

BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of:

PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

LANCASTER SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NO. 2014050790

ORDER OF DETERMINATION OF
INSUFFICIENCY OF DUE PROCESS
COMPLAINT

On May 14, 2014, Parent on behalf of Student (Student) filed a Due Process Hearing Request¹ (complaint) naming the Lancaster School District (District).

On May 22, 2014, District filed a Notice of Insufficiency (NOI) as to Student's complaint.

APPLICABLE LAW

The named parties to a due process hearing request have the right to challenge the sufficiency of the complaint.² 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 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.³ These requirements prevent vague and confusing complaints, and promote fairness by providing the

¹ 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).

² 20 U.S.C. § 1415(b) & (c).

³ 20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii)(III) & (IV).

named parties with sufficient information to know how to prepare for the hearing and how to participate in resolution sessions and mediation.⁴

The complaint provides enough information when it provides “an awareness and understanding of the issues forming the basis of the complaint.”⁵ 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.⁶ Whether the complaint is sufficient is a matter within the sound discretion of the Administrative Law Judge.⁷

DISCUSSION

Student’s complaint fails to allege a specific claim, and is therefore insufficiently pled as discussed below. Student’s complaint contains four sentences as follows:

The reason for the hearing is the school district has not been in compliance with the IEP and never put parent request in to IEP and violated child civil rights[.] [sic]

The only resolution to this problem with this district is to have a hearing. Also we the parent [sic] must unite and have proper knowledge of ourselves and with that knowledge build for the future of our children for them to succeed not fail [sic]. For failure is not an option.

Student’s complaint does not sufficiently describe a problem or the facts relating to the problem. The foregoing four sentences which comprise Student’s complaint fail to provide District with sufficient information to know how to prepare for the hearing and how to participate in resolution sessions and mediation. Rather, Student should identify the Individualized Education Program (IEP) that forms the basis of his complaint, along with the

⁴ See, H.R.Rep. No. 108-77, 1st Sess. (2003), p. 115; Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, 1st Sess. (2003), pp. 34-35.

⁵ Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, *supra*, at p. 34.

⁶ *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.].

⁷ 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).

component(s) of the IEP which District has allegedly failed to implement. Finally, Student's complaint fails to describe a particular remedy being sought.

Student's complaint is insufficiently pled in that it fails to provide District with the required notice of a description of the problem and the facts relating to the problem.

MEDIATOR ASSISTANCE FOR NON-REPRESENTED PARENT: A parent who is not represented by an attorney may request that the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) provide a mediator to assist the parent in identifying the issues and proposed resolutions that must be included in a complain.⁸ Parents are encouraged to contact OAH for assistance if they intend to amend their due process hearing request.

ORDER

1. Student's complaint is insufficiently pled under section Title 20 United States Code 1415(c)(2)(D).
2. Student shall be permitted to file an amended complaint under Title 20 United States Code section 1415(c)(2)(E)(i)(II).⁹
3. The amended complaint shall comply with the requirements of Title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii), and shall be filed not later than 14 days from the date of this order.
4. If Student fails to file a timely amended complaint, the complaint will be dismissed.
5. All dates previously set in this matter are vacated.

DATE: May 28, 2014

/s/
PAUL H. KAMOROFF
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings

8 Ed. Code, § 56505.

⁹ The filing of an amended complaint will restart the applicable timelines for a due process hearing.