

HUMBOLDT-DEL NORTE SPECIAL EDUCATION LOCAL PLAN AREA

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NOTICE OF PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS AND PARENTS' RIGHTS

Special Education Rights of Parents and Children

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act (IDEIA), Part B

2004 Reauthorization (H.R. 1350)

INTRODUCTION

This information provides you as parents, legal guardians, and surrogate parents of children with disabilities from 3 years of age through age 21 with an overview of your educational rights, sometimes called procedural safeguards. This notice is also provided for students who are entitled to these rights at age 18. (20 USC 1415; EC 56321) A copy of these safeguards will be given to you once a year. Additional copies may be given; upon an initial referral or parent request for evaluation, upon the first occurrence of the filing of a complaint under Section 615(b) (6) of H.R. 1350, and at your request.

Participation in making decision about your child's education

You have the right to refer your child for special education services. You must be given opportunities to participate in any decision-making meeting regarding your child's special education program. You have the right to participate in an individual education plan (IEP) meeting about the identification (eligibility), assessment, educational placement of your child and other matters relating to your child's free appropriate public education. [20 USC 1414(b)(c)(d) and (f); EC 56341(b), 56343(c)]

You also have the right to participate in the development of the IEP and to be informed of the availability of free appropriate public education, including all appropriate program options, and of all available alternative programs, both public and nonpublic.

Additionally, you have the right to electronically record the meeting on an audio tape recorder. The law requires that you notify the district 24 hours prior to meeting if you intend to record the proceedings. (EC 56321, 56301, 56506, and 56341).

Additional Assistance

When you have a concern about your child's education it is important that you call or contact your child's teacher or principal to talk about your child and any problems you see. The special education staff or principal can answer questions about your child's education, your rights, and procedural safeguards. When you have a concern, this informal conversation often solves the problem and helps maintain open communication. Additional resources are listed at the end of this document to help you understand the procedural safeguards.

NOTICE, CONSENT, ASSESSMENT, AND ACCESS

Prior Written Notice

You have the right to receive a written notice from the school district before decisions affecting your child's special education are put into place. These include decisions to:

- identify your child as a child with a disability, or change your child's eligibility from one disability to another;
- evaluate or reevaluate your child;
- provide a free appropriate public education to your child, or change a component of your child's free appropriate public education;
- place your child in a special education program; or,
- change your child's special education placement. (20 USC 1415[b]; EC 56329, 56506[a])

You also have the right to written notice from the school district if the district refuses your request to take these actions.

The Prior Written Notice must include the following:

- a description of the actions proposed or refused by the school district;
- an explanation of why the action was proposed or refused;
- a description of other options considered and the reasons those options were rejected;
- a description of each assessment procedure, test, record or report used as a basis for the action proposed or refused;
- a description of any other factors relevant to the action proposed or refused; and
- a statement that parents of a child with a disability are protected by the procedural safeguards.

If the notice is not in regard to an initial referral for assessment, the notice must provide a statement that you have protection under procedural safeguards; information on how you can obtain a copy of described procedural safeguards; and sources of additional assistance in understanding the procedural safeguards. (20 USC 1415[c])

Parent Consent

Parents' written approval is required for:

- **First Evaluation:** The school district must have your informed written consent before it can evaluate your child. You will be informed about the evaluations to be used with your child.
- **Re-evaluation:** The school district must have your informed written consent before reevaluating your child. However, the school district may reevaluate your child without your written consent if the school district has taken reasonable measures to get your consent and you have not responded.
- **Initial Placement in Special Education:** You must give informed written consent before the school district can place your child in a special education program. You can refuse consent for an evaluation, a reevaluation, or the initial placement of your child in special education. To avoid confusion, you should inform the school in writing if you want to refuse consent to a reevaluation. The school district may seek to evaluate or place your child in special education through a due process hearing, if it believes that it is necessary for your child's education. You and the school district may agree to first try mediation to resolve your disagreements. (EC 56321[c], 56346,56506[e]; 20 USC 1414[a][c])

Consent forms must describe the activity for which consent is sought and list the records (if any) that will be released and to whom. You can revoke consent at any time, except that revocation is not retroactive (does not negate actions that occurred after consent was given and before consent was revoked). (34 CFR 300.500)

Surrogate Parent Appointment

In order to protect the rights of the child, school districts must ensure that an individual is assigned to act as a surrogate parent for the parents of a child with a disability when a parent cannot be identified and the school district cannot discover the whereabouts of a parent. A surrogate parent may be appointed if the child is an adjudicated dependent or ward of the court under the state Welfare and Institution Code and the child is referred to special education or already has an IEP. (20 USC 1415[b]; EC 56050)

Age of Majority

When your child reaches the age of 18, all rights under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will transfer to your child. The only exception will be if your child is determined to be incompetent under California State Law. (34 CFR 300.517 30; EC 56041.5)

Assessment

Nondiscriminatory Assessment

You have the right to have your child assessed in all areas of suspected disability. Materials and procedures used for assessment and placement must not be racially, culturally, or sexually discriminatory. Assessment materials must be provided and the test(s) administered in your child's native language or mode of communication, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. No single procedure can be the sole criterion for determining eligibility and developing an appropriate education program for your child. (20 USC 1414[a][b]; EC 56001[j] and 56320)

Assessment Plan

When the district is seeking to assess your child, you will be given a written, proposed assessment plan. Along with that plan you will receive a copy of this Procedural Safeguards document. When the assessment is completed, an

individualized education program team meeting, which includes you, the parent or guardian, and or your representatives, will be scheduled to determine whether the student qualifies for special education services. The IEP Team will discuss the assessment, the educational recommendations and the reasons for these recommendations. A copy of the assessment report and the documentation of determination of eligibility will be given to you. (30 EC 56329 (a))

Independent Educational Evaluation

If you disagree with the results of the assessment conducted by the school district, you have the right to ask for an independent education evaluation (IEE) for your child, from a person qualified to conduct the assessment, at public expense. The school district must respond to your request for independent educational evaluation and provide you information, upon request, about where to obtain an independent educational evaluation. If the school district disagrees that an independent evaluation is necessary, the school district must request a due process hearing to prove that its assessment was appropriate. If the district prevails, you still have the right to an independent assessment but not at public expense. The IEP Team must consider independent assessments.

District assessment procedures allow in-class observation of students. If the school district observes your child in his or her classroom during an assessment, or if the school district would have been allowed to observe your child, an individual conducting an independent educational assessment must also be allowed to observe your child in the classroom. If the school district proposes a new school setting for your child an independent educational assessor must be allowed to first observe your child in the proposed new setting. (EC 56329(b)and(c))

(20 USC 1415; EC 56506[c] and 56329[b]; 34 CFR 300.502)

Access to Educational Records

All parents of a child enrolled in the school district have the right to inspect records under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which has been implemented in California under Education Code Sections 49060-49079. Under IDEIA), parents of a child with disabilities (including noncustodial parents whose rights have not been limited) have the right to review all educational records regarding the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of their child and the provision of a free appropriate public education and to receive an explanation and interpretation of the records. Under California statutes the parents have the right to review and to receive copies of educational records. These rights transfer to a nonconserved student who is eighteen years old or attending an institution of post secondary education.

“**Education record**” means those records that are directly related to a student and maintained by an educational agency or a party acting for the agency or institutions, and may include (1) the name of the student, the student’s parent or other family member; (2) the address of the student; (3) a personal identifier such as the student’s social security number, student number, or court file number; (4) a list of personal characteristics or other information that would make it possible to identify the student with a reasonable certainty. Both federal and state laws further define a student record as any item of information directly related to an identifiable student, other than directory information, which is maintained by a school district or required to be maintained by an employee in the performance of his duties whether recorded by handwriting, print, tapes, film, microfilm, computer, or by anyother means. Student records do not include informal personal notes prepared and kept by a school employee for his/her own use or the use of a substitute. If records contain information about more than one student, a parent can have access only to that portion of the record pertaining to his/her child.

The custodian of records at each school site is the principal of the school. The district custodian of records is the Director of Pupil Services. Student records may be kept at the school site or district office, but a written request for records at either site will be treated as a request for records from all sites. The custodian of records can provide you with a list of the types and locations of student records (if requested).

The custodian of records shall limit access to those persons authorized to review the student record, which includes the parents of the student, a student who is at least sixteen years old, individuals who have been authorized by the parent to inspect the records, school employees who have a legitimate educational interest in the records, post secondary institutions designated by the student, and employees of federal, state and local education agencies. In all other instances access will be denied unless the parent has provided written consent to release the records or the records are released pursuant to a court order. The district shall keep a log indicating the time, name and purpose for access of those individuals who are not employed by the school district.

You have a right to inspect and review all of your child’s educational records without unnecessary delay, including prior to a meeting about your child’s IEP or before a due process hearing. The school district must provide you access to records

and copies, if requested, within five days after the request has been made orally or in writing. A fee for the actual cost of the copies, but not the cost to search and retrieve, may be charged unless charging the fee would effectively deny access to you. (20 USC 1415[b]; EC 56501, 56504, and 49069)

Parents who believe that information in the education records collected, maintained or used by the school district is inaccurate, misleading or violates the privacy or other rights of their child may request in writing that the school district amend the information. If the district concurs, the record will be amended and the parent will be informed. Should the district refuse to make the amendment requested, the district shall notify the parent of the right to and provide a hearing, if required, to determine whether the challenged information is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of the student. If it is decided by the governing board after the hearing that a record will not be amended, the parent shall have the right to provide what he/she believes is a corrective written statement to be permanently attached to the record. The district has policies and procedures governing the retention and destruction of records. Parents wishing to request the destruction of records, which are no longer necessary to the school district, may contact the district's custodian of records. However, the district is required to maintain certain information in perpetuity. (34CFR99; CFR300.561—573; 20USC 1415 [b](1); 34 CFR 500.567; EC 49070)

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND PLACEMENT PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE AN IEP

Students with disabilities may be suspended or placed in other alternative interim settings or other settings to the same extent these options would be used for children without disabilities.

If a student exceeds ten cumulative days in such a placement, an IEP meeting must be held to determine whether the student's misconduct is caused by the disability. This IEP meeting must take place immediately, if possible, or within ten days of the school district's decision to take this type of disciplinary action. (20 USC 1415[k]) As a parent, you will be invited to participate as a member of the IEP team. The school district must provide you with a written notice of the required action. The school district may be required to develop an assessment plan to address the misconduct or, if your child has a behavior support/intervention plan, review and modify the plan, as necessary. If the IEP team concludes that the misconduct was not a manifestation of your child's disability, the school district might take disciplinary action, such as expulsion, in the same manner as it would for a student without disabilities. If you disagree with the IEP Team's decision, you may request an expedited due process hearing (20 USC 1415[k]) from the Office of Administrative Hearings, Special Education Unit at (916) 323-6876.

Placement in an Interim Alternative Educational Setting

Under Federal law, a school district may place a student in an appropriate interim alternative placement for up to forty five days under certain circumstances. Those circumstances are when the student has carried a weapon or has knowingly possessed or used illegal drugs or sold or solicited the sale of controlled substances at school or a school function. (20 USC 1415[k])

If you request a hearing or an appeal regarding disciplinary action or manifestation determination, your child will stay in the interim alternative setting unless the maximum of 45 days is reached, another time frame is established by a hearing officer, or **you** and school district agree to another placement. (34 CFR 300.526)

Alternative educational settings, when permissible, must allow the student to continue to participate in the general curriculum and ensure continuation of services and modifications detailed in the IEP. (20 USC 1415[k]) Except by your consent or court order, your child can not be suspended for more than 10 consecutive days. If the district obtains consent for a suspension, longer than 10 days, it must continue to provide special education and services. (20 USC 1415[k](3)[B][i]; 34 CFR 300.121 [d]; 30 EC 48911[b]; 30 EC 48915.5[d]; Honig vs. Doe)

CHILDREN ATTENDING PRIVATE SCHOOL

The school district is responsible for the full cost of special education in a private school or nonpublic, nonsectarian school, when the school district, together with the IEP team, recommends that this would be the more appropriate placement for the student. (20 USC[a][10][B]; CFR 300.401; CFR 300.349[c]; EC 56361)

The district is not obligated to offer a free appropriate public education to a student whose parent(s) have voluntarily enrolled their child in a private school. In such cases, the district will propose an Individual Services Plan (ISP) for private school students. (20 USC 1412(a)(10)(A)(I))

Notifying the District

You must notify the district of your intent to place your child in a private school:

- At the most recent IEP meeting you attended before removing your child from the public school; or
- In writing to the school district at least ten (10) business days (including holidays) before removing your child from the public school. (20 USC 1412[a]; 34 CFR 300.403)

Unilateral Parent Placement in Nonpublic or Private School

When the parent unilaterally places the student in a private or nonpublic, nonsectarian school without district consent or the referral of a court or hearing officer, the district may only be required to reimburse the parent if their child received special education and related services under the authority of a public agency before enrolling in the private school and the court or hearing officer finds that the school district did not make a free and appropriate education available in a timely manner.

Observation of Your Child at a Nonpublic School

If you unilaterally place your child in a nonpublic school and you propose the placement in the nonpublic school to be publicly financed, the school district must be given the opportunity to first observe the proposed placement and your child in the proposed placement. (EC 56329(d))

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

State Appeal Process

Note: *Complaint procedures in this section are related specifically to the California State Appeal Process and are not the same as the due process complaint procedures which are covered in the next section of this document.*

If you wish to file a complaint with the California Department of Education, you should submit your complaint in writing to:

California Department of Education (CDE)
Special Education Division
Procedural Safeguards Referral Service
1430 N Street Suite 2401
Sacramento, California 95814
Attn: PSRS Intake
Phone 1-800-926-0648
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Within 60 days after a complaint is filed, the California Dept. of Education will: carry out an independent investigation, give the complainant an opportunity to provide additional information, review all information and make a determination as to whether the LEA has violated laws or regulations and issue a written decision that addresses each allegation. You can request a copy of the CDE complaint form by calling the above number.

You have a right to file a complaint. Below are a few of the reasons why you may want to file a complaint:

- Your disabled child is not receiving the special education or related services as specified in his/her IEP.
- The Local Education Agency (school district) fails or refuses to comply with the due process procedures established pursuant to federal and state law and regulations; or has failed or refused to implement a due process hearing order.
- A public agency, other than an LEA, as specified in Government Code Section 7570 et seq., fails or refuses to comply with an applicable law or regulation relating to the provision of a free appropriate public education to disabled individuals.

For complaints involving issues not covered by IDEIA, consult your district's Uniform Complaint Procedures.

The District would like to work with you to resolve all complaints at the local level whenever possible. We invite you to meet with the administrator who has been designated to work with compliance issues and attempt to resolve your concern informally before a complaint is filed. S/he will maintain confidentiality as permitted by law. If your complaint cannot be resolved, a formal investigation will be initiated or you will be referred to the appropriate agency for assistance.

HOW DISPUTES ARE RESOLVED

Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

You may ask the school district to resolve disputes through mediation, which is less adversarial than a due process hearing. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) may also be available in your district. Mediation and ADR are voluntary methods of resolving a dispute and may not be used to delay your right to a due process hearing. The parents and the school district must both agree to try mediation before mediation is attempted. A mediator is a person who is trained in strategies that help people come to agreement over difficult issues. (20 USC 1415[e]; EC 56500.3)

Due Process Hearing

You have the right to request an impartial due process hearing regarding:

- The identification of your child for special education eligibility.
- The assessment of your child.
- The educational placement of your child.
- The provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for your child.

The request for a due process hearing must be filed within two years from the date you knew or had reason to know of the facts that were the basis for the hearing request. ((H.R.1350 §615(f)(3)(C)))

There is an exception to this timeline if you were prevented from requesting the hearing earlier because:

- a) the district misrepresented that it had resolved the problem
- b) the district withheld information that should have been provided to you. ((H.R.1350 §615(f)(3)(D)))

Due Process Rights

You have a right to:

1. Have a fair and impartial administrative hearing at the state level with a person who is knowledgeable of the laws governing special education and administrative hearings (EC 56501[b]);
2. Be accompanied and advised by an attorney and/or individuals who have knowledge about children with disabilities (EC 56505[e]; 20 USC 1415[h]);
3. Present evidence, written arguments, and oral arguments (EC 56505[e]);
4. Confront, cross-examine, and require witnesses to be present (EC 56505[e]);
5. Receive a written or, at the option of the parent, an electronic verbatim record of the hearing, including findings of fact and decisions (EC 56505[e]; 20 USC 1415[h]);
6. Have your child present at the hearing (EC 56501[c]);
7. Have the hearing be open or closed to the public (EC 56501[c]);
8. Be informed by the other parties of the issues and their proposed resolution of the issues at least ten (10) calendar days prior to the hearing (EC 56505[e] and 56043[s]; 20 USC 1415[b]);
9. Receive a copy of all documents, including assessments completed by that date and related recommendations, and a list of witnesses and their general area of testimony within five (5) business days before a hearing and bar the introduction of any documents or witnesses if not informed within five (5) business days (EC 56505[e]; 56403[t]; EC 56506.1[f]);
10. Have an interpreter provided at the expense of the California Department of Education (CCR 3082[d]);
11. Request an extension of the hearing timeline (EC 56505[f]);
12. Have a mediation conference at any point during the due process hearing (EC 56501[b]); and
13. Receive notice from the other party, at least ten (10) days prior to the hearing that it intends to be represented by an attorney. (EC 56507[a])

In any action or proceeding regarding the due process hearing, the Court, in its discretion, may award reasonable attorneys' fees as a part of the costs to you as the parent of a child with a disability if you are the prevailing party in the hearing. Reasonable attorneys' fees may also be made following the conclusion of the administrative hearing with the agreement of the parties. (20 USC 1415[i]; EC 56507[b])

Fees may be reduced for any of the following:

1. The court finds that you unreasonably delayed the final resolution of the controversy;
2. The hourly attorneys' fees exceed the prevailing rate in the community for similar services by attorneys of reasonable comparable skill, reputation, and experience;
3. The time spent and legal services provided were excessive; or
4. Your attorney did not provide to the school district the appropriate information in the due process complaint.

Attorneys' fees will not be reduced, however, if the Court finds that the state or the school district unreasonably delayed the final resolution of the action or proceeding or there was a procedural safeguards violation. (20 USC 1415[i])

Attorneys' fees may not be awarded relating to any meeting of the IEP team unless an IEP meeting is convened as a result of a due process hearing proceeding or judicial action. Attorney fees may also be denied if you reject a reasonable settlement offer made by the district/public agency ten (10) days before the hearing begins and the hearing decision is not more favorable than the settlement offer. (20 USC 1415[d])

Filing a Written Due Process Complaint

To file for mediation or a due process hearing, contact:

**Office of Administrative Hearings
Special Education Unit
1102 Q Street, 4th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 263-0880
Fax: (916) 322-8014**

You need to file a written request for a due process hearing. The written notice shall be kept confidential. You or your representative needs to submit the following information in your request:

1. Name of the child;
2. Address of the residence of the child;
3. Name of the school the child is attending; and
4. A description of the nature of the problem, including facts relating to the problem(s) and a proposed resolution of the problem(s).

State law requires that either party filing for a due process hearing must provide a copy of the written request to the other party. (20 USC 1415[h]; EC 56502[c])

Student's Placement While Due Process Proceedings are Pending

According to the "stay put" provision of the law, a student involved in any administrative or judicial proceeding must remain in his/her current educational placement unless you and the school district agree on another arrangement. If you are applying for initial admission to a public school, your child will be placed in a public school program with your consent until all proceedings are completed. (20 USC 1415[j]; EC 56505[d]and [i])

Opportunity for District to Resolve the Complaint

If you choose to file a due process complaint as explained in the section entitled "Filing a Written Due Process Complaint", a meeting must be scheduled by the district within fifteen (15) days of receiving the notice of your due process complaint. The purpose of the meeting is to give you opportunity to discuss your due process complaint and the facts on which you based your complaint so that the district has a chance to address your concerns and work with you to reach a resolution. This meeting must be held before the initiation of a due process hearing. The meeting must include you and other members of the IEP team who have specific knowledge of the facts. The district has thirty (30) days from the receipt of the due process complaint to resolve the due process complaint or the due process hearing must occur.

If you and the district are unable to resolve the due process complaint and it goes to a hearing, the hearing decision is final and binding on both parties. Either party can appeal the hearing decision by filing a civil action in state or federal court within ninety (90) days of the final decision. *(20 USC 1415[l]; EC 56505[g] and [i]; EC 56043[u])*

A court or hearing officer may not reduce or deny reimbursement to you if you failed to notify the school district for any of the following reasons:

- Illiteracy and inability to write;
- Giving notice would likely result in physical or serious emotional harm to the student;
- The school prevented you from giving notice; or
- You had not received a copy of this Notice of Procedural Safeguards or otherwise been informed of this notice requirement. *(20 USC 1412[a]; 34 CFR 300.403)*

The court or hearing office may reduce or deny reimbursement if you did not make your child available for an assessment upon written notice from the school district. You may also be denied reimbursement if you did not inform the school district that you were rejecting the special education placement proposed by the school district and did not give notice of your concerns and intent to enroll your child in a private or nonpublic school at public expense.

Please contact the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Director at 445-7068 if you would like further clarification of the Notice of Procedural Safeguards and Parents' Rights (Special Education Rights of Parents and Children).