

VALLEY STREAM UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT TWENTY FOUR

IMPARTIAL HEARING OFFICER APPOINTMENT AND COMPENSATION

Policy 5425

The Board of Education establishes the following policy to govern the appointment and compensation of impartial hearing officers for special education related impartial hearings pursuant to Part 200 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

The Board of Education will appoint impartial hearing officers (IHO), as needed, to hear complaints regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of students with disabilities, or the provision of a free appropriate public education to such a student in accordance with the rotational selection process and other applicable procedures described in Commissioner's regulations.

Selection

The updated list of certified IHOs promulgated by the New York State Education Department will be used in connection with requests for impartial hearings. The list shall also include the names of those other certified IHOs whose names appear on the state list and who have indicated to the School District their interest in serving as an IHO in the School District.

The Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee shall be responsible for recommending IHOs to the Board of Education for approval.

Upon receipt of a request for an impartial hearing, the rotational selection process for the IHO shall be initiated immediately and always within two (2) business days after receipt by the School District of such written request. Should an IHO decline appointment, or if within twenty-four (24) hours the IHO fails to respond or is unreachable after reasonable efforts by the Director of Pupil Services, such efforts will be documented through independently verifiable efforts.

The Director of Pupil Services will initiate the selection process by contacting the impartial hearing officer whose name first appears after the impartial hearing officer who last served. This will be by telephone, or if unsuccessful, by leaving a message and sending a letter by overnight mail. The Director of Pupil Services will canvass the list in alphabetical order as prescribed by the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education until an appointment is accepted. The Director of Pupil Services shall then proceed through the list to determine availability of the next successive IHO.

An IHO on the School District's rotational list may not accept appointment unless he or she is available to:

1. Make a determination on the sufficiency of the due process complaint that will be heard at the hearing within five (5) days of receiving such a request; and
2. Initiate the hearing within the first fourteen (14) days after either:
 - The School District appoints the hearing officer; or

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- The date on which he or she receives written notice that the parents and the School District waived their right to hold a resolution meeting to resolve their differences prior to commencement of the hearing, or met but were unable to reach agreement; or
- The expiration of the thirty (30) day period beginning with the receipt of the due process complaint, whichever occurs first unless the parties agree in writing to continue mediation at the end of the thirty (30) day resolution period, in which case, the hearing or pre-hearing conference shall commence within the first fourteen (14) days after the impartial hearing officer is notified in writing that either party withdrew from mediation.

Appointment

The Board of Education by resolution, or Board of Education President by letter (or Vice President in his/her absence or inability), will appoint an IHO immediately after the IHO selected from the rotational list indicates he or she is available.

The Board of Education will rescind the appointment of an IHO and appoint a new one if, the parties to the hearing mutually agree that the IHO is either incapacitated or otherwise unavailable or unwilling to continue the hearing or issue a decision. The appointment of a new IHO in such an instance will be made in accordance with the selection and appointment procedures established by this policy.

Compensation

The School District shall compensate an impartial hearing officer for his or her services at the maximum rate established for such purpose by the New York State Director of the Division of the Budget. The School District will pay the impartial hearing officer New York State appointed at the rate of up to \$100 per hour for pre-hearing, hearing, and post-hearing activities. In addition, impartial hearing officers may be reimbursed for reasonable, actual and necessary expenses for automobile travel, meals and overnight lodging in accordance with the current School District reimbursement rate set for School District employees. Mailing costs associated with the hearing will also be reimbursed. The School District will not reimburse impartial hearing officers for administrative assistance, secretarial or other overhead expenses.

Cancellation

The School District shall attempt to provide an Impartial Hearing Officer with two (2) business days' advance notice of the cancellation or re-scheduling of an impartial hearing. Should the School District request the cancellation or re-scheduling of a hearing date and fail to provide an Impartial Hearing Officer with two (2) days' notice, the School District agrees to pay the Impartial Hearing Officer a fee of \$100.00. The School District shall not be responsible for costs associated with a parent or guardian's cancellation or adjournment of a hearing.

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A copy of this policy will be forwarded to the impartial hearing officer at the time of appointment.

Records relating to the IHO process including, but not limited to, the request for initiation and completion of each impartial hearing will be maintained by the School District and such information will be reported to the New York State Education Department's Office of Special Education as required by Commissioner's regulations.

Cross Ref: Policy 5400 Programs for Students with Disabilities *et seq.*

Ref: 8 NYCRR §§200.2(b)(9), (e)(1); 200.5(j); 200.21

Adoption date: October 30, 2019