referred to as a PHC.

F. Richard Ruderman, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of Student. Jennifer Nix, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of Northern Humboldt 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

The parties jointly moved to continue the prehearing conference and due process hearing based on changes in the Student's placement and the desire to go to mediation. The motion was not filed three days before the PHC. Northern Humboldt's counsel indicated that the District was not prepared to mediate at the filing deadline. However, recent changes in circumstances have opened up that possibility. The parties also requested only a brief continuance. As indicated below, the parties established good cause for the untimely motion.

A due process hearing must be conducted and a decision rendered within 45 days of receipt of the due process notice unless an extension is granted for good cause. (34 C.F.R. § 300.515(a) & (c) (2006); Ed. Code, §§ 56502, subd. (f), 56505, subd. (f)(3); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 1, § 1020.) As a result, continuances are disfavored. Good cause may include the unavailability of a party, counsel, or an essential witness due to death, illness or other excusable circumstances; substitution of an attorney when the substitution is required in the interests of justice; a party's excused inability to obtain essential testimony or other material evidence despite diligent efforts; or another significant, unanticipated change in the status of the case as a result of which the case is not ready for hearing. (Ed. Code, § 56505, subd. (f)(3); Cal. Rules of Court, rule 3.1332(c).) OAH considers all relevant facts and circumstances, including the proximity of the hearing date; previous continuances or delays; the length of continuance requested; the availability of other means to address the problem giving rise to the request; prejudice to a party or witness as a result of a continuance; the impact of granting a continuance on other pending hearings; whether trial counsel is engaged in another trial; whether the parties have stipulated to a continuance; whether the interests of justice are served

by the continuance or imposing conditions on the continuance; and any other relevant fact or circumstance. (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 3.1332(d).)

Student's counsel indicated that Student has returned to school and has been given a placement. He indicated this significantly impacts the issues and remedies. The parties are interested in mediating the case and hope to resolve any remaining issues. The parties also believe that they may stipulate to issues and facts to avoid a lengthy hearing if they cannot settle at mediation. Northern Humboldt's counsel initially did not feel mediation was going to resolve the issues, but now that there has been a change in circumstances, she believes it would be productive.

The request for continuance is granted for good cause. All previously scheduled dates are vacated. The case shall proceed as follows:

Mediation: March 8, 2020, from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Mediation will be held by videoconference.

Prehearing Conference: March 14, 2022, at 1:00 PM

All other prehearing matters shall be addressed at the March 14, 2022, prehearing conference. All prehearing motions must be filed three business days before the PHC.

Due Process Hearing: March 22, 23, and 24, 2022.

Student's counsel requested that the hearing commence on March 23rd. OAH schedules hearings to begin on Tuesdays. The parties may bring up the start date at the next PHC.

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. The hearing shall continue day-to-day at the discretion of the ALJ. The hearing shall be via videoconference.

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 is not properly notified of the hearing date or properly subpoenaed.

SETTLEMENT

The parties shall immediately inform OAH in writing if they reach a settlement or otherwise resolve the dispute before the scheduled hearing. If the parties reach a settlement 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.

If a full and final written settlement agreement is reached after 5:00 PM the day before the 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. 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>.

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 canceled without this information.

FAILURE TO COMPLY

Failure to comply with this order may result in the exclusion of evidence or other sanctions.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian H. Krikorian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" being more prominent.

Brian H. Krikorian

Administrative Law Judge

Office of Administrative Hearings