BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE MATTER OF:

PARENTS ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

MIDDLETOWN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NUMBER 2026030288

ORDER DETERMINING DUE PROCESS COMPLAINT PARTIALLY SUFFICIENT

MARCH 24, 2026

On March 6, 2026, Student filed a Due Process Hearing Request, called a complaint, with the Office of Administrative Hearings, referred to as OAH, naming Middletown Unified School District. On March 20, 2026, Middletown filed a Notice of Insufficiency as to the complaint.

APPLICABLE LAW

The named parties have the right to challenge the complaint's sufficiency. (20 U.S.C. § 1415(b) & (c).) 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: (1) describes the problem relating to the proposed change regarding the Student's identification, evaluation, or educational placement, or providing the Student a free appropriate public education; (2) includes facts about the problem; and (3) includes a proposed resolution to the extent known and available to the party at the time. (20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii)(III) & (IV).) These requirements prevent vague and confusing complaints, and promote fairness by providing the named parties with sufficient information to know how to prepare for the hearing and how to participate in resolution sessions and mediation. (See H.R.Rep. No. 108-77, 1st Sess. (2003), p. 115; Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, 1st Sess. (2003), pp. 34-35.)

The complaint provides enough information when it provides "an awareness and understanding of the issues forming the basis of the complaint." (Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, *supra*, at p. 34.) 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. (*Alexandra R. ex rel. Burke v. Brookline School Dist.* (D.N.H., Sept. 10, 2009, CIV. 06-CV-0215-JL) 2009 WL 2957991[nonpub. Opn.]; *Escambia County Bd. 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, 8:04CV2657T24EAJ) 2005 WL 2850076 [nonpub. Opn.]; but cf. *M.S.-G v. Lenape Regional High School Dist. Bd. Of Educ.* (3d Cir. 2009) 306 Fed.Appx. 772, 775 [nonpub. Opn.].) Whether the complaint is sufficient is a matter within the sound discretion of the Administrative Law Judge. (*Assistance to States for the Educ. Of Children with Disabilities & Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities* (Aug. 14, 2006) 71 FR 46,540-46541, 46699.)

DISCUSSION

Student's complaint alleges issues from 2018 through the date of filing. The statute of limitations is generally two years. To the extent Student seeks to extend the statute of limitations to 2018, the issues are insufficiently pled. Student does not put Middletown on notice of the legal or factual basis upon which it seeks to extend the statue of limitations.

For all issues alleged, Student provided sufficient facts within the statutory period, or from March 6, 2024, through March 6, 2026. Student's complaint identifies the issues and adequate facts about the problem to permit Middletown to respond and participate in a resolution session and mediation.

ORDER

1. All Issues in Student's complaint are sufficiently pled commencing March 6, 2024.
2. To the extent Student seeks to extend the statute of limitations, the issues are insufficiently pled as the complaint does not included the basis upon which or facts supporting the basis to extend the statute of limitations.
3. Student shall be permitted to file an amended complaint under title 20 United States Code section 1415(c)(2)(E)(i)(II).
4. The amended complaint shall comply with the requirements of title 20 U.S.C. section 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii), and shall be filed not later than 14 days from the date of this order. The filing of an amended complaint will restart the applicable timelines for a due process hearing.

5. If Student fails to file a timely amended complaint, the hearing shall proceed only on Issues within the two-year statutory period.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Joy Redmon

Joy Redmon
Presiding Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings