BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE MATTER OF:

PARENTS ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

POWAY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NUMBER 2025120977

ORDER GRANTING MOTION TO QUASH SUBPOENA

JANUARY 23, 2026

On December 19, 2025, Parent on behalf of Student filed a due process hearing request with the Office of Administrative Hearings, called OAH, naming Poway Unified School District. On January 20, 2026, Student filed a subpoena duces tecum to Executive Director of Special Education Heather Schauder, Poway Unified School District. On January 21, 2025, Poway Unified filed a motion to quash the subpoena on the grounds that it requests prehearing discovery, is overbroad, and not supported by a sufficient showing of reasonable necessity. On January 21, 2026, Student filed a "Hearing Brief on Burden of Production" which is construed as a reply to Poway Unified's opposition to quash the subpoena.

GENERAL APPLICABLE LAW

A party to a due process hearing under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act has the right to present evidence and compel the attendance of witnesses in "a hearing conducted pursuant to subsection (f) or (k)" of section 1415 of title 20 of the United States Code. (20 U.S.C. § 1415(h); see also Ed. Code, § 56505, subd. (e).)

In special education proceedings in California, "[t]he hearing officer shall have the right to issue Subpoenas (order to appear and give testimony) and Subpoenas Duces Tecum (order to produce document(s) or paper(s) upon a showing of reasonable necessity by a party)." (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 3082, subd. (c)(2).) This requirement mirrors that required by Code of Civil Procedure section 1985, subdivision (b), which requires:

> A copy of an affidavit shall be served with a subpoena duces tecum . . ., showing good cause for the production of the matters and things described in the subpoena, specifying the exact matters or things desired to be produced, setting forth in full detail the materiality thereof to the issues involved in the case, and stating that the witness has the desired matters or things in his or her possession or under his or her control.

The good cause requirement is met by a factual showing of why the requested documents or things are material and relevant to the litigated issues. (*Johnson v. Superior Court* (1968) 258 Cal. App.2d 829, 835-836; see also *Seven Up Bottling Company v. Superior Court* (1951) Cal. App.2d 71, 77.)

Special education law does not specifically address motions to quash subpoenas or subpoenas duces tecum. In ruling on such motions, Office of Administrative

Hearings, referred to as OAH relies by analogy on the relevant portions of the Code of Civil Procedure. Code of Civil Procedure section 1987.1 provides that a court may make an order quashing a subpoena entirely, modifying it, or directing compliance with it upon such terms or conditions as the court shall declare, including protective orders.

A party to a due process hearing under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act has the right to present evidence and compel the attendance of witnesses in "a hearing conducted pursuant to subsection (f) or (k)" of section 1415 of title 20 of the United States Code. (20 U.S.C. § 1415(h); see also Ed. Code, § 56505, subd. (e).)

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The good cause requirement is met by a factual showing of why the requested documents or things are material and relevant to the litigated issues. (*Johnson v. Superior Court* (1968) 258 Cal. App.2d 829, 835-836; see also *Seven Up Bottling Company v. Superior Court* (1951) Cal. App.2d 71, 77.)

NO RIGHT TO PREHEARING DISCOVERY

Poway Unified argued that Student's subpoena should be quashed because it requested prehearing discovery. Poway Unified's request is granted. Thus, while Poway Unified raises several objection to the subpoena duces tecum, and Student, they need not be addressed at this time.

In general, there is no right to prehearing discovery in due process proceedings under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.) Rather, the IDEA provides parties with the right to present evidence and compel the attendance of witnesses at "a hearing conducted pursuant to subsection (f) or (k)" of section 1415 of title 20 of the United States Code. (20 U.S.C. § 1415(h).) California provides a similar right to present evidence and compel the attendance of witnesses in due process proceedings (Ed. Code, § 56505, subd. (e)), but does not confer the right to prehearing discovery.

Education Code, section 56505, subdivision (a), provides that "[t]he state hearing shall be conducted in accordance with regulations adopted by the board," and under that authority the Department of Education promulgated section 3082, subdivision (c)(2), of title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, which authorizes the issuance of subpoenas and subpoenas **duces tecum**. These regulations specifically disallow the provisions of the Administrative Procedures Act that provide broader authority for the use of subpoenas in other administrative hearings. (5 Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 3089, [inapplicability of Govt. Code, §§ 11450.05-11450.30 to due process hearing procedures].)

While subpoenas duces tecum are authorized in special education hearings, their use must be consistent with the legislative and regulatory framework of these

proceedings. Pre-hearing discovery in special education cases at the administrative hearing stage is limited. Parents or adult students are entitled to request copies of the educational records, relating to the student in question, that are maintained by the school district. (Ed. Code, § 56504; *Burnett v. San Mateo Foster City School District,* (9th Cir. 2018) 739 Fed. Appx. 870, 873.) The parties are also entitled to disclosures of any evidence an opposing party plans to introduce at hearing 5 business days before the date of the first day of hearing. (Ed. Code, 56505(e)(7).)

Student's subpoena directs Heather Schauder to produce the subpoenaed records on January 27, 2026, which is five days before February 2, 2026, the first due process hearing day scheduled. Student has no statutory right to pre-hearing from this individual before the due process hearing. Student's subpoena should have been returnable on the first day of hearing. This order neither precludes Student from reissuing the subpoena nor precludes Poway Unified from raising any objections to that subpoena.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Cynthia Fritz

Cynthia Fritz
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings