



Ohio Revised Code

Section 3323.05 Procedures to assure guaranteed procedural safeguards in decisions.

Effective: October 16, 2009

Legislation: Senate Bill 79, House Bill 1 - 128th General Assembly

The state board of education shall establish procedures to ensure that children with disabilities and their parents are guaranteed procedural safeguards under this chapter with respect to a free appropriate public education.

The procedures shall include, but need not be limited to:

- (A) An opportunity for the parents of a child with a disability to examine all records related to the child and to participate in meetings with respect to identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child, and to obtain an independent educational evaluation of the child;
- (B) Procedures to protect the rights of the child whenever the parents of the child are not known, an agency after making reasonable efforts cannot find the parents, or the child is a ward of the state, including the assignment of an individual to act as a surrogate for the parents made by the school district or other educational agency responsible for educating the child or by the court with jurisdiction over the child's custody. Such assignment shall be made in accordance with section 3323.051 of the Revised Code.
- (C) Prior written notice to the child's parents of a school district's proposal or refusal to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free appropriate education for the child. The procedures established under this division shall:
 - (1) Be designed to ensure that the written prior notice is in the native language of the parents, unless it clearly is not feasible to do so.
 - (2) Specify that the prior written notice shall include:
 - (a) A description of the action proposed or refused by the district;



- (b) An explanation of why the district proposes or refuses to take the action and a description of each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report the district used as a basis for the proposed or refused action;
 - (c) A statement that the parents of a child with a disability have protection under the procedural safeguards and, if the notice is not in regard to an initial referral for evaluation, the means by which a copy of a description of the procedural safeguards can be obtained;
 - (d) Sources for parents to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of Part B of the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004";
 - (e) A description of other options considered by the IEP team and the reason why those options were rejected;
 - (f) A description of the factors that are relevant to the agency's proposal or refusal.
- (D) An opportunity for the child's parents to present complaints to the superintendent of the child's school district of residence with respect to any matter relating to the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education under this chapter.

Within twenty school days after receipt of a complaint, the district superintendent or the superintendent's designee, without undue delay and at a time and place convenient to all parties, shall review the case, may conduct an administrative review, and shall notify all parties in writing of the superintendent's or designee's decision. Where the child is placed in a program operated by a county DD board or other educational agency, the superintendent shall consult with the administrator of that county DD board or agency.

Any party aggrieved by the decision of the district superintendent or the superintendent's designee may file a complaint with the state board as provided under division (E) of this section, request mediation as provided under division (F) of this section, or present a due process complaint notice and request for a due process hearing in writing to the superintendent of the district, with a copy to



the state board, as provided under division (G) of this section.

(E) An opportunity for a party to file a complaint with the state board of education with respect to the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education to such child. The department of education shall review and, where appropriate, investigate the complaint and issue findings.

(F) An opportunity for parents and a school district to resolve through mediation disputes involving any matter.

(1) The procedures established under this section shall ensure that the mediation process is voluntary on the part of the parties, is not used to deny or delay a parent's right to a due process hearing or to deny any other rights afforded under this chapter, and is conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator who is trained in effective mediation techniques.

(2) A school district may establish procedures to offer to parents and schools that choose not to use the mediation process, an opportunity to meet, at a time and location convenient to the parents, with a disinterested party to encourage the use, and explain the benefits, of the mediation process to the parents. The disinterested party shall be an individual who is under contract with a parent training and information center or community parent resource center in the state or is under contract with an appropriate alternative dispute resolution entity.

(3) The department shall maintain a list of individuals who are qualified mediators and knowledgeable in laws and regulations relating to the provision of special education and related services.

(4) The department shall bear the cost of the mediation process, including the costs of meetings described in division (F)(2) of this section.

(5) Each session in the mediation process shall be scheduled in a timely manner and shall be held in a location that is convenient to the parties to the dispute.

(6) Discussions that occur during the mediation process shall be confidential and shall not be used



as evidence in any subsequent due process hearing or civil proceeding.

(7) In the case that a resolution is reached to resolve the complaint through the mediation process, the parties shall execute a legally binding agreement that sets forth the resolution and that:

(a) States that all discussions that occurred during the mediation process shall be confidential and shall not be used as evidence in any subsequent due process hearing or civil proceeding;

(b) Is signed by both the parent and a representative for the school district who has the authority to bind the district;

(c) Is enforceable in any state court of competent jurisdiction or in a district court of the United States.

(G)(1) An opportunity for parents or a school district to present a due process complaint and request for a due process hearing to the superintendent of the school district of the child's residence with respect to the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child. The party presenting the due process complaint and request for a due process hearing shall provide due process complaint notice to the other party and forward a copy of the notice to the state board. The due process complaint notice shall include:

(a) The name of the child, the address of the residence of the child, or the available contact information in the case of a homeless child, and the name of the school the child is attending;

(b) A description of the nature of the problem of the child relating to the proposed initiation or change, including facts relating to the problem;

(c) A proposed resolution of the problem to the extent known and available to the party at the time.

A party shall not have a due process hearing until the party, or the attorney representing the party, files a notice that meets the requirement for filing a due process complaint notice.

A due process hearing shall be conducted by an impartial hearing officer in accordance with



standards and procedures adopted by the state board. A hearing officer shall not be an employee of the state board or any agency involved in the education or care of the child or a person having a personal or professional interest that conflicts with the person's objectivity in the hearing. A hearing officer shall possess knowledge of, and the ability to understand, the provisions of the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004," federal and state regulations pertaining to that act, and legal interpretations of that act by federal and state courts; possess the knowledge and ability to conduct hearings in accordance with appropriate standard legal practice; and possess the knowledge and ability to render and write decisions in accordance with appropriate standard legal practice. The due process requirements of section 615 of the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004," 20 U.S.C. 1415, apply to due process complaint notices and requests for due process hearings and to due process hearings held under division (G) of this section, including, but not limited to, timelines for requesting hearings, requirements for sufficient complaint notices, resolution sessions, and sufficiency and hearing decisions.

(2) Discussions that occur during a resolution session shall be confidential and shall not be used as evidence in any subsequent due process hearing or civil proceeding. If a resolution to the dispute is reached at a resolution session, the parties must execute a legally binding written settlement agreement which shall state that all discussions that occurred during the resolution process shall be confidential and shall not be used as evidence in any subsequent due process hearing or civil proceeding.

(3) A party to a hearing under division (G) of this section shall be accorded:

(a) The right to be accompanied and advised by counsel and by individuals with special knowledge or training with respect to the problems of children with disabilities;

(b) The right to present evidence and confront, cross-examine, and compel the attendance of witnesses;

(c) The right to a written or electronic verbatim record of the hearing;

(d) The right to written findings of fact and decisions, which findings of fact and decisions shall be made available to the public consistent with the requirements relating to the confidentiality of



personally identifiable data, information, and records collected and maintained by state educational agencies and local educational agencies; and shall be transmitted to the advisory panel established and maintained by the department for the purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the state.

(H) An opportunity for any party aggrieved by the findings and decision rendered in a hearing under division (G) of this section to appeal within forty-five days of notification of the decision to the state board, which shall appoint a state level officer who shall review the case and issue a final order. The state level officer shall be appointed and shall review the case in accordance with standards and procedures adopted by the state board.

Any party aggrieved by the final order of the state level officer may appeal the final order, in accordance with Chapter 119. of the Revised Code, within forty-five days after notification of the order to the court of common pleas of the county in which the child's school district of residence is located, or to a district court of the United States within ninety days after the date of the decision of the state level review officer, as provided in section 615(i)(2) of the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004," 20 U.S.C. 1415(i)(2).

The Legislative Service Commission presents the text of this section as a composite of the section as amended by multiple acts of the General Assembly. This presentation recognizes the principle stated in R.C. 1.52(B) that amendments are to be harmonized if reasonably capable of simultaneous operation.