

AN ACT concerning education.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 5. The School Code is amended by changing Sections 14-8.02 and 14-8.02a as follows:

(105 ILCS 5/14-8.02) (from Ch. 122, par. 14-8.02)

Sec. 14-8.02. Identification, evaluation and placement of children.

(a) The State Board of Education shall make rules under which local school boards shall determine the eligibility of children to receive special education. Such rules shall ensure that a free appropriate public education be available to all children with disabilities as defined in Section 14-1.02. The State Board of Education shall require local school districts to administer non-discriminatory procedures or tests to English learners coming from homes in which a language other than English is used to determine their eligibility to receive special education. The placement of low English proficiency students in special education programs and facilities shall be made in accordance with the test results reflecting the student's linguistic, cultural and special education needs. For purposes of determining the eligibility of children the State Board of Education shall include in the rules definitions

of "case study", "staff conference", "individualized educational program", and "qualified specialist" appropriate to each category of children with disabilities as defined in this Article. For purposes of determining the eligibility of children from homes in which a language other than English is used, the State Board of Education shall include in the rules definitions for "qualified bilingual specialists" and "linguistically and culturally appropriate individualized educational programs". For purposes of this Section, as well as Sections 14-8.02a, 14-8.02b, and 14-8.02c of this Code, "parent" means a parent as defined in the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1401(23)).

(b) No child shall be eligible for special education facilities except with a carefully completed case study fully reviewed by professional personnel in a multidisciplinary staff conference and only upon the recommendation of qualified specialists or a qualified bilingual specialist, if available. At the conclusion of the multidisciplinary staff conference, the parent of the child shall be given a copy of the multidisciplinary conference summary report and recommendations, which includes options considered, and be informed of their right to obtain an independent educational evaluation if they disagree with the evaluation findings conducted or obtained by the school district. If the school district's evaluation is shown to be inappropriate, the school district shall reimburse the parent for the cost of the

independent evaluation. The State Board of Education shall, with advice from the State Advisory Council on Education of Children with Disabilities on the inclusion of specific independent educational evaluators, prepare a list of suggested independent educational evaluators. The State Board of Education shall include on the list clinical psychologists licensed pursuant to the Clinical Psychologist Licensing Act. Such psychologists shall not be paid fees in excess of the amount that would be received by a school psychologist for performing the same services. The State Board of Education shall supply school districts with such list and make the list available to parents at their request. School districts shall make the list available to parents at the time they are informed of their right to obtain an independent educational evaluation. However, the school district may initiate an impartial due process hearing under this Section within 5 days of any written parent request for an independent educational evaluation to show that its evaluation is appropriate. If the final decision is that the evaluation is appropriate, the parent still has a right to an independent educational evaluation, but not at public expense. An independent educational evaluation at public expense must be completed within 30 days of a parent written request unless the school district initiates an impartial due process hearing or the parent or school district offers reasonable grounds to show that such 30 day time period should be extended. If the due

process hearing decision indicates that the parent is entitled to an independent educational evaluation, it must be completed within 30 days of the decision unless the parent or the school district offers reasonable grounds to show that such 30 day period should be extended. If a parent disagrees with the summary report or recommendations of the multidisciplinary conference or the findings of any educational evaluation which results therefrom, the school district shall not proceed with a placement based upon such evaluation and the child shall remain in his or her regular classroom setting. No child shall be eligible for admission to a special class for children with a mental disability who are educable or for children with a mental disability who are trainable except with a psychological evaluation and recommendation by a school psychologist. Consent shall be obtained from the parent of a child before any evaluation is conducted. If consent is not given by the parent or if the parent disagrees with the findings of the evaluation, then the school district may initiate an impartial due process hearing under this Section. The school district may evaluate the child if that is the decision resulting from the impartial due process hearing and the decision is not appealed or if the decision is affirmed on appeal. The determination of eligibility shall be made and the IEP meeting shall be completed within 60 school days from the date of written parental consent. In those instances when written parental consent is obtained with fewer than 60 pupil attendance days

left in the school year, the eligibility determination shall be made and the IEP meeting shall be completed prior to the first day of the following school year. Special education and related services must be provided in accordance with the student's IEP no later than 10 school attendance days after notice is provided to the parents pursuant to Section 300.503 of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations and implementing rules adopted by the State Board of Education. The appropriate program pursuant to the individualized educational program of students whose native tongue is a language other than English shall reflect the special education, cultural and linguistic needs. No later than September 1, 1993, the State Board of Education shall establish standards for the development, implementation and monitoring of appropriate bilingual special individualized educational programs. The State Board of Education shall further incorporate appropriate monitoring procedures to verify implementation of these standards. The district shall indicate to the parent and the State Board of Education the nature of the services the child will receive for the regular school term while waiting placement in the appropriate special education class.

If the child is deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or visually impaired and he or she might be eligible to receive services from the Illinois School for the Deaf or the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired, the school district shall notify the parents, in writing, of the existence of these schools and the

services they provide and shall make a reasonable effort to inform the parents of the existence of other, local schools that provide similar services and the services that these other schools provide. This notification shall include without limitation information on school services, school admissions criteria, and school contact information.

In the development of the individualized education program for a student who has a disability on the autism spectrum (which includes autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified, childhood disintegrative disorder, and Rett Syndrome, as defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition (DSM-IV, 2000)), the IEP team shall consider all of the following factors:

(1) The verbal and nonverbal communication needs of the child.

(2) The need to develop social interaction skills and proficiencies.

(3) The needs resulting from the child's unusual responses to sensory experiences.

(4) The needs resulting from resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines.

(5) The needs resulting from engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements.

(6) The need for any positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to address any

behavioral difficulties resulting from autism spectrum disorder.

(7) Other needs resulting from the child's disability that impact progress in the general curriculum, including social and emotional development.

Public Act 95-257 does not create any new entitlement to a service, program, or benefit, but must not affect any entitlement to a service, program, or benefit created by any other law.

If the student may be eligible to participate in the Home-Based Support Services Program for Adults with Mental Disabilities authorized under the Developmental Disability and Mental Disability Services Act upon becoming an adult, the student's individualized education program shall include plans for (i) determining the student's eligibility for those home-based services, (ii) enrolling the student in the program of home-based services, and (iii) developing a plan for the student's most effective use of the home-based services after the student becomes an adult and no longer receives special educational services under this Article. The plans developed under this paragraph shall include specific actions to be taken by specified individuals, agencies, or officials.

(c) In the development of the individualized education program for a student who is functionally blind, it shall be presumed that proficiency in Braille reading and writing is essential for the student's satisfactory educational progress.

For purposes of this subsection, the State Board of Education shall determine the criteria for a student to be classified as functionally blind. Students who are not currently identified as functionally blind who are also entitled to Braille instruction include: (i) those whose vision loss is so severe that they are unable to read and write at a level comparable to their peers solely through the use of vision, and (ii) those who show evidence of progressive vision loss that may result in functional blindness. Each student who is functionally blind shall be entitled to Braille reading and writing instruction that is sufficient to enable the student to communicate with the same level of proficiency as other students of comparable ability. Instruction should be provided to the extent that the student is physically and cognitively able to use Braille. Braille instruction may be used in combination with other special education services appropriate to the student's educational needs. The assessment of each student who is functionally blind for the purpose of developing the student's individualized education program shall include documentation of the student's strengths and weaknesses in Braille skills. Each person assisting in the development of the individualized education program for a student who is functionally blind shall receive information describing the benefits of Braille instruction. The individualized education program for each student who is functionally blind shall specify the appropriate learning medium or media based on the assessment report.

(d) To the maximum extent appropriate, the placement shall provide the child with the opportunity to be educated with children who do not have a disability; provided that children with disabilities who are recommended to be placed into regular education classrooms are provided with supplementary services to assist the children with disabilities to benefit from the regular classroom instruction and are included on the teacher's regular education class register. Subject to the limitation of the preceding sentence, placement in special classes, separate schools or other removal of the child with a disability from the regular educational environment shall occur only when the nature of the severity of the disability is such that education in the regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. The placement of English learners with disabilities shall be in non-restrictive environments which provide for integration with peers who do not have disabilities in bilingual classrooms. Annually, each January, school districts shall report data on students from non-English speaking backgrounds receiving special education and related services in public and private facilities as prescribed in Section 2-3.30. If there is a disagreement between parties involved regarding the special education placement of any child, either in-state or out-of-state, the placement is subject to impartial due process procedures described in Article 10 of the Rules and Regulations to Govern the Administration and Operation of Special Education.

(e) No child who comes from a home in which a language other than English is the principal language used may be assigned to any class or program under this Article until he has been given, in the principal language used by the child and used in his home, tests reasonably related to his cultural environment. All testing and evaluation materials and procedures utilized for evaluation and placement shall not be linguistically, racially or culturally discriminatory.

(f) Nothing in this Article shall be construed to require any child to undergo any physical examination or medical treatment whose parents object thereto on the grounds that such examination or treatment conflicts with his religious beliefs.

(g) School boards or their designee shall provide to the parents of a child prior written notice of any decision (a) proposing to initiate or change, or (b) refusing to initiate or change, the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free appropriate public education to their child, and the reasons therefor. Such written notification shall also inform the parent of the opportunity to present complaints with respect to any matter relating to the educational placement of the student, or the provision of a free appropriate public education and to have an impartial due process hearing on the complaint. The notice shall inform the parents in the parents' native language, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so, of their rights and all procedures available pursuant to this Act and the federal

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-446); it shall be the responsibility of the State Superintendent to develop uniform notices setting forth the procedures available under this Act and the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-446) to be used by all school boards. The notice shall also inform the parents of the availability upon request of a list of free or low-cost legal and other relevant services available locally to assist parents in initiating an impartial due process hearing. The State Superintendent shall revise the uniform notices required by this subsection (g) to reflect current law and procedures at least once every 2 years. Any parent who is deaf, or does not normally communicate using spoken English, who participates in a meeting with a representative of a local educational agency for the purposes of developing an individualized educational program shall be entitled to the services of an interpreter.

(g-5) For purposes of this subsection (g-5), "qualified professional" means an individual who holds credentials to evaluate the child in the domain or domains for which an evaluation is sought or an intern working under the direct supervision of a qualified professional, including a master's or doctoral degree candidate.

To ensure that a parent can participate fully and effectively with school personnel in the development of appropriate educational and related services for his or her

child, the parent, an independent educational evaluator, or a qualified professional retained by or on behalf of a parent or child must be afforded reasonable access to educational facilities, personnel, classrooms, and buildings and to the child as provided in this subsection (g-5). The requirements of this subsection (g-5) apply to any public school facility, building, or program and to any facility, building, or program supported in whole or in part by public funds. Prior to visiting a school, school building, or school facility, the parent, independent educational evaluator, or qualified professional may be required by the school district to inform the building principal or supervisor in writing of the proposed visit, the purpose of the visit, and the approximate duration of the visit. The visitor and the school district shall arrange the visit or visits at times that are mutually agreeable. Visitors shall comply with school safety, security, and visitation policies at all times. School district visitation policies must not conflict with this subsection (g-5). Visitors shall be required to comply with the requirements of applicable privacy laws, including those laws protecting the confidentiality of education records such as the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Illinois School Student Records Act. The visitor shall not disrupt the educational process.

- (1) A parent must be afforded reasonable access of sufficient duration and scope for the purpose of observing

his or her child in the child's current educational placement, services, or program or for the purpose of visiting an educational placement or program proposed for the child.

(2) An independent educational evaluator or a qualified professional retained by or on behalf of a parent or child must be afforded reasonable access of sufficient duration and scope for the purpose of conducting an evaluation of the child, the child's performance, the child's current educational program, placement, services, or environment, or any educational program, placement, services, or environment proposed for the child, including interviews of educational personnel, child observations, assessments, tests or assessments of the child's educational program, services, or placement or of any proposed educational program, services, or placement. If one or more interviews of school personnel are part of the evaluation, the interviews must be conducted at a mutually agreed upon time, date, and place that do not interfere with the school employee's school duties. The school district may limit interviews to personnel having information relevant to the child's current educational services, program, or placement or to a proposed educational service, program, or placement.

(h) (Blank).

(i) (Blank).

(j) (Blank).

(k) (Blank).

(l) (Blank).

(m) (Blank).

(n) (Blank).

(o) (Blank).

(Source: P.A. 98-219, eff. 8-9-13; 99-30, eff. 7-10-15; 99-143, eff. 7-27-15; 99-642, eff. 7-28-16.)

(105 ILCS 5/14-8.02a)

Sec. 14-8.02a. Impartial due process hearing; civil action.

(a) This Section shall apply to all impartial due process hearings requested on or after July 1, 2005. Impartial due process hearings requested before July 1, 2005 shall be governed by the rules described in Public Act 89-652.

(a-5) For purposes of this Section and Section 14-8.02b of this Code, days shall be computed in accordance with Section 1.11 of the Statute on Statutes.

(b) The State Board of Education shall establish an impartial due process hearing system in accordance with this Section and may, with the advice and approval of the Advisory Council on Education of Children with Disabilities, promulgate rules and regulations consistent with this Section to establish the rules and procedures for due process hearings.

(c) (Blank).

(d) (Blank).

(e) (Blank).

(f) An impartial due process hearing shall be convened upon the request of a parent, student if at least 18 years of age or emancipated, or a school district. A school district shall make a request in writing to the State Board of Education and promptly mail a copy of the request to the parents or student (if at least 18 years of age or emancipated) at the parent's or student's last known address. A request made by the parent or student shall be made in writing to the superintendent of the school district where the student resides. The superintendent shall forward the request to the State Board of Education within 5 days after receipt of the request. The request shall be filed no more than 2 years following the date the person or school district knew or should have known of the event or events forming the basis for the request. The request shall, at a minimum, contain all of the following:

(1) The name of the student, the address of the student's residence, and the name of the school the student is attending.

(2) In the case of homeless children (as defined under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2))), available contact information for the student and the name of the school the student is attending.

(3) A description of the nature of the problem relating

to the actual or proposed placement, identification, services, or evaluation of the student, including facts relating to the problem.

(4) A proposed resolution of the problem to the extent known and available to the party at the time.

(f-5) Within 3 days after receipt of the hearing request, the State Board of Education shall appoint a due process hearing officer using a rotating appointment system and shall notify the hearing officer of his or her appointment.

For a school district other than a school district located in a municipality having a population exceeding 500,000, a hearing officer who is a current resident of the school district, special education cooperative, or other public entity involved in the hearing shall recuse himself or herself. A hearing officer who is a former employee of the school district, special education cooperative, or other public entity involved in the hearing shall immediately disclose the former employment to the parties and shall recuse himself or herself, unless the parties otherwise agree in writing. A hearing officer having a personal or professional interest that may conflict with his or her objectivity in the hearing shall disclose the conflict to the parties and shall recuse himself or herself unless the parties otherwise agree in writing. For purposes of this subsection an assigned hearing officer shall be considered to have a conflict of interest if, at any time prior to the issuance of his or her written decision, he or she

knows or should know that he or she may receive remuneration from a party to the hearing within 3 years following the conclusion of the due process hearing.

A party to a due process hearing shall be permitted one substitution of hearing officer as a matter of right, in accordance with procedures established by the rules adopted by the State Board of Education under this Section. The State Board of Education shall randomly select and appoint another hearing officer within 3 days after receiving notice that the appointed hearing officer is ineligible to serve or upon receiving a proper request for substitution of hearing officer. If a party withdraws its request for a due process hearing after a hearing officer has been appointed, that hearing officer shall retain jurisdiction over a subsequent hearing that involves the same parties and is requested within one year from the date of withdrawal of the previous request, unless that hearing officer is unavailable.

Any party may raise facts that constitute a conflict of interest for the hearing officer at any time before or during the hearing and may move for recusal.

(g) Impartial due process hearings shall be conducted pursuant to this Section and any rules and regulations promulgated by the State Board of Education consistent with this Section and other governing laws and regulations. The hearing shall address only those issues properly raised in the hearing request under subsection (f) of this Section or, if

applicable, in the amended hearing request under subsection (g-15) of this Section. The hearing shall be closed to the public unless the parents request that the hearing be open to the public. The parents involved in the hearing shall have the right to have the student who is the subject of the hearing present. The hearing shall be held at a time and place which are reasonably convenient to the parties involved. Upon the request of a party, the hearing officer shall hold the hearing at a location neutral to the parties if the hearing officer determines that there is no cost for securing the use of the neutral location. Once appointed, the impartial due process hearing officer shall not communicate with the State Board of Education or its employees concerning the hearing, except that, where circumstances require, communications for administrative purposes that do not deal with substantive or procedural matters or issues on the merits are authorized, provided that the hearing officer promptly notifies all parties of the substance of the communication as a matter of record.

(g-5) Unless the school district has previously provided prior written notice to the parent or student (if at least 18 years of age or emancipated) regarding the subject matter of the hearing request, the school district shall, within 10 days after receiving a hearing request initiated by a parent or student (if at least 18 years of age or emancipated), provide a written response to the request that shall include all of the following:

(1) An explanation of why the school district proposed or refused to take the action or actions described in the hearing request.

(2) A description of other options the IEP team considered and the reasons why those options were rejected.

(3) A description of each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, report, or other evidence the school district used as the basis for the proposed or refused action or actions.

(4) A description of the factors that are or were relevant to the school district's proposed or refused action or actions.

(g-10) When the hearing request has been initiated by a school district, within 10 days after receiving the request, the parent or student (if at least 18 years of age or emancipated) shall provide the school district with a response that specifically addresses the issues raised in the school district's hearing request. The parent's or student's response shall be provided in writing, unless he or she is illiterate or has a disability that prevents him or her from providing a written response. The parent's or student's response may be provided in his or her native language, if other than English. In the event that illiteracy or another disabling condition prevents the parent or student from providing a written response, the school district shall assist the parent or student in providing the written response.

(g-15) Within 15 days after receiving notice of the hearing request, the non-requesting party may challenge the sufficiency of the request by submitting its challenge in writing to the hearing officer. Within 5 days after receiving the challenge to the sufficiency of the request, the hearing officer shall issue a determination of the challenge in writing to the parties. In the event that the hearing officer upholds the challenge, the party who requested the hearing may, with the consent of the non-requesting party or hearing officer, file an amended request. Amendments are permissible for the purpose of raising issues beyond those in the initial hearing request. In addition, the party who requested the hearing may amend the request once as a matter of right by filing the amended request within 5 days after filing the initial request. An amended request, other than an amended request as a matter of right, shall be filed by the date determined by the hearing officer, but in no event any later than 5 days prior to the date of the hearing. If an amended request, other than an amended request as a matter of right, raises issues that were not part of the initial request, the applicable timeline for a hearing, including the timeline under subsection (g-20) of this Section, shall recommence.

(g-20) Within 15 days after receiving a request for a hearing from a parent or student (if at least 18 years of age or emancipated) or, in the event that the school district requests a hearing, within 15 days after initiating the

request, the school district shall convene a resolution meeting with the parent and relevant members of the IEP team who have specific knowledge of the facts contained in the request for the purpose of resolving the problem that resulted in the request. The resolution meeting shall include a representative of the school district who has decision-making authority on behalf of the school district. Unless the parent is accompanied by an attorney at the resolution meeting, the school district may not include an attorney representing the school district.

The resolution meeting may not be waived unless agreed to in writing by the school district and the parent or student (if at least 18 years of age or emancipated) or the parent or student (if at least 18 years of age or emancipated) and the school district agree in writing to utilize mediation in place of the resolution meeting. If either party fails to cooperate in the scheduling or convening of the resolution meeting, the hearing officer may order an extension of the timeline for completion of the resolution meeting or, upon the motion of a party and at least 7 days after ordering the non-cooperating party to cooperate, order the dismissal of the hearing request or the granting of all relief set forth in the request, as appropriate.

In the event that the school district and the parent or student (if at least 18 years of age or emancipated) agree to a resolution of the problem that resulted in the hearing request, the terms of the resolution shall be committed to writing and

signed by the parent or student (if at least 18 years of age or emancipated) and the representative of the school district with decision-making authority. The agreement shall be legally binding and shall be enforceable in any State or federal court of competent jurisdiction. In the event that the parties utilize the resolution meeting process, the process shall continue until no later than the 30th day following the receipt of the hearing request by the non-requesting party (or as properly extended by order of the hearing officer) to resolve the issues underlying the request, at which time the timeline for completion of the impartial due process hearing shall commence. The State Board of Education may, by rule, establish additional procedures for the conduct of resolution meetings.

(g-25) If mutually agreed to in writing, the parties to a hearing request may request State-sponsored mediation as a substitute for the resolution process described in subsection (g-20) of this Section or may utilize mediation at the close of the resolution process if all issues underlying the hearing request have not been resolved through the resolution process.

(g-30) If mutually agreed to in writing, the parties to a hearing request may waive the resolution process described in subsection (g-20) of this Section. Upon signing a written agreement to waive the resolution process, the parties shall be required to forward the written waiver to the hearing officer appointed to the case within 2 business days following the signing of the waiver by the parties. The timeline for the

impartial due process hearing shall commence on the date of the signing of the waiver by the parties.

(g-35) The timeline for completing the impartial due process hearing, as set forth in subsection (h) of this Section, shall be initiated upon the occurrence of any one of the following events:

(1) The unsuccessful completion of the resolution process as described in subsection (g-20) of this Section.

(2) The mutual agreement of the parties to waive the resolution process as described in subsection (g-25) or (g-30) of this Section.

(g-40) The hearing officer shall convene a prehearing conference no later than 14 days before the scheduled date for the due process hearing for the general purpose of aiding in the fair, orderly, and expeditious conduct of the hearing. The hearing officer shall provide the parties with written notice of the prehearing conference at least 7 days in advance of the conference. The written notice shall require the parties to notify the hearing officer by a date certain whether they intend to participate in the prehearing conference. The hearing officer may conduct the prehearing conference in person or by telephone. Each party shall at the prehearing conference (1) disclose whether it is represented by legal counsel or intends to retain legal counsel; (2) clarify matters it believes to be in dispute in the case and the specific relief being sought; (3) disclose whether there are any additional evaluations for

the student that it intends to introduce into the hearing record that have not been previously disclosed to the other parties; (4) disclose a list of all documents it intends to introduce into the hearing record, including the date and a brief description of each document; and (5) disclose the names of all witnesses it intends to call to testify at the hearing. The hearing officer shall specify the order of presentation to be used at the hearing. If the prehearing conference is held by telephone, the parties shall transmit the information required in this paragraph in such a manner that it is available to all parties at the time of the prehearing conference. The State Board of Education may, by rule, establish additional procedures for the conduct of prehearing conferences.

(g-45) The impartial due process hearing officer shall not initiate or participate in any ex parte communications with the parties, except to arrange the date, time, and location of the prehearing conference, due process hearing, or other status conferences convened at the discretion of the hearing officer and to receive confirmation of whether a party intends to participate in the prehearing conference.

(g-50) The parties shall disclose and provide to each other any evidence which they intend to submit into the hearing record no later than 5 days before the hearing. Any party to a hearing has the right to prohibit the introduction of any evidence at the hearing that has not been disclosed to that party at least 5 days before the hearing. The party requesting

a hearing shall not be permitted at the hearing to raise issues that were not raised in the party's initial or amended request, unless otherwise permitted in this Section.

(g-55) All reasonable efforts must be made by the parties to present their respective cases at the hearing within a cumulative period of 7 days. When scheduling hearing dates, the hearing officer shall schedule the final day of the hearing no more than 30 calendar days after the first day of the hearing unless good cause is shown. This subsection (g-55) shall not be applied in a manner that (i) denies any party to the hearing a fair and reasonable allocation of time and opportunity to present its case in its entirety or (ii) deprives any party to the hearing of the safeguards accorded under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-446), regulations promulgated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, or any other applicable law. The school district shall present evidence that the special education needs of the child have been appropriately identified and that the special education program and related services proposed to meet the needs of the child are adequate, appropriate, and available. Any party to the hearing shall have the right to (1) be represented by counsel and be accompanied and advised by individuals with special knowledge or training with respect to the problems of children with disabilities, at the party's own expense; (2) present evidence and confront and cross-examine

witnesses; (3) move for the exclusion of witnesses from the hearing until they are called to testify, provided, however, that this provision may not be invoked to exclude the individual designated by a party to assist that party or its representative in the presentation of the case; (4) obtain a written or electronic verbatim record of the proceedings within 30 days of receipt of a written request from the parents by the school district; and (5) obtain a written decision, including findings of fact and conclusions of law, within 10 days after the conclusion of the hearing. If at issue, the school district shall present evidence that it has properly identified and evaluated the nature and severity of the student's suspected or identified disability and that, if the student has been or should have been determined eligible for special education and related services, that it is providing or has offered a free appropriate public education to the student in the least restrictive environment, consistent with procedural safeguards and in accordance with an individualized educational program. At any time prior to the conclusion of the hearing, the impartial due process hearing officer shall have the authority to require additional information and order independent evaluations for the student at the expense of the school district. The State Board of Education and the school district shall share equally the costs of providing a written or electronic verbatim record of the proceedings. Any party may request that the due process hearing officer issue a subpoena

to compel the testimony of witnesses or the production of documents relevant to the resolution of the hearing. Whenever a person refuses to comply with any subpoena issued under this Section, the circuit court of the county in which that hearing is pending, on application of the impartial hearing officer or the party requesting the issuance of the subpoena, may compel compliance through the contempt powers of the court in the same manner as if the requirements of a subpoena issued by the court had been disobeyed.

(h) The impartial hearing officer shall issue a written decision, including findings of fact and conclusions of law, within 10 days after the conclusion of the hearing and send by certified mail a copy of the decision to the parents or student (if the student requests the hearing), the school district, the director of special education, legal representatives of the parties, and the State Board of Education. Unless the hearing officer has granted specific extensions of time at the request of a party, a final decision, including the clarification of a decision requested under this subsection, shall be reached and mailed to the parties named above not later than 45 days after the initiation of the timeline for conducting the hearing, as described in subsection (g-35) of this Section. The decision shall specify the educational and related services that shall be provided to the student in accordance with the student's needs and the timeline for which the school district shall submit evidence to the State Board of Education to demonstrate

compliance with the hearing officer's decision in the event that the decision orders the school district to undertake corrective action. The hearing officer shall retain jurisdiction for the sole purpose of considering a request for clarification of the final decision submitted in writing by a party to the impartial hearing officer within 5 days after receipt of the decision. A copy of the request for clarification shall specify the portions of the decision for which clarification is sought and shall be mailed to all parties of record and to the State Board of Education. The request shall operate to stay implementation of those portions of the decision for which clarification is sought, pending action on the request by the hearing officer, unless the parties otherwise agree. The hearing officer shall issue a clarification of the specified portion of the decision or issue a partial or full denial of the request in writing within 10 days of receipt of the request and mail copies to all parties to whom the decision was mailed. This subsection does not permit a party to request, or authorize a hearing officer to entertain, reconsideration of the decision itself. The statute of limitations for seeking review of the decision shall be tolled from the date the request is submitted until the date the hearing officer acts upon the request. The hearing officer's decision shall be binding upon the school district and the parents unless a civil action is commenced.

(i) Any party to an impartial due process hearing aggrieved

by the final written decision of the impartial due process hearing officer shall have the right to commence a civil action with respect to the issues presented in the impartial due process hearing. That civil action shall be brought in any court of competent jurisdiction within 120 days after a copy of the decision of the impartial due process hearing officer is mailed to the party as provided in subsection (h). The civil action authorized by this subsection shall not be exclusive of any rights or causes of action otherwise available. The commencement of a civil action under this subsection shall operate as a supersedeas. In any action brought under this subsection the Court shall receive the records of the impartial due process hearing, shall hear additional evidence at the request of a party, and, basing its decision on the preponderance of the evidence, shall grant such relief as the court determines is appropriate. In any instance where a school district willfully disregards applicable regulations or statutes regarding a child covered by this Article, and which disregard has been detrimental to the child, the school district shall be liable for any reasonable attorney's fees incurred by the parent in connection with proceedings under this Section.

(j) During the pendency of any administrative or judicial proceeding conducted pursuant to this Section, including mediation (if the school district or other public entity voluntarily agrees to participate in mediation), unless the

school district and the parents or student (if at least 18 years of age or emancipated) otherwise agree, the student shall remain in his or her present educational placement and continue in his or her present eligibility status and special education and related services, if any. If mediation fails to resolve the dispute between the parties, or if the parties do not agree to use mediation, the parent (or student if 18 years of age or older or emancipated) shall have 10 days after the mediation concludes, or after a party declines to use mediation, to file a request for a due process hearing in order to continue to invoke the "stay-put" provisions of this subsection (j). If applying for initial admission to the school district, the student shall, with the consent of the parents (if the student is not at least 18 years of age or emancipated), be placed in the school district program until all such proceedings have been completed. The costs for any special education and related services or placement incurred following 60 school days after the initial request for evaluation shall be borne by the school district if the services or placement is in accordance with the final determination as to the special education and related services or placement that must be provided to the child, provided that during that 60 day period there have been no delays caused by the child's parent. The requirements and procedures of this subsection (j) shall be included in the uniform notices developed by the State Superintendent under subsection (g) of Section 14-8.02 of this Code.

(k) Whenever the parents of a child of the type described in Section 14-1.02 are not known, are unavailable, or the child is a ward of the State, a person shall be assigned to serve as surrogate parent for the child in matters relating to the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child. Persons shall be assigned as surrogate parents by the State Superintendent of Education. The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations establishing qualifications of those persons and their responsibilities and the procedures to be followed in making assignments of persons as surrogate parents. Surrogate parents shall not be employees of the school district, an agency created by joint agreement under Section 10-22.31, an agency involved in the education or care of the student, or the State Board of Education. Services of any person assigned as surrogate parent shall terminate if the parent becomes available unless otherwise requested by the parents. The assignment of a person as surrogate parent at no time supersedes, terminates, or suspends the parents' legal authority relative to the child. Any person participating in good faith as surrogate parent on behalf of the child before school officials or a hearing officer shall have immunity from civil or criminal liability that otherwise might result by reason of that participation, except in cases of willful and wanton misconduct.

(1) At all stages of the hearing the hearing officer shall

require that interpreters be made available by the school district for persons who are deaf or for persons whose normally spoken language is other than English.

(m) If any provision of this Section or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity of that provision or application does not affect other provisions or applications of the Section that can be given effect without the invalid application or provision, and to this end the provisions of this Section are severable, unless otherwise provided by this Section.

(Source: P.A. 98-383, eff. 8-16-13.)

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.