

BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of:

PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO OFFICE OF
EDUCATION.

OAH CASE NO. 2012110566

ORDER DENYING MOTION TO
QUASH SDT TO DR. KELIN

On November 16, 2012, the Parent on behalf of Student (Student) filed a request for due process hearing. The complaint alleges that COE is the local education agency operating the Sarah Anthony School, a juvenile court school. Student contends that he was denied a free appropriate public education (FAPE) when the COE failed to place him in a residential treatment center (RTC), provide appropriate mental health services, academic services and occupational therapy.

On December 19, 2012, COE, by its counsel, caused to be served a subpoena duces tecum (SDT) on Dr. Robert Kelin requesting all documents, including correspondence, email and bills, referring to Student, his mother (Mother), placement or relating to services Student received or services the deponent recommended for Student. The time period for the documents to be produced is from January 1, 2012 through the date of service. Dr. Kelin conducted an Independent Education Evaluation on Student on February 6, 2012.

On December 26, 2012, Student filed a motion for an order quashing the SDT. Student contends that the SDT should be quashed as (1) it is overly broad and seeks irrelevant records; (2) it violates the educational psychotherapist-patient privilege; and (3) discovery is not authorized in special education proceedings.

On December 27, 2012, COE filed an opposition to the motion.¹

APPLICABLE LAW

Federal law provides for the rights 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).) Both of those subsections relate only

¹ COE’s opposition also included Student’s motion to quash several other SDT’s dated December 21, 2012. The earlier motion will be dealt with in a separate order.

to due process hearings, not to any prehearing procedures. A party does not have the power to use a subpoena to compel the production of documents before hearing. The applicable statutes and regulation securing the rights to present evidence and compel the attendance of witnesses all relate to the hearing itself. Federal law provides for the rights 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).) Both of those subsections relate only to due process hearings, not to any prehearing procedures.

Similarly, California law extends the rights to present evidence and compel the attendance of witnesses only to “[a] party to a hearing held pursuant to this section ...” (Ed. Code, § 56505, subd. (e).) That section of the Education Code only addresses the rights of parties during a due process hearing. 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 Board of Education promulgated section 3082, subdivision (c)(2), of title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, which authorizes the issuance of subpoenas and SDTs.

The provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act governing subpoenas do not apply to special education hearings. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 3089.) Subdivision (c)(2) of section 3082 of title 5 of the California Code of Regulations provides in pertinent part that 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).”

Special education law does not specifically address motions to quash subpoenas or SDTs. In ruling on such motions, the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) relies by analogy on the relevant portions of the California Code of Civil Procedure. Section 1987.1 of that code 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.

Section 3082, subsection (c)(2) of Title 5 of the California Code of Regulation (Section 3082) permits the issuance of SDTs “upon a showing of reasonable necessity by a party.” This requirement mirrors that required by California 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 Code of Civil Procedure also requires a similar affidavit in an SDT. Section 1985 requires that an SDT shall be served with an affidavit demonstrating good cause in “full detail” how the material being sought is material to the issues involved. The requirement to demonstrate good cause as to materiality is not met by the affiant’s legal conclusion. The good cause requirement is met by a factual showing of why the requested documents 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.)

DISCUSSION

Student’s contention that the records sought are not relevant to this matter is without merit. Student is contending that his mental and emotional state require placement in a therapeutic secured facility. Thus, Student’s mental and emotional states are relevant to the instant matter. Dr. Kelin was chosen by Student to perform an IEE, which was funded by the COE. His opinions and recommendations were made to Student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. COE seeks documentation as to his report, recommendations and as to any influences that may have effected Dr. Kelin in reaching those opinions or which may have an influence in his potential testimony as Student’s designated expert. Student has failed to demonstrate how any of the requested documentation is overly broad.

The District affidavit is sufficient to meet the standards of Section 3082 as COE does demonstrate fully the materiality to the issues involved in the case. The affiant makes the legal conclusion that the documents are relevant and material in order for the District to meet its burden of proof. Additionally, the affiant declares that the documents are material to its defense.

Student in his motion seeks to quash the SDTs on grounds that the requested documents violate Student’s expectation of privacy and the information is subject to privilege. However, this due process case is itself a confidential proceeding. Should Student feel that a particular document or portions of a document contain sensitive material too sensitive even for a confidential due process proceeding, he is free to seek a protective order.

Student also refers to the psychotherapist-patient privilege. Evidence Code section creates an educational psychologist-patient privilege which is the same as the patient-psychotherapist privilege created by Section 1010, subdivisions (d). But Evidence Code section 1016 states “[t]here is no privilege under this article as to a communication relevant to an issue concerning mental or emotional condition of the patient if such issue has been tendered (a) by the patient.” Thus, Student can not claim this privilege.

Student’s claim that discovery is not permitted in due process is not relevant here. COE is attempting to obtain documents which may be used in evidence or to impeach Dr. Kelin. A party to a due process hearing, as is noted by Student in his motion, is permitted to present evidence and compel the testimony of witnesses. (20 U.S.C § 1415 (h)(2); Ed. Code, § 56505, subds. (e)(2) and (3).)

ORDER

1. Student's motion to quash the SDT to Dr. Robert Kelin is DENIED.
2. COE is directed to provide Student's counsel with a copy of all documents produced by Dr. Kelin the day after the documents are produced at COE's expense.
3. Student will have the opportunity to object to the admissibility of any of the documents at the first day of hearing.

Dated: December 28, 2012

/s/

ROBERT HELFAND
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings