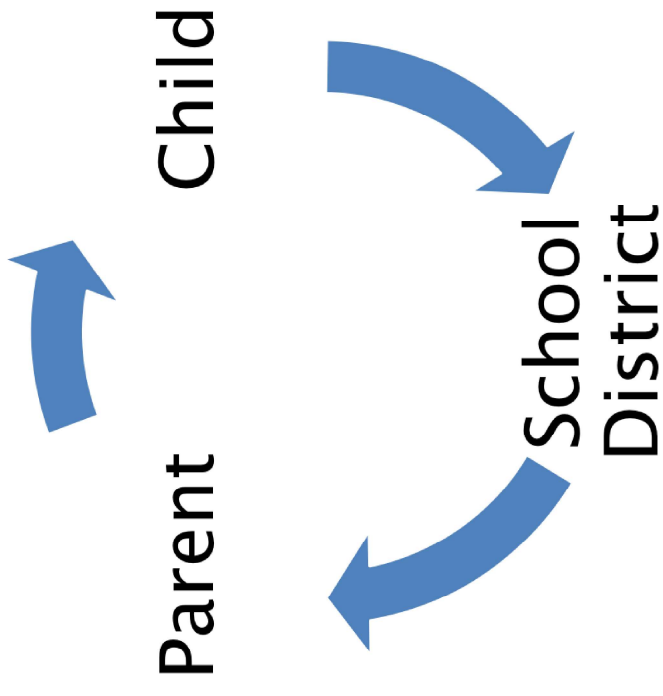


PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS
Your Family's Special Education Rights



Mississippi Department of Education
Office of Special Education

Revised October 2025

Procedural Safeguards Requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 2004 (IDEA 2004) and State law

As a parent, you are an important member of your child's multidisciplinary team. A multidisciplinary team makes decisions about evaluations and eligibility. Another multidisciplinary team, called the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Committee, develops recommendations for special education services for your child. You have the opportunity to participate in the multidisciplinary team meeting discussions and decision-making processes about your child's needs for special education.

The following information relates to procedural safeguards explaining your rights under Federal and Mississippi law. One can expect these rights in order to ensure parental involvement in the special education programs.

Please adhere to the amended sections 37-23-137 of the Mississippi Code of 1972 as it relates to provision of Procedural Safeguards to a child with a disability.

A copy of this Procedural Safeguards Notice must be provided only one time each school year, with the following exceptions:

- a. Upon initial referral or your request for an evaluation or reevaluation;

- b. Upon the receipt of the first MDE State complaint in a school year;
- c. Upon the receipt of the first request for a due process hearing in a school year;
- d. In accordance with the discipline procedures when a change in placement occurs;
- e. Upon your child's initial IEP Committee meeting; and
- f. Upon your request to receive a copy.

The revisions reflect the new mandates of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 2004*. The Federal Regulations were issued on April 14, 2006, and became effective October 13, 2006. Additional amendments were issued on December 1, 2008, and became effective December 31, 2008.

Additional information regarding special education and these procedural safeguards is available by contacting your local special education supervisor or school principal, a parent advocacy organization, or the Division of Parent Outreach at the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Special Education at 1-877-544-0408.

This document conforms to the U.S. Department of Education's Model Procedural Safeguards Notice (July 2009) and includes specific Mississippi requirements.

This document is available electronically at: <http://www.mde.k12.org/special-education/special-education-for-parents>

Questions regarding this document may be referred to:
 Parent Outreach Division
 Mississippi Department of Education
 359 North West Street
 P.O. Box 771
 Jackson, MS 39205-0771
 601-359-3498
 1-877-544-0408

Procedural Safeguards

disabilities in accordance with their individualized education program (IEP) beyond the normal school year of the local district and at no cost to the parents of the students.

IEP, at no cost to the parents of the child and meet the standards of the State Board of Education.

1. Each public agency must ensure that extended school year services are available as necessary to provide FAPE, consistent with paragraph (a)(2) below and in *State Board of Education Policy 7212*.
2. *ESY* services must be provided only if a child's IEP *Committee* determines, on an individual basis, in accordance with §§ 300.320 through 300.324, that the services are necessary for the provision of FAPE to the child. *Students with disabilities who turn twenty-one (21) during the school year and who are eligible for ESY services may be served in an ESY program as determined by the IEP Committee.*
3. In implementing the *ESY* requirements, a public agency may not limit *ESY* services to particular categories of disability or unilaterally limit the type, amount, or duration of those services.

Definition

The term *ESY* services means special education and related services that are provided to a child with a disability beyond the normal school year (*180 days*) of the public agency in accordance with the child's

enroll your child in a private preschool, elementary school, or secondary school without the consent of or referral by the public agency, a court or a hearing officer may require the agency to reimburse you for the cost of that enrollment if the court or hearing officer finds that the agency had not made FAPE available to your child in a timely manner prior to that enrollment and that the private placement is appropriate. A hearing officer or court may find your placement to be appropriate, even if the placement does not meet the State standards that apply to education provided by the MDE and public agencies.

Limitation on reimbursement

The cost of reimbursement described in the paragraph above may be reduced or denied:

1. If: (a) At the most recent IEP Committee meeting that you attended prior to your removal of your child from the public school, you did not inform the IEP Committee that you were rejecting the placement proposed by the public agency to provide FAPE to your child, including stating your concerns and your intent to enroll your child in a private school at public expense; or (b) At least **ten (10)** business days (including any holidays that occur on a business day) prior to your removal of your child from the public school, you did not give written notice to the public agency of that information;
2. If, prior to your removal of your child from the public

school, the public agency provided prior written notice to you of its intent to evaluate your child (including a statement of the purpose of the evaluation that was appropriate and reasonable), but you did not make the child available for the evaluation; **or**

3. Upon a court's finding that your actions were unreasonable.

However, the cost of reimbursement:

1. Must not be reduced or denied for failure to provide the notice if: (a) The school prevented you from providing the notice; (b) You had not received notice of your responsibility to provide the notice described above; or (c) Compliance with the requirements above would likely result in physical harm to your child; **and**
2. May, in the discretion of the court or a hearing officer, not be reduced or denied for the parents' failure to provide the required notice if: (a) You are not literate or cannot write in English; or (b) Compliance with the above requirement would likely result in serious emotional harm to your child.

Extended School Year (ESY)

General
\$300.106

Extended school year (ESY) is the provision of special education and related services to students with

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However, if a request is made for an evaluation of your child during the time period in which your child is subjected to disciplinary measures, the evaluation must be conducted in an expedited manner.

Until the evaluation is completed, your child remains in the educational placement determined by school authorities, which can include suspension or expulsion without educational services.

If your child is determined to be a child with a disability, taking into consideration information from the evaluation conducted by the public agency, and information provided by you, the public agency must provide special education and related services in accordance with Part B of IDEA, including the disciplinary requirements described above.

Referral to and Action by Law Enforcement and Judicial Authorities

§300.535

Part B of IDEA does not:

1. Prohibit an agency from reporting a crime committed by a child with a disability to appropriate authorities; **or**
2. Prevent State law enforcement and judicial authorities from exercising their responsibilities with regard to the application of Federal and State law to crimes committed by a child with a disability.

Transmittal of records

If a public agency reports a crime committed by a child with a disability, the public agency:

1. Must ensure that copies of the child's special education and disciplinary records are transmitted for consideration by the authorities to whom the agency reports the crime; **and**
2. May transmit copies of the child's special education and disciplinary records only to the extent permitted by FERPA.

REQUIREMENTS FOR UNILATERAL PLACEMENT BY PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS AT PUBLIC EXPENSE

General

§300.148

Part B of IDEA does not require a public agency to pay for the cost of education, including special education and related services, of your child with a disability at a private school or facility if the public agency made FAPE available to your child and you choose to place the child in a private school or facility. However, the public agency where the private school is located must include your child in the population whose needs are addressed under the Part B provisions regarding children who have been placed by their parents in a private school under 34 CFR §§300.131 through 300.144.

Reimbursement for private school placement

If your child previously received special education and related services under the authority of a public agency, and you choose to

Placement During Appeals
\$300.533

When, as described above, you or the public agency files a due process complaint related to disciplinary matters, your child must (unless you and the MDE or public agency agree otherwise) remain in the interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the hearing officer, or until the expiration of the time period of removal as provided for and described under the heading *Authority of School Personnel*, whichever occurs first.

Protections for Children Not Yet Eligible for Special Education and Related Services
\$300.534

General

If your child has not been determined eligible for special education and related services and violates a code of student conduct, but the public agency had knowledge (as determined below) before the behavior that brought about the disciplinary action occurred, that your child was a child with a disability, then your child may assert any of the protections described in this notice.

Basis of knowledge for disciplinary matters

A public agency must be deemed to have knowledge that your child is a child with a disability if: before the behavior that brought about the disciplinary action occurred:

1. You expressed concern in writing to supervisory or administrative personnel of

- the appropriate educational agency, or to your child's teacher that your child is in need of special education and related services;
2. You requested an evaluation related to eligibility for special education and related services under Part B of IDEA; **or**
 3. Your child's teacher or other public agency personnel expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by your child directly to the public agency's director of special education or to other supervisory personnel of the public agency.

Exception

A public agency would not be deemed to have such knowledge if:

1. You have not allowed an evaluation of your child or have refused special education services; **or**
2. Your child has been evaluated and determined to not be a child with a disability under Part B of IDEA.

Conditions that apply if there is no basis of knowledge

If prior to taking disciplinary measures against your child, a public agency does not have knowledge that your child is a child with a disability, as described above under the subheadings *Basis of knowledge for disciplinary matters* and

Exception, your child may be subjected to the disciplinary measures that are applied to children without disabilities who engage in comparable behaviors.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Notification Before Child Find Activities

Before any major activity to identify, locate, or evaluate children in need of special education and related services (also known as "Child Find"), the notice must be published or announced in newspapers or other media, or both, with circulation adequate to notify parents throughout the State of these activities.

Prior Written Notice

\$300.503

Notice

Unless you waive the timeline, written notice must be given to you seven (7) calendar days before the public agency:

1. Proposes to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of your child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to your child; **or**
2. Refuses to initiate or to change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of your child, or the provision of FAPE to your child.

Content of Notice

The written notice must:

1. Describe the action that the public agency proposes or refuses to take;
2. Explain why the public agency is proposing or refusing to take the action;

3. Describe each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report the public agency used in deciding to propose or refuse the action;
4. Include a statement that you have rights under the procedural safeguards provisions in Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
5. Inform you on how to obtain a description of the procedural safeguards if the action that the public agency is proposing or refusing is not an initial referral for evaluation;
6. Include resources for one to contact help in understanding Part B of the IDEA;
7. Describe any other choices that your child's IEP Committee considered and why those choices were rejected; **and**
8. Provide a description of other reasons as to why the public agency proposed or refused the action.

Notice in understandable language

The notice must be:

1. Written in language understandable to the general public; **and**
2. Provided in your native language or other mode of communication one uses, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.

If one's native language or other mode of communication is not a written language, one's public agency must ensure that:

1. The notice is translated for you orally or by other means

- in your native language or other mode of communication:
2. One understands the content of the notice; **and**
 3. There is written evidence that 1 and 2 above have been met.

Native Language

\$300.29

Native language, when used with an individual who has limited English proficiency, means the following:

1. The language normally used by that person, or, in the case of a child, the language normally used by the child's parents;
2. in all direct contact with a child (including evaluation of the child), the language normally used by the child in the home or learning environment.

For a person with deafness or blindness, or for a person with no written language, the mode of communication is what the person normally uses (such as sign language, Braille, or oral communication).

Electronic Mail

\$300.505

If one's public agency offers parents the choice of receiving documents by email, one may choose to receive the following by email:

1. Prior written notice;
2. Procedural safeguards notice; **and**
3. Notices related to a due process request.

Parental Consent Definition

\$300.9

Consent

Consent means:

1. One has been fully informed in one's native language or other mode of communication (such as sign language, Braille, or oral communication) of all information about the action for which one is giving consent;
2. one understands and agrees in writing to that action, and the consent describes that action and lists the records (if any) that will be released and to whom; **and**
3. One understands that the consent is voluntary on their part and consent may be withdrawn at any time.

If one wishes to revoke (cancel) consent after their child has begun receiving special education and related services, one must do so in writing. Your withdrawal of consent does not negate (undo) an action that has occurred after you gave your consent but before you withdrew it. In addition, the public agency is not required to amend (change) your child's education records to remove any references that your child received special education and related services after your withdrawal of consent.

Parental Consent

\$300.300

Your public agency cannot conduct an initial evaluation of your child to

- manifestation of your child's disability; **or**
2. Order a change of placement of your child with a disability to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting for not more than **forty-five (45) school days** if the hearing officer determines that maintaining the current placement of your child is substantially likely to result in injury to your child or to others.

These hearing procedures may be repeated, if the public agency believes that returning your child to the original placement is substantially likely to result in injury to your child or to others.

Whenever you or a public agency files a due process complaint to request such a hearing, a hearing must be held that meets the requirements described under the headings ***Due Process Complaint Procedures and Hearings on Due Process Complaints***, except as follows:

1. The MDE or public agency must arrange for an expedited due process hearing, which must occur within **twenty (20) school days** of the date the hearing is requested and must result in a determination within **ten (10)** school days after the hearing.
2. Unless the parents and the public agency agree in writing to waive the meeting, or agree to use mediation, a resolution meeting must occur within **seven (7) calendar days** of receiving notice of the due process complaint. The

hearing may proceed unless the matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of both parties within **fifteen (15) calendar days** of receipt of the due process complaint.

A party may appeal the decision in an expedited due process hearing in the same way as they may for decisions in other due process hearings (see the heading ***Appeal***).

decision and provide you with Procedural Safeguards Notice.

Change of Placement Because of Disciplinary Removals

\$300.536

A removal of a child with a disability from the child's current educational placement is a **change of placement** if:

1. The removal is for more than **ten (10) school days** in a row; **or**
2. Your child has been subjected to a series of removals that constitute a pattern because:
 - a. The series of removals total more than **ten (10) school days** in a school year;
 - b. Your child's behavior is substantially similar to the child's behavior in previous incidents that resulted in the series of removals; **and**
 - c. Of such additional factors as the length of each removal, the total amount of time your child has been removed, and the proximity of the removals to one another.

Whether a pattern of removals constitutes a change of placement is determined on a case-by-case basis by the public agency and, if challenged, is subject to review through due process and judicial proceedings.

Determination of Setting

\$300.531

The IEP committee determines the interim alternative educational setting for removals that are **changes of placement**, and removals under the headings **Additional authority** and **Special circumstances**.

Appeal

\$300.532

General

You may file a due process complaint (see the heading **Due Process Complaint Procedures**) to request a due process hearing if you disagree with:

1. Any decision regarding placement made under these discipline procedures; **or**
2. The manifestation determination described above.

The public agency may file a due process complaint (see above) to request a due process hearing if it believes that maintaining the current placement of your child is substantially likely to result in injury to your child or to others.

Authority of hearing officer

A hearing officer that meets the requirements described under the sub-heading **Impartial Hearing Officer** must conduct the due process hearing and make a decision. The hearing officer may:

1. Return your child with a disability to the placement from which your child was removed if the hearing officer determines that the removal was a violation of the requirements described under the heading **Authority of School Personnel**, or that your child's behavior was a

determine whether your child is eligible under Part B of IDEA to receive special education and related services without first providing you with written prior notice of the proposed action and without obtaining your consent as described under the headings **Prior Written Notice** and **Parental Consent**.

Your public agency must make reasonable efforts to obtain your informed consent for an initial evaluation to decide whether your child is a child with a disability.

Your consent for initial evaluation does not mean that you have also given your consent for the public agency to start providing special education and related services to your child.

Your public agency may not use your refusal to consent to one service or activity related to the initial evaluation as a basis for denying you or your child any other services, benefit, or activity, unless another IDEA, Part B requirement requires the public agency to do so.

If your child is enrolled in public school or you are seeking to enroll your child in a public school and you have refused to provide consent or failed to respond to a request to provide consent for an initial evaluation, your public agency may, but is not required to, seek to conduct an initial evaluation for your child by utilizing IDEA's mediation or due process complaint, resolution meeting, and impartial due process hearing procedures. Your public agency will not violate its obligations to locate, identify and evaluate your child if it does not pursue an

evaluation of your child in these circumstances.

Special rules for initial evaluation of wards of the State
If a child is a ward of the State and is not living with either parent –

The public agency does not need consent from the parent for an initial evaluation to determine if the child is a child with a disability if:

1. Despite reasonable efforts to do so, the public agency cannot find the child's parent;
2. The rights of the parents have been terminated in accordance with State law; **or**
3. A judge has assigned the right to make educational decisions to an individual other than the parent and that individual has provided consent for an initial evaluation.

Ward of the State, defined by IDEA, means a child who, as determined by the State where the child lives, is:

1. A foster child;
2. Considered a ward of the State under State law; **or**
3. In the custody of a public child welfare agency.

Ward of the State does not include a foster child who has a foster parent who meets the definition of a *parent* as defined in IDEA.

Parental consent for services

The public agency must make reasonable efforts to obtain your informed consent before providing special education and related services to your child for the first time.

If you do not respond to a request to provide your consent for your child

to receive special education and related services for the first time, or if you refuse to give such consent or later revoke (cancel) your consent in writing, your public agency may **not** use the procedural safeguards (i.e., mediation, resolution meeting, or an impartial due process hearing) in order to obtain agreement or a ruling that the special education and related services (decided by your child's IEP Committee) may be provided to your child without your consent.

If you refuse to give your consent for your child to receive special education and related services for the first time, or if you do not respond to a request to provide such consent or later revoke (cancel) your consent in writing and the public agency does not provide your child with the special education and related services for which it sought your consent, your public agency:

1. Is not in violation of the requirement to make FAPE available to your child for its failure to provide those services to your child; **and**
2. Is not required to have an IEP meeting or develop an IEP for your child for the special education and related services for which your consent was requested.

If you revoke (cancel) your consent in writing at any point after your child is first provided special education and related services, then the public agency may not continue to provide such services, but must first provide you with prior written notice, as described under the heading Prior Written Notice, before discontinuing those services.

Parental consent for reevaluations

Your public agency must obtain your informed consent before it reevaluates your child, unless your public agency can demonstrate that:

1. It took reasonable steps to obtain your consent for your child's reevaluation; **and**
2. You did not respond.

If you refuse to consent to your child's reevaluation, the public agency may, but is not required to, pursue your child's reevaluation by using the mediation, resolution meeting, and impartial due process hearing procedures to seek to override your refusal to consent to your child's reevaluation. As with initial evaluations, your public agency does not violate its obligations under Part B of the IDEA if it declines to pursue the reevaluation in this manner.

Documentation of reasonable efforts to obtain parental consent

Your school must maintain documentation of reasonable efforts to obtain parental consent for initial evaluations, to provide special education and related services for the first time, for a reevaluation, and to locate parents of wards of the State for initial evaluations. The documentation must include a record of the public agency's attempts in these areas, such as:

1. Detailed records of telephone calls made or attempted and the results of those calls;
2. Copies of correspondence sent to the parents and any responses received; **and**

the public agency had conducted a functional behavioral assessment before the behavior that resulted in the change of placement occurred, and implement a behavioral intervention plan for the child; **or**

2. If a behavioral intervention plan already has been developed, review the behavioral intervention plan, and modify it, as necessary, to address the behavior.

Except as described below under the sub-heading **Special circumstances**, the public agency must return the child to the placement from which the child was removed, unless you and the district agree to a change of placement as part of the modification of the behavioral intervention plan.

Special circumstances

Whether or not the behavior was a manifestation of the child's disability, school personnel may remove a student to an interim alternative educational setting (determined by the child's IEP Committee) for **not more than forty-five (45) school days**, if the child:

1. Carries a weapon (see the definition below) to school or has a weapon at school, on school premises, or at a school function under the jurisdiction of the MDE or a public agency;
2. Knowingly has or uses illegal drugs (see the definition below), or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance, (see the definition below), while at school, on school

premises, or at a school function under the jurisdiction of the MDE or a public agency; **or**

3. Has inflicted serious bodily injury (see the definition below) upon another person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function under the jurisdiction of the MDE or a public agency.

Definitions

Controlled substance means a drug or other substance identified under schedules I, II, III, IV, or V in section 202(c) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 812(c)).

Illegal drug means a controlled substance, but does not include a controlled substance that is legally possessed or used under the supervision of a licensed health-care professional or that is legally possessed or used under any other authority under that Act or under any provision of Federal law.

Serious bodily injury has the meaning given the term "serious bodily injury" under paragraph (3) of subsection (h) of section 1365 of title 18, United States Code.

Weapon has the meaning given the term "dangerous weapon" under paragraph (2) of the first subsection (g) of section 930 of title 18, United States Code.

Notification

On the date it makes the decision to make a removal, that is a change of placement because of a violation of a code of student conduct, the public agency must notify you of that

2. Receive, as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment, and behavioral intervention services and modifications, which are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not happen again.

After a child with a disability has been removed from his or her current placement for **ten (10) school days** in that same school year, and **if** the current removal is for **ten (10) school days** in a row or less **and**, if the removal is not a change of placement (see definition below), **then** school personnel, in consultation with at least one of the child's teachers, determine the extent to which services are needed to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's IEP.

If the removal is a change of placement (see the heading, **Change of Placement Because of Disciplinary Removals**), the child's IEP Committee determines the appropriate services to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting (that may be an interim alternative educational setting), and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's IEP.

Manifestation determination

Within **ten (10) school days** of any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of a code of student conduct (except for a removal that is for **ten**

(10) school days in a row or less and not a change of placement), the public agency, you, and other relevant members of the IEP Committee (as determined by you and the public agency) must review all relevant information in the student's file, including the child's IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by you to determine:

1. If the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability; **or**
2. If the conduct in question was the direct result of the public agency's failure to implement the child's IEP.

If the public agency, you, and other relevant members of the child's IEP Committee determine that either of those conditions was met, the conduct must be determined to be a manifestation of the child's disability.

If the public agency, you, and other relevant members of the child's IEP Committee determine that the conduct in question was the direct result of the public agency's failure to implement the IEP, the public agency must take immediate action to remedy those deficiencies.

Determination that behavior was a manifestation of the child's disability

If the public agency, you, and other relevant members of the IEP committee determine that the conduct was a manifestation of the child's disability, the IEP committee must either:

1. Conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment, unless

3. Detailed records of visits made to the parent's home or place of employment and the results of those visits.

Other consent requirements

Your consent is not required before your public agency may:

1. Review existing data as part of your child's evaluation or a reevaluation; **or**
2. Give your child a test or other evaluation that is given to all children unless, before that test or evaluation, consent is required from all parents of all children.

Your public agency may not use your refusal to consent to one service or activity to deny you or your child any other service, benefit, or activity, unless another IDEA, Part B requirement requires the public agency to do so.

If you have enrolled your child in a private school at your own expense or if you are home schooling your child, and you do not provide your consent for your child's initial evaluation or your child's reevaluation, or you fail to respond to a request to provide your consent, the public agency may not use its dispute resolution procedures (i.e., mediation, resolution meeting, or an impartial due process hearing) and is not required to consider your child as eligible to receive equitable services (services made available to parentally-placed private school children with disabilities).

Independent Educational Evaluations

\$300.502

General
As described below, you have the right to obtain an independent educational evaluation (IEE) of your child if you disagree with the evaluation of your child that was obtained by your public agency.

If you request an IEE, the public agency must provide you with information about where you may obtain an IEE and about the public agency's criteria that apply to IEEs.

Definitions

Independent educational evaluation means an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the public agency responsible for the education of your child.

Public expense means that the public agency either pays for the full cost of the evaluation or ensures that the evaluation is otherwise provided at no cost to you, consistent with the provisions of Part B of the IDEA, which allow each State to use whatever State, local, Federal and private sources of support that are available in the State to meet the requirements of Part B of the IDEA.

Parent's right to evaluation at public expense

You have the right to an IEE of your child at public expense if you disagree with an evaluation of your child obtained by your public agency, subject to the following conditions:

1. If you request an IEE of your child at public expense, your public agency must, without unnecessary delay, **either**: (a) File a *request for a due process hearing* to show that its evaluation of your child is

appropriate; **or** (b) Provide an IEE at public expense, unless the public agency demonstrates in a hearing that the evaluation of your child that you obtained did not meet the public agency's criteria.

2. If your public agency requests a hearing and the final decision is that your public agency's evaluation of your child is appropriate, you still have the right to an IEE, but not at public expense.
3. If you request an IEE of your child, the public agency may ask why you object to the evaluation of your child obtained by your public agency. However, your public agency may not require an explanation and may not unreasonably delay either providing the IEE of your child at public expense or filing a request for a due process hearing to defend the public agency's evaluation of your child.

You are entitled to only one IEE of your child at public expense each time your public agency conducts an evaluation of your child with which you disagree.

Parent-initiated evaluations

If you obtain an IEE of your child at public expense or you share with the public agency an evaluation of your child that you obtained at private expense:

1. Your public agency must consider the results of the evaluation of your child, if it meets the public agency's criteria for IEEs, in any

decision made with respect to the provision of FAPE to your child; **and**

2. You or your public agency may present the evaluation as evidence at a due process hearing regarding your child.

Requests for evaluations by hearing officers

If a hearing officer requests an IEE for your child as part of a due process hearing, the cost of the evaluation must be at public expense.

Public agency criteria

If an IEE is at public expense, the criteria under which the evaluation is obtained, including the location of the evaluation and the qualifications of the examiner, must be the same as the criteria that the public agency uses when it initiates an evaluation (to the extent those criteria are consistent with your right to an IEE).

Except for the criteria described above, a public agency may not impose conditions or timelines related to obtaining an IEE at public expense.

Audio Recording of Individualized Education Program Meeting **MS Code Section 37-23-137**

The parent or guardian, or the local educational agency (LEA), has the right to participate in the development of the IEP and to initiate their intent to audio record the proceedings of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. The parent or guardian or local educational agency shall notify the members of the IEP team of their intent to record a meeting at least

with a disability who violates a school code of student conduct.

General

To the extent that they also take such action for children without disabilities, school personnel may, for not more than **ten (10) school days** in a row, remove a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct from his or her current placement to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting (which must be determined by the child's IEP Committee), another setting, or suspension. School personnel may also impose additional removals of the child of not more than **ten (10) school days** in a row in that same school year for separate incidents of misconduct, as long as those removals do not constitute a change in placement (see *Change of Placement Because of Disciplinary Removals* for the definition, page 31).

Once a child with a disability has been removed from his or her current placement for a total of **ten (10) school days** in the same school year, the public agency must, during any subsequent days of removal in that school year, provide services to the extent required below under the sub-heading **Services**.
Additional authority.

If the behavior that violated the student code of conduct was not a manifestation of the child's disability (see **Manifestation** (see *Manifestation determination*) and the disciplinary change of placement would exceed **ten (10) school days** in a row, school personnel may apply the disciplinary procedures to that child with a disability in the same

manner and for the same duration as it would to children without disabilities, except that the school must provide services to that child as described below under **Services**. The child's IEP Committee determines the interim alternative educational setting for such services.

Services

The services that must be provided to a child with a disability who has been removed from the child's current placement [§300.530(d)(2)] may be provided in an interim alternative educational setting.

Dependent upon local school board policy, a public agency may only be required to provide services to a child with a disability who has been removed from his or her current placement for **ten (10) school days or less** in that school year, if it provides services to a child without disabilities who has been similarly removed.

A child with a disability who is removed from the child's current placement for **more than ten (10) school days and the behavior is not a manifestation of the child's disability** (see subheading, **Manifestation determination**) or who is removed under special circumstances (see subheading, **Special circumstances**) must:

1. Continue to receive educational services, so as to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's IEP; **and**

calendar days before the proceeding begins;

- (b) The offer is not accepted within **ten (10)** calendar days; **and**

- (c) The court or administrative hearing officer finds that the relief finally obtained by you is not more favorable to you than the offer of settlement.

Despite these restrictions, an award of attorney's fees and related costs may be made to you if you prevail and you were substantially justified in rejecting the settlement offer.

3. Fees may not be awarded relating to any meeting of the IEP Committee unless the meeting is held as a result of an administrative proceeding or court action.
4. Fees also may not be awarded for mediation as described under the heading **Mediation**.

A resolution meeting, as described under the heading **Resolution Process**, is not considered a meeting convened as a result of an administrative hearing or court action, and also is not considered an administrative hearing or court action for purposes of these attorney's fees provisions.

The court reduces, as appropriate, the amount of the attorney's fees awarded under Part B of IDEA, if the court finds that:

1. You, or your attorney, during the course of the action or proceeding, unreasonably delayed the final resolution of the dispute;

2. The amount of the attorney's fees otherwise authorized to be awarded unreasonably exceeds the hourly rate prevailing in the community for similar services by attorneys of reasonably similar skill, reputation, and experience;
3. The time spent and legal services furnished were excessive considering the nature of the action or proceeding; **or**
4. The attorney representing you did not provide the public agency the appropriate information in the due process request notice as described under the heading **Due Process Complaint**.

However, the court may not reduce fees if the court finds that the State or public agency unreasonably delayed the final resolution of the action or proceeding or there was a violation under the procedural safeguards provisions of Part B of IDEA.

PROCEDURES WHEN DISCIPLINING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Authority of School Personnel

\$300.530

Case-by-case determination

School personnel may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis, when determining whether a change of placement, made in accordance with the following requirements related to discipline, is appropriate for a child

twenty-four (24) hours prior to the meeting.

Confidentiality of Information Definitions

\$300.611

As used under the heading **Confidentiality of Information**:

Destruction means physical destruction or removal of personal identifiers from information so that the information is no longer personally identifiable.

Education records means the type of records covered under the definition of "education records" in 34 CFR Part 99 (the regulations implementing the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. 1232g [FERPA]).

Participating agency means any public agency, agency or institution that collects, maintains, or uses personally identifiable information, or from which information is obtained, under Part B of the IDEA.

**Personally Identifiable
§300.32**

Personally identifiable means information that includes:

- a. Your child's name, your name as the parent, or the name of another family member;
- b. Your child's address;
- c. A personal identifier, such as your child's social security number or student number; **or**
- d. A list of personal characteristics or other information that would make it possible to identify your child with reasonable certainty.

Notice to Parents

§300.612

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) will give notice that is adequate to fully inform parents about confidentiality of personally identifiable information, including:

1. A description of the extent to which the notice is given in the native languages of the various population groups in Mississippi;
2. A description of the children on whom personally identifiable information is maintained, the types of information sought, the methods the MDE intends to use in gathering the information (including the sources from whom information is gathered), and the uses to be made of the information;

3. A summary of the policies and procedures that participating agencies must follow regarding storage, disclosure to third parties, retention, and destruction of personally identifiable information; **and**
4. A description of all the rights of parents and children regarding this information, including the rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and its implementing regulations in 34 CFR Part 99.

Access Rights

§300.613

The participating agency must permit you to inspect and review any education records relating to your child that are collected, maintained, or used by your public agency under Part B of IDEA. The participating agency must comply with your request to inspect and review any education records on your child without unnecessary delay and before any meeting regarding an IEP, or any impartial due process hearing (including a resolution meeting or a hearing regarding discipline), and in no case more than **forty-five (45) calendar days** after you have made the request.

Your right to inspect and review education records includes:

1. Your right to a response from the participating agency to your reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of the records;
2. Your right to request that the participating agency provide copies of the records if you

under Part B of IDEA for a child who is transitioning from being served under Part C of IDEA to Part B of IDEA and who is no longer eligible for Part C services because the child has turned three, the public agency is not required to provide the Part C services that the child has been receiving. If the child is found eligible under Part B of IDEA and you consent for the child to receive special education and related services for the first time, then, pending the outcome of the proceedings, the public agency must provide those special education and related services that are not in dispute (those upon which you and the public agency both agree).

If a hearing officer in a due process hearing conducted by the MDE agrees with you that a change of placement is appropriate, that placement must be treated as your child's current educational placement where your child will remain while waiting for the decision of any impartial due process hearing or court proceeding.

Attorney's Fees

§300.517

General

In any action or proceeding brought under Part B of IDEA, the court, in its discretion, may award reasonable attorney's fees as part of the costs to you, if you prevail (win).

In any action or proceeding brought under Part B of IDEA, the court, in its discretion, may award reasonable attorney's fees as part of the costs to a prevailing MDE or public agency, to be paid by your attorney, if the attorney: (a) filed a complaint or

court case that the court finds is frivolous, unreasonable, or without foundation; **or** (b) continued to litigate after the litigation clearly became frivolous, unreasonable, or without foundation; **or**

In any action or proceeding brought under Part B of the IDEA, the court, in its discretion, may award reasonable attorney's fees as part of the costs to the prevailing MDE or public agency, to be paid by you or your attorney, if your request for a due process hearing or later court case was presented for any improper purpose, such as to harass, to cause unnecessary delay, or to unnecessarily increase the cost of the action or proceeding (*hearing*).

Award of fees

A court awards reasonable attorney's fees as follows:

1. Fees must be based on rates prevailing in the community in which the action or proceeding arose for the kind and quality of services furnished. No bonus or multiplier may be used in calculating the fees awarded.
2. Attorney's fees may not be awarded and related costs may not be reimbursed in any action or proceeding under Part B of IDEA for services performed after a written offer of settlement is made to you if:

- (a) The offer is made within the time prescribed by Rule 68 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure or, in the case of a due process hearing or State-level review, at any time more than **ten (10)**

of the United States without regard to the amount in dispute.

Time limitation

The party (you or the public agency) bringing the action shall have **ninety (90)** calendar days from the date of the decision of the hearing officer to file a civil action.

Additional procedures

In any civil action, the court:

1. Receives the records of the administrative proceedings;
2. Hears additional evidence at your request or at the public agency's request; **and**
3. Bases its decision on the preponderance of the evidence and grants the relief that the court determines to be appropriate.

Under appropriate circumstances, judicial relief may include reimbursement of private school tuition and compensatory education services.

Jurisdiction of district courts

The district courts of the United States have authority to rule on actions brought under Part B of IDEA without regard to the amount in dispute.

Interpretation

Nothing in Part B of IDEA restricts or limits the rights, procedures, and remedies available under the U.S. Constitution, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title V of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), or other Federal laws protecting the rights of children with disabilities, except that before the filing of a civil action under these laws seeking relief that is also available under Part B of IDEA, the

cannot effectively inspect and review the records unless you receive those copies; **and**

3. Your right to have your representative inspect and review the records.

The participating agency may presume that you have authority to inspect and review records relating to your child unless advised that you do not have the authority under applicable Mississippi law governing such matters as guardianship, separation and divorce.

Record of Access

\$300.614

Each participating agency must keep a record of parties obtaining access to education records collected, maintained or used under Part B of IDEA (except access by parents and authorized employees of the participating agency), including the name of the party, the date access was given, and the purpose for which the party is authorized to use the records.

Records on More Than One Child

\$300.615

If any education record includes information on more than one child, the parents of those children have the right to inspect and review only the information relating to their child or to be informed of that specific information.

List of Types and Locations of Information

\$300.616

On request, each participating agency must provide you with a list of the types and locations of education records collected, maintained or used by the agency.

Fees

\$300.617

Each participating agency may charge a fee for copies of records that are made for you under Part B of IDEA, if the fee does not effectively prevent you from exercising your right to inspect and review those records.

A participating agency may not charge a fee to search for or to retrieve information under Part B of IDEA.

Amendment of Records at Parent's Request

\$300.618

If you believe that information in the education records regarding your child collected, maintained, or used under Part B of IDEA is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the privacy or other rights of your child, you may request the participating agency that maintains the information to change the information.

The participating agency must decide whether to change the information in accordance with your request within a reasonable period of time of receipt of your request.

If the participating agency refuses to change the information in accordance with your request, it must inform you of the refusal and advise you of the right to a hearing for this purpose as described under

the heading ***Opportunity For a Hearing.***

Opportunity for a Hearing
§300.619

The participating agency must, on request, provide you an opportunity for a hearing to challenge information in education records regarding your child to ensure that it is not inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of your child.

Hearing Procedures
§300.621

A hearing to challenge information in education records must be conducted according to the procedures for such hearings under Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Result of a Hearing
§300.620

If, as a result of the hearing, the participating agency decides that the information is inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of the child, it must change the information accordingly and inform you in writing.

If, as a result of the hearing, the participating agency decides that the information is not inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of your child, it must inform you of your right to place in the records that it maintains on your child a statement commenting on the information or providing any reasons you disagree

Nothing in the procedural safeguards section of the Federal Regulations under Part B of IDEA (34 CFR §§300.500 through 300.536) can be interpreted to prevent you from filing a separate due process complaint on an issue separate from a due process complaint already filed.

Findings and decision to advisory panel and general public
MDE, after deleting any personally identifiable information, must:

1. Provide the findings and decisions in the due process hearing to the State special education advisory panel; **and**
2. Make those findings and decisions available to the public.

APPEALS

Finality of Decision, Appeal, Impartial Review
§300.514

Finality of hearing decision
A decision made in a due process hearing (including a hearing relating to disciplinary procedures) is final, except that any party involved in the hearing (you or the public agency) may appeal the decision by bringing a civil action, as described under the heading ***Civil Actions, Including the Time Period in Which to File Those Actions.***

Timelines and Convenience of Hearings and Review
§300.515

The MDE must ensure that, not later than **forty-five (45)** calendar days after the expiration date of the **thirty (30)** calendar-day period for resolution meetings **or**, as described under the sub-heading ***Adjustments to the thirty (30) calendar-day resolution period, not later than forty-five (45)*** calendar days after the expiration of the adjusted time period:

1. A final decision is reached in the hearing; **and**
2. A copy of the decision is mailed to each of the parties.

A hearing officer may grant specific extensions of time beyond the **forty-five (45)** calendar-day time period described above at the request of either party (you or the public agency).

Each hearing must be conducted at a time and place that is reasonably convenient to you and your child.

Civil Actions, Including the Time Period in Which to File Those Actions
§300.516

General
Any party (you or the public agency) who does not agree with the findings and decision in the due process hearing (including a hearing relating to disciplinary procedures) has the right to bring a civil action with respect to the matter that was the subject of the due process hearing. The action may be brought in a State court of competent jurisdiction (a State court that has authority to hear this type of case) or in a district court



Consent for Disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information
§300.622

Unless the information is contained in education records, and the disclosure is authorized without parental consent under FERPA, your consent must be obtained before personally identifiable information is disclosed to parties other than officials of participating agencies. Except under the circumstances specified below, your consent is not required before personally identifiable information is released to officials of participating agencies for purposes of meeting a requirement of Part B of IDEA.

Your consent, or consent of an eligible child who has reached the age of majority (twenty-one) under

- with special knowledge or training regarding the problems of children with disabilities;
2. Be represented at the due process hearing by an attorney;
 3. Present evidence and confront, cross-examine, and require the attendance of witnesses;
 4. Prohibit the introduction of any evidence at the hearing that has not been disclosed to that party at least **five (5)** business days before the hearing;
 5. Obtain a written, or, at your option, electronic, word-for-word record of the hearing; **and**
 6. Obtain written, or, at your option, electronic findings of fact and decisions.

Additional disclosure of information

At least **five (5)** business days prior to a due process hearing, you and the public agency must disclose to each other all evaluations completed by that date and recommendations based on those evaluations that you or the public agency intend to use at the hearing.

A hearing officer may prevent any party that fails to comply with this requirement from introducing the relevant evaluation or recommendation at the hearing without the consent of the other party.

Parental rights at hearings

You must be given the right to:

1. Have your child present at the hearing;

2. Open the hearing to the public; **and**
3. Have the record of the hearing, the findings of facts and decisions provided to you at no cost.

Hearing Decisions **\$300.513**

Decision of hearing officer

A hearing officer's decision on whether your child received FAPE must be based on evidence and arguments that directly relate to FAPE.

In matters alleging a procedural violation (such as an incomplete IEP Committee), a hearing officer may find that your child did not receive FAPE only if the procedural violations:

1. Interfered with your child's right to FAPE;
2. Significantly interfered with your opportunity to participate in the decision-making process regarding the provision of FAPE to your child; **or**
3. Caused your child to be deprived of an educational benefit.

None of the provisions described above can be interpreted to prevent a hearing officer from ordering a public agency to comply with the requirements in the procedural safeguards section of the Federal Regulations under Part B of IDEA (34 CFR §§300.500 through 300.536).

Separate request for a due process hearing

Mississippi law, must be obtained before personally identifiable information is released to officials of participating agencies providing or paying for transition services.

If your child is in, or is going to go to, a private school that is not located in the same public agency in which you reside, your consent must be obtained before any personally identifiable information about your child is released between officials in the public agency where the private school is located and officials in the public agency where you reside.

be maintained without time limitation.

Safeguards

§300.623

Each participating agency must protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information at collection, storage, disclosure and destruction stages.

One official at each participating agency must assume responsibility for ensuring the confidentiality of any personally identifiable information.

All persons collecting or using personally identifiable information must receive training or instruction regarding MDE's policies and procedures regarding confidentiality under Part B of IDEA and FERPA.

Each participating agency must maintain, for public inspection, a current listing of the names and positions of those employees within the agency who may have access to personally identifiable information.

Destruction of Information

§300.624

Your public agency must inform you when personally identifiable information collected, maintained or used under Part B of IDEA is no longer needed to provide educational services to your child.

The information must be destroyed at your request. However, a permanent record of your child's name, address, and phone number, his or her grades, attendance record, classes attended, grade level completed, and year completed may

Whenever a due process complaint is filed, you or the public agency involved in the dispute must have an opportunity for an impartial due process hearing, as described in the **Due Process Complaint and Resolution Process** sections. Mississippi is a "One-Tier" state, which means that the MDE is responsible for convening due process hearings and any appeal from a due process hearing decision is filed directly with a court of competent jurisdiction.

Impartial hearing officer

- At a minimum, a hearing officer:
1. Must not be an employee of MDE or the public agency that is involved in the education or care of the child. However, a person is not an employee of the agency solely because they are paid by the agency to serve as a hearing officer;
 2. Must not have a personal or professional interest that conflicts with the hearing officer's objectivity in the hearing;
 3. Must be knowledgeable and understand the provisions of IDEA, and Federal and State Regulations pertaining to IDEA, and legal interpretations of IDEA by Federal and State Courts; **and**
 4. Must have the knowledge and ability to conduct hearings, and to make and write decisions, consistent with appropriate, standard legal practice.

The MDE maintains a list of those persons who serve as hearing officers that includes a statement of the qualifications of each hearing officer.

Subject matter of due process hearing

The party (you or the public agency) that requests the due process hearing may not raise issues at the due process hearing that were not addressed in the due process complaint, unless the other party agrees.

Timeline for requesting a hearing

You or the public agency must request an impartial hearing on a due process complaint within **two (2)** years of the date you or the public agency knew or should have known about the issue addressed in the complaint.

Exceptions to the timeline

The above timeline does not apply to you if you could not file a due process complaint because:

1. The public agency specifically misrepresented that it had resolved the problem or issue that you are raising in your complaint; **or**
2. The public agency withheld information from you that it was required to provide to you under Part B of the IDEA.

Hearing Rights

§300.512

General

You have the right to represent yourself at a due process hearing. In addition, any party to a due process hearing (including a hearing relating to disciplinary procedures) has the right to:

1. Be accompanied and advised by counsel and by persons

arrange a mutually agreed upon time and place, such as:

1. Detailed records of telephone calls made or attempted and the results of those calls;
2. Copies of correspondence sent to you and any responses received; **and**
3. Detailed records of visits made to your home or place of employment and the results of those visits.

If the public agency fails to hold the resolution meeting within **fifteen (15)** calendar days of receiving notice of your due process complaint **or** fails to participate in the resolution meeting, you may ask the hearing officer to begin the **forty-five (45)** calendar-day due process hearing timeline.

Adjustments to the thirty (30) calendar-day resolution period

If you and the public agency agree in writing to waive the resolution meeting, then the **forty-five (45)** calendar day timeline for the due process hearing starts the next day.

After the start of mediation or the resolution meeting and before the end of the **thirty (30)** calendar day resolution period, if you and the public agency may agree in writing that no agreement is possible, then the **forty-five (45)** calendar day timeline for the due process hearing starts the next day.

If you and the public agency may agree to use the mediation process but have not yet reached agreement, at the end of the **thirty (30)** calendar day resolution period the mediation process may be continued until an agreement is reached if both

parties agree to the continuation in writing. However, if either you or the public agency withdraws from the mediation process during this continuation period, then the **forty-five (45)** calendar day timeline for the due process hearing starts the next day.

Written settlement agreement

If a resolution to the dispute is reached at the resolution meeting, you and the public agency must enter into a legally binding agreement that is:

1. Signed by you and a representative of the public agency who has the authority to bind the public agency; **and**
2. Enforceable in any State court of competent jurisdiction (a State court that has the authority to hear this type of case) or in a district court of the United States.

Agreement review period

If you and the public agency enter into an agreement as a result of a resolution meeting, either party (you or the public agency) may void the agreement within **three (3)** business days of the time that both you and the public agency signed the agreement.

HEARINGS ON DUE PROCESS COMPLAINTS

Impartial Due Process Hearing

\$300.511 • MS Code §37-23-143

General

heading **Resolution Process**, unless the hearing officer grants a specific extension of the timeline at your request or the public agency's request. The formal State complaint and due process complaint, resolution and hearing procedures are described more fully on the next three pages. The MDE has available model forms to help you file a due process complaint and to help you or other parties to file a formal State complaint.

Adoption of Formal State Complaint Procedures

\$300.151

General

The MDE has written procedures for:

1. Resolving any formal State complaint, including a formal State complaint filed by an organization or individual from another State;
2. The filing of a formal State complaint with the MDE;
3. Widely disseminating the formal State complaint procedures to parents and other interested individuals, including parent training and information centers, protection and advocacy agencies, independent living centers, and other appropriate entities.

Remedies for denial of appropriate services

In resolving a formal State complaint in which the MDE has found a failure to provide appropriate services, the MDE will address:

1. The failure to provide appropriate services, including corrective action

appropriate to address the needs of the child (such as compensatory services or monetary reimbursement); **and**

2. Appropriate future provision of services for all children with disabilities.



Formal State Complaint Procedures

\$300.152

Time limit, procedures

MDE includes in its formal State complaint procedures a time limit of **sixty (60)** calendar days after a formal State complaint is filed to:

1. Carry out an independent on-site investigation, if MDE determines that an investigation is necessary;
2. Give the complainant the opportunity to submit additional information, either orally or in writing, about the allegations in the formal State complaint;
3. Provide the public agency with the opportunity to respond to the formal State complaint, including, at a minimum: (a) at the option of the agency, a proposal to resolve the formal State complaint; **and** (b) an opportunity for a parent who has filed a formal State complaint and the public agency to agree voluntarily to engage in mediation;

4. Review all relevant information and make an independent determination as to whether the public agency is violating a requirement of Part B of IDEA; **and**
5. Issue a written decision to the complainant that addresses each allegation in the formal State complaint and contains: (a) findings of fact and conclusions; **and** (b) the reasons for MDE's final decision.

Time extension, final decision, and implementation

The MDE's procedures described above also:

1. Permit an extension of the **sixty (60)** calendar-day time limit only if:
 - (a) exceptional circumstances exist with respect to a particular formal State complaint; **or** (b) the parent and the public agency involved voluntarily agree to extend the time to resolve the matter through mediation or alternative means of dispute resolution;
2. Include procedures for effective implementation of the MDE's final decision, if needed, including: (a) technical assistance activities; (b) negotiations; **and** (c) corrective actions to achieve compliance.

Formal State complaints and due process hearings

If a formal State complaint is received that is also the subject of a due process hearing as described below under the heading **Filing a Due Process Complaint**, or the

formal State complaint contains multiple issues of which one or more are part of such a hearing, MDE will set aside any part of the formal State complaint that is being addressed in the due process hearing until the hearing is over. Any issue in the formal State complaint that is not a part of the due process hearing will be resolved using the time limit and procedures described above.

If an issue raised in a formal State complaint has previously been decided in a due process hearing involving the same parties (for example, you and the public agency), then the due process hearing decision is binding on that issue and the MDE will inform the complainant that the decision is binding.

A formal State complaint alleging a public agency's failure to implement a due process hearing decision will be resolved by the MDE.

Filing a Formal State Complaint

§300.153

An organization or individual may file a formal State complaint under the procedures described above.

The formal State complaint must include:

1. A statement that a public agency or has violated a requirement of Part B of IDEA or its implementing regulations in 34 CFR Part 300;
2. The facts on which the statement is based;

2. Must not have a personal or professional interest which conflicts with the mediator's objectivity.

A person who otherwise qualifies as a mediator is not an employee of a public agency or MDE solely because they are paid by MDE or public agency to serve as a mediator.

Resolution Process

§300.510

Resolution meeting
Within **fifteen (15)** calendar days of receiving notice of your due process complaint, and before the due process hearing begins, the public agency must convene a meeting with you and the relevant member or members of the IEP Committee who have specific knowledge of the facts identified in your due process complaint. The meeting:

1. Must include a representative of the public agency who has decision-making authority on behalf of the public agency; **and**
2. May not include an attorney of the public agency unless you are accompanied by an attorney.

You and the public agency determine the relevant members of the IEP Committee to attend the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting is for you to discuss your due process complaint, and the facts that form the basis of the complaint, so that the public agency has the opportunity to resolve the dispute.

The resolution meeting is not necessary if:

1. You and the public agency agree in writing to waive the meeting; **or**
2. You and the public agency agree to use the mediation process, as described under the heading **Mediation**.

Resolution period

If the public agency has not resolved the due process complaint to your satisfaction within **thirty (30)** calendar days of the receipt of the due process complaint (during the time period for the resolution process), the due process hearing may occur.

The **forty-five (45)** calendar-day timeline for issuing a final decision begins at the expiration of the **thirty (30)** calendar-day resolution period with certain exceptions for adjustments made to the **thirty (30)** calendar-day resolution period, as described below.

Except where you and the public agency have both agreed to waive the resolution process or to use mediation, your failure to participate in the resolution meeting will delay the timelines for the resolution process and due process hearing until the meeting is held.

If after making reasonable efforts and documenting such efforts, the public agency is not able to obtain your participation in the resolution meeting, the public agency may, at the end of the **thirty (30)** calendar-day resolution period, request that a hearing officer dismiss your due process complaint. Documentation of such efforts must include a record of the public agency's attempts to

the heading ***Filing a Due Process Complaint***.

Requirements

The procedures must ensure that the mediation process:

1. Is voluntary on your part and the public agency's part;
2. Is not used to deny or delay your right to a due process hearing, or to deny any other rights you have under Part B of IDEA; **and**
3. Is conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator who is trained in effective mediation techniques.

The public agency may develop procedures that offer parents and schools that choose not to use the mediation process an opportunity to meet, at a time and location convenient to you, with a disinterested party:

1. Who is under contract with an appropriate alternative dispute resolution entity, or a parent training and information center or community parent resource center in Mississippi; **and**
2. Who would explain the benefits of, and encourage the use of, the mediation process to you.

MDE has a list of people who are qualified mediators and know the laws and regulations relating to the provision of special education and related services. MDE selects mediators on a rotational and impartial basis.

MDE is responsible for the cost of the mediation process, including the costs of meetings.

Each meeting in the mediation process must be scheduled in a timely manner and held at a place that is convenient for you and the public agency.

If you, and the public agency resolve a dispute through the mediation process, both parties must enter into a legally binding agreement that sets forth the resolution and that:

1. States that all discussions that happened during the mediation process will remain confidential and may not be used as evidence in any subsequent due process hearing or civil proceeding (court case); **and**
2. Is signed by both you and a representative of the public agency who has the authority to bind the public agency.

A written, signed mediation agreement is enforceable in any State court of competent jurisdiction (a court that has the authority under State law to hear this type of case) or in a district court of the United States.

Discussions that happened during the mediation process must be kept confidential. They cannot be used as evidence in any future due process hearing or civil proceeding of any Federal Court or State Court of a State receiving assistance under Part B of IDEA.

Impartiality of mediator

The mediator:

1. May not be an employee of MDE or the public agency that is involved in the education or care of your child; **and**

3. The signature and contact information for the party filing the complaint; and
4. If alleging violations regarding a specific child:

- (a) The name of the child and address of the residence of the child;
- (b) The name of the school the child is attending;
- (c) In the case of a homeless child or youth, available contact information for the child, and the name of the school the child is attending;
- (d) A description of the nature of the problem of the child, including facts relating to the problem; **and**
- (e) A proposed resolution of the problem to the extent known and available to the party filing the formal State complaint at the time the formal State complaint is filed.

The formal State complaint must allege a violation that occurred not more than **one (1)** year prior to the date that the formal State complaint is received as described under the heading ***Adoption of Formal State Complaint Procedures***.

The party filing the formal State complaint must forward a copy of the formal State complaint to the public agency serving the child at the same time the party files the formal State complaint with the MDE. Additionally, the public agency must forward a copy of any and all responses they send to the MDE regarding said formal complaint.

DUE PROCESS COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Filing a Due Process Complaint

\$300.507

General

You or the public agency may file a due process complaint on any matter relating to a proposal or a refusal to initiate or change the identification, evaluation or educational placement of your child, or the provision of FAPE to your child.

The due process complaint must allege a violation that happened not more than **two (2)** years before you or the public agency knew or should have known about the alleged action that forms the basis of the due process complaint.

The above timeline does not apply if you could not file a due process complaint within the timeline because:

1. The public agency specifically misrepresented that it had resolved the issues identified in the complaint; **or**
2. The public agency withheld information from you that it was required to provide under Part B of IDEA.

Information for parents

The public agency must inform you of any free or low-cost legal and other relevant services available in the area if you request the information, **or** if the public agency file a due process complaint.

Due Process Complaint

§300.508

General

In order to request a hearing, you, the public agency (or your attorney or the public agency's attorney) must submit a due process complaint to the other party.

That complaint must contain all of the content listed below and must be kept confidential. You, the public agency whichever one filed the complaint, must also provide the MDE with a copy of the complaint.

Content of the complaint

The due process complaint must include:

1. The name of the child;
2. The address of the child's residence;
3. The name of the child's school;
4. If the child is a homeless child or youth, the child's contact information and the name of the child's school;
5. A description of the nature of the problem of the child relating to the proposed or refused action, including facts relating to the problem; **and**
6. A proposed resolution of the problem to the extent known and available to the complaining party (you or the public agency) at the time.

Notice required before a hearing on a due process complaint

You, or the public agency may not have a due process hearing until you or the public agency (or your attorney or the public agency's attorney), file a due process

complaint that includes the information listed above.

Sufficiency of complaint

In order for a due process complaint to go forward, it must be considered sufficient. The due process complaint will be considered sufficient (to have met the content requirements above) unless the party receiving the due process complaint (you or the public agency) notifies the hearing officer and the other party in writing, within **fifteen (15)** calendar days of receiving the complaint, that the receiving party believes the due process complaint does not meet the requirements listed above.

Within **five (5)** calendar days of receiving notification that the receiving party (you or the public agency) considers a due process complaint insufficient, the hearing officer must decide if the due process complaint meets the requirements listed above and notify you and the public agency in writing immediately.

Complaint amendment

You or the public agency may make changes to the complaint only if:

1. The other party approves of the changes in writing and is given the chance to resolve the due process complaint through a resolution meeting described below; **or**
2. By no later than **five (5)** days before the due process hearing begins, the hearing officer grants permission for the changes.

If the complaining party (you or the public agency) makes changes to the due process complaint, the timelines

for the resolution meeting (within **fifteen (15)** calendar days of receiving the complaint) and the time period for resolution (within **thirty (30)** calendar days of receiving the complaint) start again on the date the amended complaint is filed.

Local educational agency (LEA) or other public agency, response to a due process complaint

If the public agency has not sent a prior written notice to you, as described under the heading **Prior Written Notice**, regarding the subject matter contained in your due process complaint, the public agency must, within **ten (10)** calendar days of receiving the due process complaint, send to you a response that includes:

1. An explanation of why the agency proposed or refused to take the action raised in the due process complaint;
2. A description of other options that your child's IEP Committee considered and the reasons why those options were rejected;
3. A description of each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report the agency used as the basis for the proposed or refused action; **and**
4. A description of the other factors that are relevant to the agency's proposed or refused action.

Providing the information in items 1-4 above does not prevent the public agency from asserting that your due process complaint was insufficient.

Other party response to a due process complaint
Except as stated under the sub-heading immediately above, **LEA, or other public agency response to a due process complaint**, the party receiving a due process complaint must, within **ten (10)** calendar days of receiving the complaint, send the other party a response that specifically addresses the issues in the complaint.

Model Forms

§300.509

The MDE has developed model forms to help you file a due process complaint and to help you and other parties file a formal State complaint. However, the MDE, public agency does not require you to use these model forms. In fact, you can use this form or another appropriate form, so long as it contains the required information for filing a due process complaint or a formal State complaint.

Mediation

§300.506

General

The public agency must make mediation available to allow you and the public agency to resolve disagreements involving any matter under Part B of IDEA, including matters arising prior to the filing of a due process complaint. Thus, mediation is available to resolve disputes under Part B of IDEA, whether or not you have filed a due process complaint to request a due process hearing as described under