

Hardeman County Board of Education

Monitoring: Review: Annually, in September	Descriptor Term: Section 504 and ADA Grievance Procedures	Descriptor Code: 1.802	Issued Date: 07/25/13
		Rescinds: 1.802	Issued: 11/08/12

1 The Board is committed to maintaining equitable employment/educational practices, services, programs
2 and activities that are accessible and usable by qualified individuals with disabilities.

3 4 **DEFINITION**

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6 *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973* provides that : No otherwise qualified individual with
7 handicaps in the United States...solely by reason of his/her handicap, be excluded from the participation
8 in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving
9 federal financial assistance.¹

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11 *Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990* provides that : No otherwise qualified individual
12 with a disability shall be discriminated against in regard to job application procedures, the hiring, ad-
13 vancement, or discharge of employees, employee compensation, job training and other terms, conditions
14 and privileges of employment.²

15 16 **COORDINATOR**³

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18 The Director shall designate at least one employee to coordinate its efforts to comply with and carry
19 out its responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504, including
20 any investigation of any complaint alleging non-compliance with the Acts or alleging any actions that
21 would be prohibited by the Acts.

22 23 **NOTICE**⁴

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25 The Director shall make available the name, office address and telephone number of the ADA/Section
26 504 coordinator.

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28 Methods of initial and continuing notification may include the posting of notices, publication in newspapers
29 and student and employee handbooks and distribution of memoranda or other written communications.

30 31 **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**⁵

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33 The coordinator will hear ADA/Section 504 complaints. Complaints shall be submitted orally or in
34 writing to the coordinator who will endeavor to accomplish prompt and equitable resolution of com-
35 plaints alleging any action that would be prohibited by the ADA/Section 504. The district coordinator
36 will respond to all complaints within twenty (20) days with a written response as well as information
37 on further grievance procedures that may be followed if the complaining party is not satisfied with the
38 coordinator's proposed resolution.

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DUE PROCESS HEARING PROCEDURES

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 provides the right to an impartial due process hearing if a parent wishes to contest any action of the school system with regard to a child's identification, evaluation, and placement under Section 504.⁶ If a parent/guardian requests a Section 504 hearing, the parent/guardian has the right to personally participate and to be represented at the hearing by an attorney or advocate at the parent's expense. Contested actions or omissions that are appropriate for a Section 504 hearing should involve identification, evaluation, or placement issues involving a child who has or is believed to have a disability.

Request for Hearing

A parent/guardian who wishes to challenge an action or omission with regard to the identification, evaluation, or placement of a student who has or is believed to have a disability as defined by Section 504, shall make an oral or written request for a due process hearing to the Section 504 coordinator. The request shall be submitted on or reduced to writing on a form provided through the Central Office.

Impartial Hearing Officer

The Director of Schools or his/her designee shall appoint an impartial hearing officer to preside over the hearing and issue a decision. Such appointment will be made within fifteen (15) days of the date of receipt of a request for a due process hearing. The hearing officer will be hired as an independent contractor at no expense to the parent. The hearing officer that is appointed shall not be a current employee of the school system and shall not be related to any member of the Board of Education. The hearing officer need not be an attorney but shall be familiar with the requirements of Section 504 and the hearing procedures under Section 504. The choice of an impartial hearing officer is final and may not be presented as an issue at the due process hearing since such an issue would not relate to the identification, evaluation, or placement of a disabled child under Section 504. If a parent/guardian disputes the impartiality of the appointed hearing officer, he/she may raise such issue in a review of the hearing officer's opinion by a court of competent jurisdiction or in a complaint to the Office for Civil Rights.

Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
61 Forsyth Street S.W., Suite 19T10
Atlanta, GA 30303-8927
Telephone: 404-974-9406; TDD 877-521-2172
Email: OCR.Atlanta@ed.gov

Scheduling of Hearing

The appointed hearing officer shall set a date for the hearing within fifteen (15) days of his/her appointment and provide this information in writing to the parent/guardian and the Section 504 coordinator. The hearing shall take place at a mutually agreeable time and place.

Continuances

Upon a showing of good cause, the hearing officer, at his/her discretion may grant a continuance of the hearing date and set a new hearing date.

1 *Pre-Hearing Conference*

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3 The hearing officer may order a Pre-Hearing Conference during which the parent/guardian or his/her
4 representative will state and clarify the issues to be addressed at the hearing. The Pre-Hearing Confer-
5 ence will also serve to resolve preliminary matters, clarify jurisdictional issues, and answer the parties'
6 questions regarding the hearing process. The Pre-Hearing Conference may be held via telephone or in
7 person depending on the hearing officer's decision based on the convenience to both parties.
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9 *Dismissals*

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11 If, after the Pre-Hearing Conference, the hearing officer finds that the parent, as a matter of law, alleges
12 and/or raises no factual claims or legal issues that come within his/her jurisdiction as a Section 504
13 hearing officer, he/she may dismiss the hearing and issue an order to that effect explaining the basis for
14 such finding.
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16 *Hearing*

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18 The hearing shall be conducted in an informal, non-adversarial manner. The hearing shall be closed
19 to the public unless the parent/guardian requests an open hearing. The hearing officer may reasonably
20 limit testimony and introduction of exhibits for reasons or relevance.
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22 *Recording*

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24 Instead of a formal written transcript produced by a court reporter, the entire due process hearing may
25 be video recorded. The school system shall provide a copy of the recording to the parent/guardian upon
26 request. In order for an accurate recording to be made, the parties and witnesses shall introduce them-
27 selves at the beginning of their presentations. If a parent/guardian appeals the decision of the hearing
28 officer to a court of competent jurisdiction, the school system shall prepare a written transcript of the
29 hearing to be offered to the court as an exhibit.
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31 *Witnesses*

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33 Witnesses will present their information in narrative form, without the traditional question and answer
34 format of legal proceedings. Cross-examination of witnesses will not be allowed, but a party may request
35 that the hearing officer, at his/her discretion, ask a witness a certain question.
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37 *Format of Presentation*

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39 Each side shall have an opportunity to present their positions as determined by the hearing officer. The
40 parent/guardian will present his/her case first by making an opening statement outlining the issues, call-
41 ing witnesses, and making a closing argument. The school system will present its side next. At the
42 end of the school system's presentation, the parent/guardian may offer a short response. Each side may
43 present personally or through their representatives.
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45 *Submission of Exhibits*

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47 As part of their presentations and at the discretion of the hearing officer, the parties may submit any
48 reports, evaluations, correspondence, notes, or any other documents that may support their positions.
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1 Exhibits submitted to the hearing officer by either party must be marked. The hearing officer may, in
2 the exercise of his/her discretion, reasonably limit the number of documents to be submitted for his/her
3 review, as well as the number of witnesses and the length and/or scope of their presentations or statements.
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5 *Closing Arguments*

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7 The hearing officer may allow or request written closing arguments summarizing and characterizing the
8 information presented at the hearing.
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10 *Decision*

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12 The hearing officer may make an oral ruling at the conclusion of the hearing or take the case under
13 advisement and issue a written opinion. Such decision shall address all of the issues raised by the par-
14 ent/guardian as well as any corrective actions, if any, the school system must take. Any issue or claim
15 raised by the parent/guardian that is left unaddressed by the hearing officer in his/her decision will be
16 deemed to have been denied. The decision must be issued within forty-five (45) days after the date
17 the Request for a Due Process Hearing is received by the district. The hearing officer may not award
18 attorneys' fees as a part of the relief granted to a parent/guardian or the district.
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20 *Review Procedure/Appeal*

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22 If the parent/guardian is not satisfied by the decision of the hearing officer, he/she may seek review of
23 the decision in a court of competent jurisdiction.
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29 *Legal Reference:*

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- 31 1. 34 CFR § 104.4(a)
- 32 2. 42 USCA §12112(a)
- 33 3. 28 CFR § 35.107
- 34 4. 28 CFR § 35.106; 34 CFR § 104.8
- 35 5. 28 CFR § 35.170;172
- 36 6. 34 CFR §104.36
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