



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

State Complaints Fact Sheet

Overview

Pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA), the State Complaint Office (SCO) of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) investigates written complaints alleging violations of the IDEA and local special education laws by public agencies. The complaint can raise any issue covered by the IDEA including, but not limited to:

- an evaluation of a child with a disability, or suspected of having a disability
- disagreements about the eligibility of a child with a disability for special education
- the educational placement and location of services of a child with disability
- the provision of special education and related services to a child with a disability

Upon the completion of an investigation lasting no more than 60 days, a Letter of Decision is issued explaining whether or not the public agency is in compliance with federal and local laws. If noncompliance is identified, the public agency is ordered to complete corrective actions described by the Letter of Decision.

Filing a State Complaint

Any individual or organization (“complainant”) may submit a State complaint alleging that any District of Columbia public agency has violated the requirements of Part C or B of the IDEA and related District laws and regulations regarding special education. A model State complaint form is available on the OSSE website at <https://osse.dc.gov/publication/specialized-education-state-complaints-form>. The model form is not required to be used for filing a complaint but requests all required information, including submission information. An individual who is unable to file a written complaint by mail, e-mail, or hand delivery may contact the SCO for further assistance.

Mediation

The SCO provides an opportunity for a complainant and public agency to engage in mediation of the issues raised in the complaint. Mediation is a voluntary process and both the complainant and public agency must agree to participate. Mediation is available through the OSSE Office of Dispute Resolution at no cost. Please check the box marked “yes” under Mediation on the complaint form to request this option.

Additional Resources

OSSE encourages families and public agencies to work together to resolve concerns through informal means. The OSSE Office of Community Learning and School Support (CLASS) provides information to families on informal dispute resolution and access to no-cost advocacy services. For information on how families may collaborate with their student’s school to seek immediate resolution of concerns, please contact the OSSE CLASS at 202-727-6436. Families are also encouraged to contact Advocates for Justice and Education (AJE) at 202-678-8060 and the DC Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education at 202-741-0886 as alternative resources for resolving complaints and concerns for parents and families regarding public education in the District of Columbia.