



*Frequently Asked Questions with Answers to Help Your Navigate the OSSE ODR Website*

**Q: How can I file a due process complaint?**

**A:**Parents initiating a complaint under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must provide a completed administrative [due process complaint notice](#) to the Local Educational Agency (LEA) and/or State Educational Agency (SEA) whichever agency the complaint is filed against. The Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE) is the SEA for the District of Columbia. In addition, a copy of the completed complaint must be provided to the Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR), 810 First Street, NE, 2nd Floor, Washington DC 20002 by hand delivery, email [hearing.office@dc.gov](mailto:hearing.office@dc.gov) or e-fax to (202) 478-2956.

**Q: What is a due process hearing?**

**A:**A [Due Process Hearing](#) is a dispute resolution option under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Parents or Schools may choose this option when they have been unsuccessful in attempts to resolve special education disputes.

**Q: How can I request a due process hearing?**

**A:**By completing the [Due Process Complaint form](#) and serving the party(s) the complaint is against along with providing a copy to the Office of Dispute Resolution, 810 First Street, NE 2nd Floor, Washington, DC 20002.

Fax: (202) 478-2956

Email: [hearing.office@dc.gov](mailto:hearing.office@dc.gov)

You can find a copy of the complaint on the [ODR website](#) or pick one up in our office. If the complaint has not been sent to the agency or parent(s) that the complaint is being filed against (LEA/SEA), the case may not move forward until they are served with the complaint.

**Q: What's the difference between Mediation and a Due Process Hearing?**

**A:**During [Mediation](#), the Mediator helps the parties work with each other to resolve the dispute. It is the parties not the mediator, who decide how the dispute is resolved. If the parties reach an agreement, a legally binding written agreement will be developed and signed by both parties. An Impartial [Due Process Hearing](#) is a more formal process in which a hearing officer presides and the parties have an opportunity to present witnesses and testimony during a process similar to a courtroom setting. The hearing officer decides the outcome, not the parties.

**Q: How can I request mediation?**

**A:**Fill out the [mediation request form](#) located on our website or pick up a copy in our office and return it by mail, hand-delivery, email or fax to the Office of Dispute Resolution, 810 First Street, NE 2nd Floor, Washington, DC 20002.

Fax: (202) 478-2956

Email: [ossemediation@dc.gov](mailto:ossemediation@dc.gov)



**Q: Will I need an attorney?**

A: It is not mandatory that you have an attorney. However, all parties have the right to be represented at all stages of the hearing process by an attorney.

**Q: Do you provide attorneys or can you assist me in finding one?**

A: The Office of Dispute Resolution does not provide attorneys. ODR is required to provide a list of local persons and organizations that provide free or low cost representation which you may request a copy of this list from our office staff or access it from our website: [Free Legal Services](#)

**Q: Who will preside over the hearing?**

A: ODR utilizes independent contractors who are licensed attorneys and possess the knowledge and ability to conduct hearings and issue and write decisions as appropriate legal standard practice requires. The hearing officers are not employees of ODR. [View a list of the Hearing Officers.](#)

**Q: How are the cases assigned?**

A: They are assigned on a rotating basis with the availability of the Hearing Officer.

**Q: How can I contact the Office of Dispute Resolution?**

A: The Office of Dispute Resolution is located at:  
801 First Street, NE - 2nd Floor  
Washington, DC 20002  
Office: (202) 698-8381  
Fax: (202) 478-2956  
Email: [hearing.office@dc.gov](mailto:hearing.office@dc.gov)

**Q: What is a HOD?**

A: HOD or [Hearing Officer's Determination](#) is the final decision issued by a hearing officer in the case.

**Q: Will I receive a copy of the HOD?**

A: Yes, the Office of Dispute Resolution will distribute a copy of the [Hearing Officer's Determination](#) to all parties to the Complaint.