BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE MATTER OF:

PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

SAN JUAN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT AND VISIONS IN EDUCATION CHARTER SCHOOL.

OAH CASE NUMBER 2020050817

ORDER FOLLOWING PREHEARING CONFERENCE FOR HEARING BY VIDEOCONFERENCE

JUNE 19, 2020

On June 19, 2020, 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.

Parent appeared on behalf of Student. Linda Simlick, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of San Juan Unified School District and Visions in Education Charter School. 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 June 30 through July 2, 2020 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.

HEARING LOCATION

OAH is authorized to conduct due process hearings by videoconference or telephone. (5 C.C.R. § 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.

DISMISSAL OF CLAIMS OUTSIDE 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 FAPE 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 Sch. Dist.* (9th Cir. 2000) 223 F.3d 1026, 1028-1029.)

The complaint alleges Student is seeking damages for violations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and civil rights laws. The complaint also indicates an alleged violation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. However, OAH does not have jurisdiction to adjudicate such claims. Accordingly, all claims based on violations of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and civil rights laws are dismissed. The matter shall proceed as scheduled as to all other claims.

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 San Juan and Visions Charter School deny Student a free appropriate public education, known as a FAPE, by failing to refer Student for individualized education program support in the form of special education services based upon his prior individualized education programs, pursuant Parent's February 2020 request?

2. Did San Juan and Visions Charter School deny Student a FAPE by failing to timely assess Student in all areas of known or suspected disability pursuant to Parent's March 2020 request?
3. Did San Juan and Visions Charter School deny Student a FAPE between April 2020 and the date the complaint was filed by failing to develop and offer him an individualized education program based on his needs, including his speech and language needs?

At the PHC, Respondents' counsel stated that Visions Charter School was an independent charter school and a separate local educational agency but not for purposes of special education. At the PHC, Respondents were ordered to file a prehearing brief explaining the relationship between Respondents. The brief shall address whether and which Respondent(s) was the agency(s) responsible for assessing Student for special education and offering him an individualized education program if he was otherwise eligible for special education during time period at issue, and set forth the factual and legal basis for Respondents' position. The brief will also address whether the parties will propose a written stipulation regarding this issue. The brief shall be no more than seven pages and shall be filed and served by Friday, June 26, 2020 at noon. Student may but is not required to file and serve a prehearing brief addressing the same issue by the same deadline.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

The resolutions requested by Student include assessments in all areas of suspected disability, an offer of an appropriate individualized education program, including accommodations based on his disability and needs, and damages for FAPE

violations. At the prehearing conference, Parent clarified that Student was also seeking reimbursement and compensatory education.

San Juan and Visions Charter School filed its response to Student's complaint on June 15, 2020. (*M.C. v. Antelope Valley Unified School Dist.* (9th Cir. 2017) 858 F.3d 1189, 1199-1200.)

EXHIBITS

Each party shall file one paper copy of their exhibits with OAH at 2349 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 200, Sacramento, CA 95833, on the Friday before the first day of hearing by noon. The parties shall also upload their exhibits electronically according to the instructions provided.

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.

PAPER COPIES OF EXHIBITS

The paper copies of exhibits shall be pre-marked and bound or placed in three-ring binders before filing with OAH. The exhibits shall contain a detailed table of contents which clearly identifies exhibits and the document page numbers.

EXHIBIT COVER PAGES AND PAGE NUMBERS

Each exhibit must be identified by a letter and number. Each exhibit shall have a cover sheet that identifies that letter and number in the middle of the page. Student must use the letter S before the number to identify Student's exhibits. San Juan must use the letter D before the number to identify San Juan's exhibits. Visions Charter School must use the letter C before the number to identify its exhibits. For example, S-1 means Student's exhibit 1, D-1 means San Juan's exhibit 1, and C-1 means Visions Charter School's exhibit 1. Parties may either number each page within each exhibit or number each page in the binder consecutively beginning with the cover page before exhibit one as page 1, through the last page of the last exhibit. For example, if there are 100 total pages in the binder the first cover page in front of the first page of the first exhibit is page 1 and the last page of the last exhibit in the binder is 100.

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.

San Juan's and Visions Charter School's exhibits must include a copy of the school calendar for each school year in question.

ELECTRONIC COPIES OF EXHIBITS

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. The electronic copies must be an exact

duplicate of the paper copies filed with OAH. OAH will issue a separate Order Setting Procedures for Filing Exhibits Electronically that includes instructions for how to file exhibits electronically.

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. In that situation, 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 shall be discussed at the start of the hearing.

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 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 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 June 24, 2020 at 4:00 PM to discuss scheduling witnesses and how much time each witness will take. The parties shall discuss any issues pertaining to the parties, counsel and witnesses appearing by videoconference for hearing and electronically viewing exhibits during the hearing. 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, San Juan and Visions Charter School shall inform Parent which proposed witnesses are employees of any Respondent. San Juan

and Visions Charter School shall also identify the witnesses on Student's list that require a subpoena. San Juan and Visions Charter School may agree to accept service for witnesses under San Juan's or Visions Charter School's control or provide Parent 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 San Juan and Visions Charter School, 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. The 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:

- the OAH recording is the only official recording;
- participants shall not use Teams to record the hearing;
- 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;
- operation of the party's recording mechanism will not be allowed to delay the hearing;
- a parties' recording may not be given, provided or played to a witness, or potential witness; and
- the recording is subject to the same confidentiality as the due process hearing;
- use of the chat function in the videoconference is prohibited and shall not be part of the official record;
- participants shall not take screenshots of the videoconference, or share or publish any portion of the videoconference or audio recording.

All parties requested permission to audio record the hearing. The requests are granted, subject to these conditions.

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

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.

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

At the prehearing conference, Parent stated that Student intended to make a motion to amend the complaint.

No other 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 shall 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

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 TO THE PUBLIC

The hearing is open to the public. 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. (Tit. 1, Cal. Code Regs., § 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 particular 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

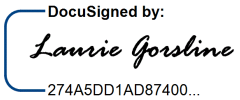
The failure to comply with this Order may result in the exclusion of evidence or other sanctions.

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