

RIVERSIDE COUNTY 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 Education Act, 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 56041.5 and 56301] 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, when a decision is made to make a removal that constitutes a change of placement and at your request. If your district has a website, a copy of these procedural safeguards may be made available to you through that website. [20 USC 1415(d); 34 CFR 300.504; EC 56301(d)(2), 56321 and 56341.1(g)(1)] You may elect to receive this notice and other notices required under this section by an electronic mail (e-mail) communication, if your district makes such an option available.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA is a federal law that requires school districts to provide a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) to eligible children with disabilities. A free appropriate public education means that special education and related services are to be provided as described in an individualized education program (IEP) and under public supervision to your child at no cost to you.

Participation in Making Decisions 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 IEP meeting either in person, by teleconference, written communication and/or by sending a representative to discuss the identification (eligibility), assessment, educational placement of your child and other matters relating to your child's free appropriate public education. [20 USC 1414(d)(1)B-(d)(1)(D), 20 USC 1415(d); 34 CFR 300.321 and 300.504; EC 56301(d)(2) and EC 56321]

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. If the parent or guardian does not consent to the LEA audiotape recording an IEP meeting, the meeting shall not be recorded on an audiotape recorder. [EC 56301, 56321, 56341.1(g)(1) and 56506(d)]

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 administrators to talk about your child and any problems you see. Staff in the Special Education Department 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.

You may also want to contact one of the California parent organizations (Family Empowerment Centers and Parent Training Institutes), which were developed to increase collaboration between parents and educators to improve the educational system. Contact information for these organizations is found on the CDE special education California Parent Organizations Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/qa/capmrtorg.asp>.

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;
- change your child's special education placement.; or,
- revoke consent after consenting to the initial provision of services. [34 CFR 300.300(b)(3) and (4), 1415(c)(1), 1414(b)(1); 34 CFR 300.503 and 300.9; EC 56329 and 56506(a)]

The school district must inform you about proposed evaluations of your child in a written notice or an assessment plan within fifteen (15) days of your written request for evaluation. The notice must be understandable and in your native language or other mode of communication, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. [34 CFR 300.304; EC 56321]

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;
- a statement that parents of a child with a disability are protected by the procedural safeguards; and,
- sources for parents to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of this subchapter. [20 USC 1415(b)(3) and (4), 1415(c)(1), 1414(b)(1); 34 CFR 300.503]

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. The parent has at least fifteen (15) days from the receipt of the proposed assessment plan to arrive at a decision. The assessment may begin immediately upon receipt of the consent and must be completed and an IEP developed within sixty (60) days of your consent not counting days between the pupil's regular school sessions, terms, or days of school vacation in excess of five schooldays. The school district may seek to evaluate 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. [20 USC 1414(a)(1)(D) and (c); EC 56321(c)(d), 56346, 56506(e)]
- **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. [34 CFR 300.300(c)(1)(ii)] The assessment may begin immediately upon receipt of the consent and must be completed and an IEP developed within sixty (60) days of your consent not counting days between the pupil's regular school sessions, terms, or days of school vacation in excess of five schooldays.
- **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. If you refuse to consent to the initiation of services, the school district must not provide special education and related services and shall not seek to provide services through due process procedures. If you consent in writing to the special education and related services for your child but do not consent to all of the components of the IEP, those components of the program to which you have consented must be implemented without delay.
- **Revocation of Consent:** Parents may only revoke consent in writing, and this action is not retroactive. Once the parent revokes consent the district will provide prior written notice and exit the student from all special education services. If in the future the parent seeks re-enrollment in special education, the assessment will be treated as an initial assessment. [34 CFR 300.9]
- **Authorization to Request/Release Information:**
To obtain information from outside agencies, 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] Written parent consent is not required to release educational information, under certain circumstances. [EC 49076]
- **Consent to Bill California Medi-Cal & Release/Exchange Information for Health Related Special Education and Related Services:**
School districts may submit claims to California Medi-Cal for covered services provided to Medi-Cal eligible children enrolled in special education programs. The Medi-Cal program is a way for school districts and/or County Offices of Education (COEs) to receive federal funds to help pay for health related special education and related services. Your consent is voluntary and can be revoked at any time. If you do revoke consent, the revocation is not retroactive. Consent will not result in denial or limitation of community-based services provided outside the school. If you refuse to consent for the school district and/or COE to access California Medi-Cal to pay for health related special education

and/or related services, the school district and/or COE is still responsible to ensure that all required special education and related services are provided at no cost to you. As a parent, you need to know that:

- You may refuse to sign consent.
- Information about your family and child is strictly confidential.
- Your rights are protected under Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations 300.154; Family Education Rights Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA); Title 20, United States Code Section 1232(g); Title 34 Code of Federal Regulations Section 99.
- Your consent is good for one year unless you withdraw your consent before that time. Your consent can be renewed annually at the IEP team meeting. Furthermore, as a public agency, the school district may access your public benefits or insurance to pay for related services required under Part B of the IDEA, for a free appropriate public education (FAPE). For related services required to provide FAPE to an eligible student, the school district:
- May not require you to sign up for or enroll in public benefits or Insurance programs (Medi-Cal) in order for your child to receive FAPE under Part B of the IDEA (34 CFR 300.154(d)(2)(i)).
- May not require you to incur an out-of-pocket expense such as the payment of a deductible or co-pay amount incurred in filing a claim for services and reimbursement through Medi-Cal (34 CFR 300.154(d)(2)(ii)).
- May not use your child's benefits under Medi-Cal if that use would:
 - Decrease available lifetime coverage or any other insured benefit.
 - Result in the family paying for services that would otherwise be covered by the public benefits or insurance program (Medi-Cal) and are required for your child outside of the time your child is in school.
 - Increase premiums or lead to the discontinuation of public benefits or insurance (Medi-Cal).
 - Risk loss of eligibility for home and community-based waivers, based on aggregate health related expenditures.

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 unaccompanied homeless youth, 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)(2); EC 56050; 34 CFR 300.519; GC 7579.5 and 7579.6]

Age of Majority

When your child reaches the age of 18, all rights under Part B of the IDEA will transfer to your child. The only exception will be if your child is determined to be incompetent under State Law. [34 CFR 300.520; 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(b)(1)-(3), 1412 (a)(6)(B); EC 56001(j) and EC 56320; CFR 300.304]

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. [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 parent is entitled to only one independent educational evaluation at public expense each time the public agency conducts an evaluation with which the parent disagrees. The school district must respond to your request for independent educational evaluation and provide you information, upon request, about obtaining 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.

[20 USC 1415(b)(1) and (d)(2)(A); EC 56329(b)(c) and 56506(c); 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 IDEA, 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 the 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 pupil who is eighteen years old or attending an institution of post secondary education.

“Education record” means those records that are directly related to a pupil and maintained by an educational agency or a party acting for the agency or institutions, and may include (1) the name of the child, the child’s parent or other family member; (2) the address of the child; (3) a personal identifier such as the child’s social security number, student number, or court file number; and (4) a list of personal characteristics or other information that would make it possible to identify the child with a reasonable certainty. Both federal and state laws further define a pupil record as any item of information directly related to an identifiable pupil, 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 other means. Pupil 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. Pupil 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 will provide you with a list of the types and locations of pupil records (if requested). The custodian of the records shall limit access to those persons authorized to review the pupil record, which includes the parents of the pupil, a pupil 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 pupil, 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 business days after the request has been made orally or in writing. A fee for copies, but not the cost to search and retrieve, may be charged unless charging the fee would effectively deny access to the parent. [20 USC 1415(b); EC 49060, 49069, 56043 (n), 56501(b)(3), and 56504]

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 the pupil 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 pupil. 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. [34 CFR 99; CFR 300.613—621; 20 USC 1412(a)(8); 1417(c); 20 USC 1415 (b)(1); 34 CFR 500.567; EC 49070]

HOW DISPUTES ARE RESOLVED

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. [20 USC 1415(b)(6); 34 CFR 300.507; EC 56043(r), 56501 and 56505(l)] 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)]

Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

A request for mediation may be made either before or after a request for a due process hearing is made. 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 free 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 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]

Pre-hearing Mediation Conference

You may seek resolution through mediation prior to filing a request for a due process hearing. The conference is an informal proceeding conducted in a nonadversarial manner to resolve issues relating to the identification, assessment, or educational placement of a child or to FAPE. At the prehearing mediation conference, the parent or the school district may be accompanied and advised by attorney and/or nonattorney representatives and may consult with such persons prior to or following the conference. However, requesting or participating in a prehearing mediation conference is not a prerequisite to requesting a due process hearing.

All requests for a prehearing mediation conference shall be filed with the State Superintendent [via the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH)]. The party initiating a prehearing mediation conference shall provide the other party to the mediation with a copy of the request at the same time the request is filed. The prehearing mediation conference shall be scheduled within fifteen (15) days of receipt by the State Superintendent [via OAH] of the request for mediation and shall be completed within thirty (30) days after receipt of the request for mediation unless both parties agree to extend the time. If a resolution is reached, the parties shall execute a legally binding written agreement that sets forth the resolution. All discussions during the mediation process shall be confidential. All prehearing mediation conferences shall be scheduled in a timely manner and held at a time and place reasonably convenient to the parties. If the issues fail to be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, the party who requested the mediation conference has the option of filing for a due process hearing. [EC 56500.3 and 56503]

Mediation Only

"Mediation Only" is requested through the Office of Administrative Hearings and participation is voluntary. If one of the parties declines the opportunity to participate, the mediation cannot occur. However, either party still has the option of requesting a due process hearing. The law provides that attorneys and other independent contractors who provide legal advocacy services shall not attend or otherwise participate in "Mediation Only". However, they may participate during all stages of the due process procedures. This means that by requesting "Mediation Only" you may not have an attorney or advocate present at mediation. The OAH will assign your request to a specific mediator. All mediators are under contract with the Office of Administrative Hearings and are experienced in the area of Special Education Mediation. [EC 56503(b)]

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 [20 USC 1415 (f)(1)(A), 1415 (f)(3)(A)-(D); 34 CFR 300.511; EC 56501(b)(4)];
2. Be accompanied and advised by an attorney and/or individuals who have knowledge about children with disabilities [EC 56505(e)(1); 20 USC 1415(h)(1)];
3. Present evidence, written arguments, and oral arguments [EC 56505(e)(2)];
4. Confront, cross-examine, and require witnesses to be present [EC 56505(e)(3)];
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)(4); 20 USC 1415(h)];
6. Have your child present at the hearing [EC 56501(c)(1)];
7. Have the hearing be open or closed to the public [EC 56501(c)(2)];
8. Be informed by the other parties of the issues and their proposed resolution of the issues at least ten calendar days prior to the hearing [EC 56505(e)(6) and 56043(u); 20 USC 1415(f)];
9. Receive a copy of all documents, including assessments completed by that date and recommendations, and a list of witnesses and their general area of testimony within five business days before a hearing and bar the introduction of any documents or witnesses if not informed within 5 business days [EC 56505(e)(7)(8); 56043(v); EC 56505.1(d)];
10. Have an interpreter provided at the expense of the California Dept. of Education [CCR 3082(d)];
11. Request an extension of the hearing timeline [EC 56505(f)(3)];
12. Have a mediation conference at any point during the due process hearing [EC 56501(b)(1)(2)]; and,
13. Receive notice from the other party, at least ten days prior to the hearing that it intends to be represented by an attorney [20 USC 1415(e); 34 CFR 300.506, 300.508, 300.512 and 300.515; 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. 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 days before the hearing begins and the hearing decision is not more favorable than the settlement offer. [20 USC 1415(i)(3)(B)-(G); 34 CFR 300.517]

Filing a Written Due Process Complaint

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

**Office of Administrative Hearings
Special Education Division
2349 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95833-4231
Phone: (916) 263-0880
Fax: (916) 263-0890**

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;
4. In the case of a homeless child, available contact information for the child and the name of the school the child is attending; and,
5. A description of the nature of the problem, including facts relating to the problem(s) and a proposed resolution of the problem(s).

Federal and 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(b)(7), 1415 (c)(2); 34 CFR 300.508; EC 56502(c)(1)]

Child's Placement While Due Process Proceedings are Pending

According to the "stay put" provision of the law, a child involved in any administrative or judicial proceeding must remain in the 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); 34 CFR 300.518]

Opportunity for District to Resolve the Due Process Complaint

If you choose to file a due process complaint as explained in the section entitled "Filing a Written Due Process Complaint", a resolution meeting must be scheduled by the district within 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 resolution meeting must be held before the initiation of a due process hearing. The resolution meeting shall include a representative of the school district who has decision-making authority and not include an attorney of the school district unless the parent is accompanied by an attorney. The resolution meeting is not required if the parent and the school district agree in writing to waive the meeting. The district has 30 days from the receipt of the due process complaint to resolve the due process complaint or the due process hearing must occur. If a resolution is reached, the parties shall execute a legally binding agreement. If the parents and the district are unable to resolve the due process complaint and it goes to 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 90 days of the final decision. [20 USC 1415(f)(1)(B), (i)(2) and (3)(A), 1415 (l); CFR 300.516; EC 56501.5; 56505(h)(k), 56043(q)(s)(w); 34 CFR 300.510 and 300.516]

COMPLIANCE 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 covered earlier in this document.*

You may file a state compliance complaint when you believe that a school district has violated federal or state special education laws or regulations. Your written complaint must specify at least one alleged violation of federal and state special education laws. The violation must have occurred not

more than one year prior to the date the complaint is received by the California Department of Education (CDE). When filing a complaint, you must forward a copy of the complaint to the school district at the same time you file a state compliance complaint with the CDE. If you are not in agreement with the compliance complaint decision, you have the option of filing an appeal with CDE to request reconsideration. [34 CFR 300.151–153; 5 CCR 4600; 5 CCR 4665].

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
Special Education Division
Procedural Safeguards Referral Service
1430 N Street Suite 2401
Sacramento, California 95814
Attn: PSRS Intake**

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.

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

To obtain more information about dispute resolution, including how to file a complaint, contact the CDE, Special Education Division, Procedural Safeguards Referral Service, by telephone at (800) 926-0648; by fax at 916-327-3704; or by visiting the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se>

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.

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND PLACEMENT PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Children 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. School personnel may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether a change in placement is appropriate for a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct. A manifestation determination IEP amendment meeting will be called to determine the need for a change of placement from the current setting when (1) the administrator has decided to suspend the student for ten or more cumulative days, and/or (2) removal of the student for more than ten consecutive days has been considered. 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)] 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 300.530; 30 EC 48915.5; *Honig vs. Doe*]

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. During the meeting, the team members will discuss the alleged misconduct and the student's relevant disciplinary history, current IEP, educational placement, behavior supports, attendance and health records, and assessment reports on file. They will also consider teacher observations, relevant information provided by the parent/guardian, and other relevant unique circumstances to be considered. From this discussion, the team will make manifestation determination review findings and make recommendations. The options are to either not continue with the discipline process and consider possible changes to current IEP or continue with the discipline processes applicable to nondisabled students.

After a student with a disability has been removed from his or her current placement for ten (10) school days in the same school year, during any subsequent days of removal the public agency must provide services to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum and progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's IEP. Also, a student will receive, as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral interventions which are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not recur.

Under Federal law, a school district may place a child in an appropriate interim alternative placement for up to forty five (45) days under certain circumstances. Those circumstances are when the child has carried a weapon or has knowingly possessed or used illegal drugs or sold or solicited sale of controlled substances at school or a school function or committed serious bodily injury. [20 USC 1415(k)] Alternative educational settings must

allow the child to continue to participate in the general curriculum and ensure continuation of services and modifications detailed in the IEP. [34 CFR 300.530; EC 48915.5(b)]

If you disagree with the IEP Team's decision, you may request an expedited due process hearing from the California Department of Education's Special Education Hearing Office, which must occur within twenty (20) school days of the date on which you requested the hearing. [20 USC 1415(k)(2); 34 CFR 300.531(c)] 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 the parents and school district agree to another placement. [34 CFR 300.533]

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 appropriate placement for the student. [20 USC 1412(a)(10)(B)(i); CFR 300.146] The district is not obligated to offer a free appropriate public education to a child whose parent(s) have voluntarily enrolled that child in a private school. In such cases, the district will propose an Individual Services Plan for Private School Students. [20 USC 1412(a)(10)(A)(i)]

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 business days (including holidays) before removing your child from the public school. [20 USC 1412(a)(10)(C)(iii); 34 CFR 300.148(d)(1); EC 56176]

Children who are enrolled by their parents in private schools may participate in publicly funded special education programs. The school district must consult with private schools and with parents to determine the services that will be offered to private school students. Although school districts have a clear responsibility to offer FAPE to students with disabilities, those children, when placed by their parent in private schools, do not have the right to receive some or all of the special education and related services necessary to provide FAPE. [20 USC 1415(a)(10)(A); 34 CFR 300.137 and 300.138; EC 56173]

If a parent of an individual with exceptional needs who previously received special education and related services under the authority of the school district enrolls the child in a private elementary school or secondary school without the consent of or referral by the local educational agency, the school district is not required to provide special education if the district has made FAPE available. 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)] A court or a due process hearing officer may require the school district to reimburse the parent or guardian for the cost of special education and the private school only if the court or due process hearing officer finds that the school district had not made FAPE available to the child in a timely manner prior to that enrollment in the private elementary school or secondary school and that the private placement is appropriate. [20 USC 1412(a)(10)(C); 34 CFR 300.148; EC 56175]

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 in English prevented you from providing notice;
- Giving notice would likely result in physical or serious emotional harm to the child;
- 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)(10)(C)(iv); 34 CFR 300.148(e); EC 56177]

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 school at public expense.

STATE SPECIAL SCHOOLS

The State Special Schools provide services to students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind at each of its three facilities: the California Schools for the Deaf in Fremont and Riverside and at the California School for the Blind in Fremont. Residential and day school programs are offered to students from infancy to age 21 at both State Schools for the Deaf and from ages five through 21 at the California School for the Blind. The State Special Schools also offer assessment services and technical assistance. For more information about the State Special Schools, please visit the California Department of Education Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se> or ask for more information from the members of your child's IEP team.

District Contact Information

Please contact the Special Education Administrator at the phone number listed below for your school district if you:

