**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION – ADMINISTRATIVE RULE SUMMARY**

**Title/OAR #:** OAR 581-015-2030- Procedures for Complaints as Required by IDEA Regulations

**Date:** May 16, 2013

**Staff/Office:** Claudette Rushing, Office of Student Learning & Partnerships

**New Rule** **Amend Existing Rule Repeal Rule**

**Hearing Date:** February 22nd, 2013  **Hearings Officer Report Attached**

**Prompted by:  State law changes  Federal law changes  Other**

See below.

**Action Requested:**

**Written Item/First Reading  Adoption  Adoption/Consent Agenda**

**PROPOSED/AMENDED RULE SUMMARY:**

Amend OAR 581-015-2030(14)(b) and (c) in order to once again allow for Reconsideration of Final Orders issued by the Department of Education for IDEA Complaints.

**BACKGROUND:**

Oregon’s Administrative Procedures Act (APA) establishes default procedural rules for adjudicative proceedings conducted by state administrative agencies. With the exception of special education due process hearings, the State Board of Education (SBE) has adopted, via OAR 581-001-0005, the APA procedures for adjudication conducted by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). This provision has been in effect since January 1, 2006.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to maintain state-level procedures for investigating alleged violations of the IDEA and issuing findings and ordering corrective action in circumstances where the State identifies non-compliance. The IDEA requires such procedures to be completed within 60 calendar days of receipt of an alleged violation.

The SBE has adopted a state-level special education complaint process via OAR 581-015-2030. The process outlined in OAR 581-015-2030 complies with the general 60-day federal timeline. The default procedures of the Oregon APA allow parties to special education complaints to request reconsideration of the complaint final order.

Reconsideration of IDEA Final Orders was a practice utlized by Oregon until March 2011 when OAR 581-015-2030 was revised in order to stop the process of reconsideration for these Final Orders. This was pursuant to a verification visit from the federal Departmetn of Education. In fall 2010, the US Department of Education (DOE) conducted a verification visit to review Oregon’s implementation of the IDEA. As a result of that visit, the US DOE found that Oregon’s reconsideration process created the possibility that complaint final orders could be issued outside of the 60-day period identified in federal law due to the then existing practice of reconsideration. In February 2011, the US DOE ordered the State to provide an assurance that our complaint policies and procedures are consistent with federal law by May 2, 2011. As a result of this requirement, the Department changed OAR 581-015-2030 to remove the possiblity of reconsideration for these orders. At this time, a member of State’s the Dispute Resolution Advisory Committee expressed concern that the discontinuation of the reconsideration process may increase the amount of petitions for review to the Oregon Circuit Courts and result in more litigation between parents and districts. The member was concerned that litigation is more adversarial and costly than the reconsideration process. This has proven to be true, as more School Districts are now appealing these Final Orders in Circuit Court, now that recondiseration is not an option. This is costly to Districts, parents, and the Department of Education. Additonally, it is not in accordance with the spirit of the the IDEA, which sought to create nonlitiguous means of low level dispute resolution for parents and schools.

By creating this tempory rule and again allowing for Reconsideration of Final Orders, the Department will make this process less adversarial for all involved and conserve the resources that are currently being spent on litigation. Additonally, this change would also be approved by OSEP, as they stated that: “Oregon may establish procedures that would permit petitions for reconsideration of orders in special education complaints under Model Rule 137-015-0080 to occur outide of the 60 day complaint resolution timeline, but only if any corrective action(s) required in the State’s written decision is not delayed pending the reconsideration process.” Finally, stakeholders throughout the State and the Interim Assitant Superintendent for the Office of Student Learning and Partnerships have expressed a desire for this change. This temporary rule will be in place while the change is vetted publicly and public commentary is collected on this matter. Then a permanent rule change will be sought to finalize this provision.

**ISSUES/CONCERNS THAT SURFACED DURING RULE WORK:**

The Department presented the proposed amendment to the State Advisory Council on Special Education, the Dispute Resolution Advisory Committee, and the State Interagency Coordinating Council during the public comment period. No comments were received. This rule was also previosuly a temporary rule in place from January 2013. A Public Hearing was held on February 22, 2013 and no comments were presented at the hearing.

**CHANGED SINCE LAST BOARD MEETING?**

N/A; first read—hasn’t been before board

No; same as last month

Yes – As follows:

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**:

Adopt administrative rule as prepared this month

Adopt next month administrative rule as prepared

No recommendation at this time (rarely used)

**Created by CH on 1/9/13**

**581-015-2030**

**Procedures for Complaints as Required by IDEA Regulations**

(1) An organization or individual, including an organization or individual from another state, may file with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction a written, signed complaint that the Department, or a sub grantee, including but not limited to a regional program, an education service district or a local education agency is violating or has violated the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or regulations under that Act.

(2) The complainant must send a copy of the complaint to the public agency serving the child at the same time the complainant files the complaint with the Department.

(3) Upon receipt of a complaint under this provision, the Department will provide a copy of the Notice of Procedural Safeguards to a parent or adult student who files a complaint.

(4) If a complaint alleges violations outside the scope of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the complainant will be informed of alternative procedures that are available to address the complainant's allegations.

(5) The complaint must allege a violation that occurred not more than one year before the date that the complaint is received by the Department

(6) The complaint must include the facts on which the complaint is based. If the facts as alleged by the complainant would be considered a violation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act:

(a) The Superintendent will request the public agency to respond to the allegations. The Superintendent (or designee) may also initiate attempts to resolve the complaint through mediation or alternative dispute resolution, including local resolution.

(b) The respondent must respond to the allegations and furnish any information or documents requested by the Superintendent within ten business days from the receipt of request for response from the Superintendent unless another time period is specified by the Superintendent. At the same time, the respondent must send a copy of the response and documents to the complainant. If the complainant does not otherwise have access to confidential information in the response, the respondent must provide the complainant with the non-confidential portion(s) of the response.

(7) The Superintendent will give the complainant the opportunity to submit additional information, either orally or in writing, about the allegations in the complaint or the public agency's response. The complainant must provide a copy of any further written information to the public agency that is the subject of the complaint, unless it would be a hardship to do so. In those situations, the Department will provide a copy of the written information to the public agency.

(8) The Superintendent will review all of the written information submitted by the complainant and the public agency to resolve the allegations in the complaint.

(9) The Superintendent may conduct further investigation, such as telephone or onsite interviews, to the extent necessary to resolve the complaint allegations.

(10) If a written complaint is received that is also the subject of a due process hearing under OAR 581-015-2345, or contains multiple issues of which one or more are part of that hearing, the Superintendent will set aside any part of the complaint that is being addressed in the due process hearing, until the conclusion of the hearing. Any issue in the complaint that is not a part of the due process hearing will be resolved using the time limit and procedures in this rule.

(11) If an issue raised in a complaint has previously been decided in a due process hearing involving the same parties, the hearing decision is binding and the Superintendent will inform the complainant to that effect. A complaint alleging a school district's failure to implement a due process decision will be resolved by the Superintendent.

(12) The Superintendent will issue a written decision that addresses each allegation in the complaint and contains findings of fact, conclusions, and reasons for the Department's final decision within 60 days of receipt of the complaint unless:

(a) Exceptional circumstances related to the complaint require an extension; or

(b) The complainant and public agency agree in writing to extend the time to try mediation or local resolution.

(13) If the Superintendent finds a violation, the Superintendent's written decision will include any necessary corrective action to be undertaken as well as any documentation to be supplied by any party to ensure that the corrective action has occurred. If the decision is that a school district has failed to provide appropriate services, the Superintendent will address:

(a) How to remediate the failure to provide those services, including, as appropriate, compensatory education, monetary reimbursement or other corrective action appropriate to the needs of the child; and

(b) Appropriate future provision of services for all children with disabilities.

(14)(a) Parties may seek judicial review of the final order under ORS 183.484. Judicial review may be obtained by filing a petition for review within 60 days of service of the final order with the Marion County Circuit Court or with the Circuit Court for the County where the party resides.

(b) Pursuant to OAR 137-004-0080 and ORS 183.484(2), a party to the complaint may request reconsideration of the final order by the Superintendent within 60 days after the date of the order. Except as provided in this subsection, the Superintendent and a party seeking reconsideration shall follow the procedure for reconsideration described in OAR 137-004-0080.(c) Notwithstanding OAR 137-004-0080, the Superintendent may not stay a final order upon request by a party and any party subject to Corrective Action resulting from the order must commence the Corrective Action according to the final order.

(15) Corrective action ordered by the Superintendent must be completed within the timelines established in the final order unless another time period is specified by the Department.

(16) At any time during the pendency of the complaint, if the Superintendent determines that there is a strong likelihood that the respondent has significantly breached the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and that delay may cause irreparable harm, the Superintendent may order interim relief.

(17) If the respondent refuses to voluntarily comply with a plan of correction when so ordered, the Superintendent may take one or more of following actions:

(a) Disapprove in whole or part, the respondent's application for federal funding;

(b) Withhold or terminate further assistance to the respondent for an approved project;

(c) Suspend payments, under an approved project, to a respondent;

(d) Order, in accordance with a final state audit resolution determination, the repayment of specified federal funds; and

(e) Withhold all or part of a district's basic school support in accordance with ORS 327.103.

(18) Before the Superintendent denies or withholds funding or orders reimbursement as provided in Section (17) of this rule, the Superintendent will notify the respondent of the right to request a hearing in accordance with ORS 183.415.

(a) The hearing request must be made to the Superintendent within 30 days of receiving notice;

(b) The Superintendent will appoint a hearings officer who will conduct the hearing in accordance with ORS 183.413 to 183.470;

(c) The burden of proof at the hearing is on the Department;

(d) The Superintendent's decision is final, subject to appeal to the United States Secretary of Education or the Oregon Court of Appeals.

(19) No person may be subject to retaliation or discrimination for having filed or participated in this complaint procedure. Any person who believes that she or he has been subject to retaliation or discrimination may file a complaint under this rule with the Superintendent.

Stat. Auth.: ORS 343.041  
Stats. Implemented: ORS 343.041, 34 CFR 300.151-153; 34 CFR 300.504(a)(2)  
Hist.: 1EB 28-1980, f. & ef. 12-23-80; EB 26-1987(Temp), f. & ef. 11-17-87; EB 22-1988, f. & cert. ef. 5-24-88; EB 32-1988, f. & cert. ef. 8-3-88; EB 44-1990, f. & cert. ef. 9-12-90; EB 35-1992(Temp), f. & cert. ef. 11-24-92; EB 8-1993, f. & cert. ef. 3-25-93; ODE 15-1999, f. & cert. ef. 9-24-99, Renumbered from 581-001-0010; ODE 29-2000, f. & cert. ef. 12-11-00; ODE 2-2003, f. & cert. ef. 3-10-03; Renumbered from 581-015-0054, ODE 10-2007, f. & cert. ef. 4-25-07; ODE 6-2011, f. & cert. ef. 4-22-11

BEFORE THE OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RULE HEARING: OAR 581-015-2030 Complaints under IDEA

HEARING OFFICER’S REPORT

The Department held a public hearing on February 22, 2013, to receive public comment on the proposed rule amendments. Notice of hearing was published in a timely manner in the Secretary of State’s bulletin and was sent to interested parties and persons who requested notice pursuant to ORS 183.335 (7). The hearing was held at the Department’s offices in Salem, Oregon before Cindy Hunt, Hearing Officer.

No one testified and no one submitted written testimony.

Respectfully submitted this 23rd day of February, 2013

Cindy Hunt

Hearing Officer