

BEFORE THE  
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of:

PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

MORENO VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL  
DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NO. 2011040127

ORDER OF DETERMINATION OF  
SUFFICIENCY OF DUE PROCESS  
COMPLAINT

On April 1, 2011 Student, through his parent, filed a Due Process Hearing Request<sup>1</sup> (complaint). Student's complaint does not identify or name a school district or any other entity as a party to this case.

On April 20, 2011, the Moreno Valley Unified School District (District), filed a Notice of Insufficiency (NOI) as to Student's complaint.<sup>2</sup>

APPLICABLE LAW

The named parties to a due process hearing request have the right to challenge the sufficiency of the complaint.<sup>3</sup> 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).

The complaint is deemed sufficient unless a party notifies the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) and the other party in writing within 15 days of receiving the complaint that the party believes the complaint has not met the notice requirements.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> A request for a due process hearing under Education Code section 56502 is the due process complaint notice required under Title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A).

<sup>2</sup> The District simultaneously filed a motion to dismiss Student's complaint which will be addressed in a separate order.

<sup>3</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1415(b) & (c).

<sup>4</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1415(c)(2)(C); Ed. Code, § 56502, subd. (d)(1).

A complaint is sufficient if it contains: (1) a description of the nature of the problem of the child relating to the proposed initiation or change concerning the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to the child; (2) facts relating to the problem; and (3) a proposed resolution of the problem to the extent known and available to the party at the time.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

The complaint provides enough information when it provides “an awareness and understanding of the issues forming the basis of the complaint.”<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> Whether the complaint is sufficient is a matter within the sound discretion of the Administrative Law Judge.<sup>9</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Student’s complaint was filed with OAH on April 1, 2011. The District filed its NOI by faxing it to OAH on April 20, 2011, which is 19 days after Student filed his complaint. There is no indication in the District’s NOI that it received Student’s complaint after the date it was filed with OAH and no explanation as to why the District’s NOI meets the statutory requirement that it be filed within 15 days of receipt of Student’s complaint. On its face, the District’s NOI was not filed within the statutorily required timeline. Therefore, Student’s complaint is deemed sufficient.

---

<sup>5</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii)(III) & (IV).

<sup>6</sup> See, H.R.Rep. No. 108-77, 1st Sess. (2003), p. 115; Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, 1st Sess. (2003), pp. 34-35.

<sup>7</sup> Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, *supra*, at p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> *Alexandra R. v. Brookline School Dist.* (D.N.H., Sept. 10, 2009, No. 06-cv-0215-JL) 2009 WL 2957991 at p.3 [nonpub. opn.]; *Escambia County Board 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, No. 8:04CV2657T24EAJ) 2005 WL 2850076 at p. 3[nonpub. opn.] ; but cf. *M.S.-G. v. Lenape Regional High School Dist.* (3d Cir. 2009) 306 Fed.Appx. 772, at p. 3[nonpub. opn.].

<sup>9</sup> Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children With Disabilities, 71 Fed.Reg. 46540-46541, 46699 (Aug. 14, 2006).

ORDER

1. The complaint is deemed sufficient under Title 20 United States Code section 1415(c)(2)(C) and Education Code section 56502, subdivision (d)(1).

2. All mediation, prehearing conference, and hearing dates in this matter are confirmed.

Dated: April 21, 2011

/s/

---

DARRELL LEPKOWSKY  
Administrative Law Judge  
Office of Administrative Hearings