



The University of the State of New York

The State Education Department

State Review Officer

www.sro.nysed.gov

No. 24-641

Application of a STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY, by his parent, for review of a determination of a hearing officer relating to the provision of educational services by the New York City Department of Education

Appearances:

Liz Vladeck, General Counsel, attorneys for respondent, by Cynthia Sheps, Esq.

DECISION

I. Introduction

This proceeding arises under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. §§ 1400-1482) and Article 89 of the New York State Education Law. Petitioner (the parent) appeals from a decision of an impartial hearing officer (IHO) which dismissed her due process complaint notice against the respondent (the district) with prejudice. The district cross-appeals, asserting that the IHO erred in failing to dismiss the parent's claims for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. The appeal must be sustained. The cross-appeal must be dismissed.

II. Overview—Administrative Procedures

When a student who resides in New York is eligible for special education services and attends a nonpublic school, Article 73 of the New York State Education Law allows for the creation of an individualized education services program (IESP) under the State's so-called "dual enrollment" statute (see Educ. Law § 3602-c). The task of creating an IESP is assigned to the same committee that designs educational programming for students with disabilities under the IDEA (20 U.S.C. §§ 1400-1482), namely a local Committee on Special Education (CSE) that includes, but is not limited to, parents, teachers, a school psychologist, and a district representative (Educ. Law § 4402; see 20 U.S.C. § 1414[d][1][A]-[B]; 34 CFR 300.320, 300.321; 8 NYCRR 200.3, 200.4[d][2]). If disputes occur between parents and school districts, State law provides that "[r]eview of the recommendation of the committee on special education may be obtained by the parent or person in parental relation of the pupil pursuant to the provisions of [Education Law

§ 4404], " which effectuates the due process provisions called for by the IDEA (Educ. Law § 3602-c[2][b][1]). Incorporated among the procedural protections is the opportunity to engage in mediation, present State complaints, and initiate an impartial due process hearing (20 U.S.C. §§ 1221e-3, 1415[e]-[f]; Educ. Law § 4404[1]; 34 CFR 300.151-300.152, 300.506, 300.511; 8 NYCRR 200.5[h]-[l]).

New York State has implemented a two-tiered system of administrative review to address disputed matters between parents and school districts regarding "any matter relating to the identification, evaluation or educational placement of a student with a disability, or a student suspected of having a disability, or the provision of a free appropriate public education to such student" (8 NYCRR 200.5[i][1]; see 20 U.S.C. § 1415[b][6]-[7]; 34 CFR 300.503[a][1]-[2], 300.507[a][1]). First, after an opportunity to engage in a resolution process, the parties appear at an impartial hearing conducted at the local level before an IHO (Educ. Law § 4404[1][a]; 8 NYCRR 200.5[j]). An IHO typically conducts a trial-type hearing regarding the matters in dispute in which the parties have the right to be accompanied and advised by counsel and certain other individuals with special knowledge or training; present evidence and confront, cross-examine, and compel the attendance of witnesses; prohibit the introduction of any evidence at the hearing that has not been disclosed five business days before the hearing; and obtain a verbatim record of the proceeding (20 U.S.C. § 1415[f][2][A], [h][1]-[3]; 34 CFR 300.512[a][1]-[4]; 8 NYCRR 200.5[j][3][v], [vii], [xii]). The IHO must render and transmit a final written decision in the matter to the parties not later than 45 days after the expiration period or adjusted period for the resolution process (34 CFR 300.510[b][2], [c], 300.515[a]; 8 NYCRR 200.5[j][5]). A party may seek a specific extension of time of the 45-day timeline, which the IHO may grant in accordance with State and federal regulations (34 CFR 300.515[c]; 8 NYCRR 200.5[j][5]). The decision of the IHO is binding upon both parties unless appealed (Educ. Law § 4404[1]).

A party aggrieved by the decision of an IHO may subsequently appeal to a State Review Officer (SRO) (Educ. Law § 4404[2]; see 20 U.S.C. § 1415[g][1]; 34 CFR 300.514[b][1]; 8 NYCRR 200.5[k]). The appealing party or parties must identify the findings, conclusions, and orders of the IHO with which they disagree and indicate the relief that they would like the SRO to grant (8 NYCRR 279.4). The opposing party is entitled to respond to an appeal or cross-appeal in an answer (8 NYCRR 279.5). The SRO conducts an impartial review of the IHO's findings, conclusions, and decision and is required to examine the entire hearing record; ensure that the procedures at the hearing were consistent with the requirements of due process; seek additional evidence if necessary; and render an independent decision based upon the hearing record (34 CFR 300.514[b][2]; 8 NYCRR 279.12[a]). The SRO must ensure that a final decision is reached in the review and that a copy of the decision is mailed to each of the parties not later than 30 days after the receipt of a request for a review, except that a party may seek a specific extension of time of the 30-day timeline, which the SRO may grant in accordance with State and federal regulations (34 CFR 300.515[b], [c]; 8 NYCRR 200.5[k][2]).

III. Facts and Procedural History

Given the disposition of this matter on procedural grounds, a detailed recitation of the facts and procedural history is not necessary. Briefly, on February 9, 2023, a CSE convened, found the student eligible for special education as a student with a speech or language impairment, and

developed an IESP for the student (Parent Ex. B at p. 1).¹ The CSE recommended that the student receive four periods per week of group special education teacher support services (SETSS), three 30-minute sessions per week of individual speech-language therapy, and an FM unit for use daily, during class time (id. at p. 9).²

In a letter to the district dated May 2, 2023, the parent advised that she intended to place the student in a nonpublic school for the 2023-24 school year and requested that the district provide the educational services that the student was entitled to as a result of having an IESP (Parent Ex. E).

On June 28, 2023, the parent electronically signed a "Payment Agreement" with EdZone, LLC (EdZone) for the delivery of private services to the student (Parent Ex. C). In an addendum to the agreement, EdZone agreed to provide the services recommended in the "last agreed upon" IESP for the 10-month 2023-24 school year (id. at p. 3). The addendum specified that the rates for services including "Special Educational Services" and "Speech Therapy" would be provided at an hourly rate of \$198.00 for individual sessions and \$148.00 for group sessions (id.).

On August 23, 2023, the parent, through her lay advocate, advised the district that it had failed to assign a provider for the student for the recommended services during the 2023-24 school year and requested that the district "fulfill [its] mandate", otherwise, the parent would be "compelled to unilaterally obtain the mandated services through a private agency at an enhanced market rate" (Parent Ex. D).

In a prior written notice dated March 26, 2024, the district advised the parent that a CSE had convened on March 16, 2024, found the student eligible for special education as a student with a speech or language impairment, and recommended SETSS, individual speech-language therapy, and the provision of an individual FM unit (see Response to Due Process Compl. Not. at p. 3).

By due process complaint notice dated July 16, 2024, the parent, through her lay advocate, alleged that the district failed to implement the services recommended in the February 2023 IESP and therefore failed to provide the student a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for the 2023-24 school year (Parent Ex. A). The parent sought, in pertinent part, an order directing the district to fund the SETSS, speech language therapy, and FM unit received by the student during the school year at enhanced rates (id. at p. 3). The district filed a response, denying the parent's material allegations and asserting, in pertinent part, that the IHO lacked subject matter jurisdiction to adjudicate the parent's claims (Response to Due Process Compl. Not. at p. 1).

An impartial hearing convened on November 8, 2024 before an IHO appointed by the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearing (OATH) (Tr. pp. 1-13). In a final decision entitled "Order of Dismissal" dated November 19, 2024, the IHO dismissed the matter with prejudice (IHO

¹ The student's eligibility for special education as a student with a speech or language impairment is not in dispute (see 34 CFR 300.8[c][11]; 8 NYCRR 200.1[zz][11]).

² SETSS is not defined in the State continuum of special education services (see 8 NYCRR 200.6). As has been laid out in prior administrative proceedings, the term is not used anywhere other than within this school district and a static and reliable definition of "SETSS" does not exist within the district.

Decision at p. 2). The IHO found that according to the due process complaint notice and the impartial hearing reporting system, both the parent and the student resided outside of the district (id.).³ The IHO held that "it is well known that the school district of residence acts as the [local educational agency (LEA)] and is responsible for applying for federal [IDEA] funds for special education services provided to resident students in a district" (id.). The IHO found that the parent's advocate had filed the matter in an LEA where the student and the parent were not residents and consequently the matter must be dismissed with prejudice (id.).

IV. Appeal for State-Level Review

The parent appeals, alleging that the IHO incorrectly dismissed the due process complaint notice with prejudice because the student and parent resided outside of the district and seeks to overturn the IHO's decision and require the district to fund the SETSS provided to the student during the 2023-24 school year at a contract rate of \$198.00.⁴

In an answer and cross-appeal, the district asserts that the IHO lacked subject matter jurisdiction to adjudicate the parent's claims. In addition, the district asserts that if the dismissal of the parent's claims is not upheld, the parent failed to meet her burden of proving the appropriateness of the SETSS and that equitable considerations favor the parent.

The parent filed a "Verified Reply to Respondent's Answer And Cross-Appeal" generally denying the allegations contained therein and asserting that the IHO possessed subject matter jurisdiction to adjudicate her claims.⁵ The district filed a reply, asserting that the parent's answer to the cross-appeal did not comply with the practice regulations of Part 279.

³ The impartial hearing reporting system is a data collection system designed to record information about the impartial hearing process (see <https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/impartial-hearing-reporting-system>).

⁴ I note that the request for review does not conform to practice regulations governing appeals before the Office of State Review. The lay advocate "signed" the request for review (see Req. for Rev. at p. 4). This is not permitted under State regulation, which requires that "[a]ll pleadings shall be signed by an attorney, or by a party if the party is not represented by an attorney" (8 NYCRR 279.8[a][4]). While I decline to exercise my discretion to reject and dismiss the request for review in this instance, the lay advocate is cautioned that failure to comply with the practice requirements of Part 279 of State regulations in future matters is far more likely to result in rejection of submitted documents (see 8 NYCRR 279.8[a]). Furthermore, I note that it appears that the parent's advocate served the district by email with consent; however, the affidavit is likely inaccurate in that it states that the lay advocate served the district's managing attorney by personal service at the address of the offices of the lay advocate, Prime Advocacy (see Parent Aff. of Serv.). While State regulations do not preclude a school district and a parent from agreeing to waive personal service or consenting to service by an alternate delivery method, both the method of service used as well as the identification of what papers were served must be accurately set forth in the affidavit of service. It appears that the lay advocate did not understand how to properly draft the affidavit of service, the district has waived any such defenses because no concerns regarding service issues were raised in its answer with cross-appeal. The district also cites concerns with the parent's signature on subsequent pleadings and I note that lay advocate appears to have simply substituted the parent's signature in place of her own, while maintaining the preprinted signature block of Prime Advocacy, again adding confusion to what should be a straightforward procedure. The lay advocate, in the role of "assisting" the parent, should direct the parent to put her own name and current information on pleadings herself.

⁵ On two occasions the parent's lay advocate sought extensions of time to file an "Answer to Cross-Appeal", but

V. Applicable Standards

A board of education must offer a FAPE to each student with a disability residing in the school district who requires special education services or programs (20 U.S.C. § 1412[a][1][A]; Educ. Law § 4402[2][a], [b][2]). However, the IDEA confers no individual entitlement to special education or related services upon students who are enrolled by their parents in nonpublic schools (see 34 CFR 300.137[a]). Although districts are required by the IDEA to participate in a consultation process for making special education services available to students who are enrolled privately by their parents in nonpublic schools, such students are not individually entitled under the IDEA to receive some or all of the special education and related services they would receive if enrolled in a public school (see 34 CFR 300.134, 300.137[a], [c], 300.138[b]).

However, under State law, parents of a student with a disability who have privately enrolled their child in a nonpublic school may seek to obtain educational "services" for their child by filing a request for such services in the public school district of location where the nonpublic school is located on or before the first day of June preceding the school year for which the request for services is made (Educ. Law § 3602-c[2]).⁶ "Boards of education of all school districts of the state shall furnish services to students who are residents of this state and who attend nonpublic schools located in such school districts, upon the written request of the parent" (Educ. Law § 3602-c[2][a]). In such circumstances, the district of location's CSE must review the request for services and "develop an [IESP] for the student based on the student's individual needs in the same manner and with the same contents as an [IEP]" (Educ. Law § 3602-c[2][b][1]). The CSE must "assure that special education programs and services are made available to students with disabilities attending nonpublic schools located within the school district on an equitable basis, as compared to special education programs and services provided to other students with disabilities attending public or nonpublic schools located within the school district (id.).⁷ Thus, under State law an eligible New York State resident student may be voluntarily enrolled by a parent in a nonpublic school, but at the same time the student is also enrolled in the public school district, that is dually enrolled, for

then confusingly filed a Reply. The proper nomenclature for the parent's pleading likely should have been "Answer to Cross-Appeal" (8 NYCRR 279).

⁶ State law provides that "services" includes "education for students with disabilities," which means "special educational programs designed to serve persons who meet the definition of children with disabilities set forth in [Education Law § 4401(1)]" (Educ. Law § 3602-c[1][a], [d]).

⁷ State guidance explains that providing services on an "equitable basis" means that "special education services are provided to parentally placed nonpublic school students with disabilities in the same manner as compared to other students with disabilities attending public or nonpublic schools located within the school district" ("Chapter 378 of the Laws of 2007—Guidance on Parentally Placed Nonpublic Elementary and Secondary School Students with Disabilities Pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 and New York State (NYS) Education Law Section 3602-c," Attachment 1 (Questions and Answers), VESID Mem. [Sept. 2007], available at <https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/guidance-parentally-placed-nonpublic-elementary-and-secondary-school-students>). The guidance document further provides that "parentally placed nonpublic students must be provided services based on need and the same range of services provided by the district of location to its public school students must be made available to nonpublic students, taking into account the student's placement in the nonpublic school program" (id.). The guidance has recently been reorganized on the State's web site and the paginated pdf versions of the documents previously available do not currently appear there, having been updated with web based versions.

the purpose of receiving special education programming under Education Law § 3602-c, dual enrollment services for which a public school district may be held accountable through an impartial hearing.

The burden of proof is on the school district during an impartial hearing, except that a parent seeking tuition reimbursement for a unilateral placement has the burden of proof regarding the appropriateness of such placement (Educ. Law § 4404[1][c]; see R.E. v. New York City Dep't of Educ., 694 F.3d 167, 184-85 [2d Cir. 2012]).

VI. Discussion

A. Subject Matter Jurisdiction

As an initial matter, it is necessary to address the district's argument raised in its cross-appeal that federal law confers no right to file a due process complaint notice regarding services recommended in an IESP and New York law confers no right to file a due process complaint notice regarding IESP implementation. The district did not raise this point during the impartial hearing in November 2024. Nevertheless, according to the district, IHOs and SROs lack subject matter jurisdiction with respect to IESP implementation claims.

Subject matter jurisdiction refers to "the courts' statutory or constitutional power to adjudicate the case" (Steel Co. v. Citizens for a Better Environment, 523 U.S. 83, 89 [1998]). Subject matter jurisdiction can be raised at any time in the proceedings, including on appeal (see U.S. v. Cotton, 535 U.S. 625, 630 [2002]; Bay Shore Union Free Sch. Dist. v. Kain, 485 F.3d 730, 733 [2d Cir. 2007] [ordering supplemental briefing on appeal and vacating a district court decision addressing an Education Law § 3602-c state law dispute for lack of subject matter jurisdiction]). Indeed, a lack of jurisdiction "can never be forfeited or waived" (Cotton, 535 U.S. at 630).

Recently in several decisions, the undersigned and other SROs have rejected the district's position that IHOs and SROs lack subject matter jurisdiction to address claims related to implementation of equitable services under State law (see, e.g., Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-615; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-614; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-612; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-602; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-595; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-594; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-589; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-584; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-572; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-564; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-558; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-547; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-528; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-525; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-512; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-507; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-501; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-498; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-464; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-461; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-460; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-441; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-436; Application of the Dep't of Educ., Appeal No. 24-435; Application of a Student with a Disability,

Appeal No. 24-392; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-391; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-390; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-388; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 24-386). Under federal law, all districts are required by the IDEA to participate in a consultation process with nonpublic schools located within the district and develop a services plan for the provision of special education and related services to students who are enrolled privately by their parents in nonpublic schools within the district equal to a proportionate amount of the district's federal funds made available under part B of the IDEA (20 U.S.C. § 1412[a][10][A]; 34 CFR 300.132[b], 300.134, 300.138[b]). However, the services plan provisions under federal law clarify that "[n]o parentally-placed private school child with a disability has an individual right to receive some or all of the special education and related services that the child would receive if enrolled in a public school" (34 CFR 300.137 [a]). Additionally, the due process procedures, other than child-find, are not applicable for complaints related to a services plan developed pursuant to federal law.

Accordingly, the parent would not have a right to due process under federal law; however, the student did not merely have a services plan developed pursuant to federal law, and the parent did not argue that the district failed in the federal consultation process or in the development of a services plan pursuant to federal regulations.

Separate from the services plan envisioned under the IDEA, the Education Law in New York has afforded parents of resident students with disabilities with a State law option that requires a district of location to review a parental request for dual enrollment services and "develop an [IESP] for the student based on the student's individual needs in the same manner and with the same contents as an [IEP]" (Educ. Law § 3602-c[2][b][1]).⁸

Education Law § 3602-c, concerning students who attend nonpublic schools, provides that "[r]eview of the recommendation of the committee on special education may be obtained by the parent or person in parental relation of the pupil pursuant to the provisions of section forty-four hundred four of this chapter" (Educ. Law § 3602-c[2][b][1]). It further provides that "[d]ue process complaints relating to compliance of the school district of location with child find requirements, including evaluation requirements, may be brought by the parent or person in parental relation of the student pursuant to section forty-four hundred four of this chapter" (Educ. Law § 3602-c[2][c]).

However, the district asserts that neither Education Law § 3602-c nor Education Law § 4404 confer IHOs with jurisdiction to consider enhanced rates claims from a parent seeking implementation of equitable services.

Consistent with the IDEA, Education Law § 4404, which concerns appeal procedures for students with disabilities, provides that a due process complaint may be presented with respect to "any matter relating to the identification, evaluation or educational placement of the student or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the student" (Educ. Law § 4404; see 20 U.S.C. § 1415[b][6]). State Review Officers have in the past, taking into account the legislative history

⁸ This provision is separate and distinct from the State's adoption of statutory language effectuating the federal requirement that the district of location "expend a proportionate amount of its federal funds made available under part B of the individuals with disabilities education act for the provision of services to students with disabilities attending such nonpublic schools" (Educ. Law § 3602-c[2-a]).

of Education Law § 3602-c, concluded that the legislature did not intend to eliminate a parent's ability to challenge the district's implementation of equitable services under Education Law § 3602-c through the due process procedures set forth in Education Law § 4404 (see Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 23-121; Application of the Dep't of Educ., Appeal No. 23-069; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 23-068).⁹ In addition, the New York Court of Appeals has explained that students authorized to receive services pursuant to Education Law § 3602-c are considered part-time public school students under State Law (Bd. of Educ. of Monroe-Woodbury Cent. Sch. Dist. v. Wieder, 72 N.Y.2d 174, 184 [1988] see also L. Off. of Philippe J. Gerschel v. New York City Dep't of Educ., 2025 WL 466973, at *4-*6 [S.D.N.Y. Feb. 1, 2025]), which further supports the conclusion that part-time public school students are entitled to the same legal protections found in the due process procedures set forth in Education Law § 4404.

However, the number of due process cases involving the dual enrollment statute statewide, which were minuscule in number until only a handful of years ago, have now increased to tens of thousands of due process proceedings per year within certain regions of this school district in the last several years. Public agencies are attempting to grapple with how to address this colossal change in circumstances, which is a matter of great significance in terms of State policy. Policy makers have recently attempted to address the issue.

In May 2024, the State Education Department proposed amendments to 8 NYCRR 200.5 "to clarify that parents of students who are parentally placed in nonpublic schools do not have the right under Education Law § 3602-c to file a due process complaint regarding the implementation of services recommended on an IESP" (see "Proposed Amendment of Section 200.5 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education Relating to Special Education Due Process Hearings," SED Mem. [May 2024], available at <https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/524p12d2revised.pdf>). Ultimately, however, the proposed regulation was not adopted. Instead, in July 2024, the Board of Regents adopted, by emergency rulemaking, an amendment of 8 NYCRR 200.5, which provides that a parent may not file a due process complaint notice in a dispute "over whether a rate charged by a licensed provider is consistent with the program in a student's IESP or aligned with the current market rate for such services" (8 NYCRR 200.5[i][1]). The amendment to the regulation does not apply to the present circumstance. Since its adoption, the amendment has been enjoined and suspended in an Order to Show Cause signed October 4, 2024 (Agudath Israel of America v. New York State Bd. of Regents, No. 909589-24 [Sup. Ct., Albany County, Oct. 4, 2024]). Specifically, the Order provides that:

pending the hearing and determination of Petitioners' application for a preliminary injunction, the Revised Regulation is hereby stayed and suspended, and Respondents, their agents, servants, employees, officers, attorneys, and all other persons in active concert or participation with them, are temporarily enjoined and restrained from taking any steps to (a) implement the Revised Regulation, or (b) enforce it as against any person or entity

⁹ The district did not seek judicial review of these decisions.

(Order to Show Cause, O'Connor, J.S.C., Agudath Israel of America, No. 909589-24).¹⁰

Consistent with the district's position that New York law has never granted due process rights for IESP implementation claims or enhanced rate for services and that the preliminary injunction issued by the New York Supreme Court does not change the meaning of § 3602-c, State guidance issued in August 2024 noted that the State Education Department had previously "conveyed" to the district that:

parents have never had the right to file a due process complaint to request an enhanced rate for equitable services or dispute whether a rate charged by a licensed provider is consistent with the program in a student's IESP or aligned with the current market rate for such services. Therefore, such claims should be dismissed on jurisdictional grounds, whether they were filed before or after the date of the regulatory amendment.

("Special Education Due Process Hearings - Rate Disputes," Office of Special Educ. [Aug. 2024]).¹¹

However, acknowledging that the question has publicly received new attention from State policymakers as well as at least one court at this juncture and appears to be an evolving situation, given the implementation date set forth in the text of the amendment to the regulation and the issuance of the temporary restraining order suspending application of the regulatory amendment, the amendments to the regulation may not be deemed to apply to the present matter. Further, the position set forth in the guidance document issued in the wake of the emergency regulation, which is now enjoined and suspended, does not convince me that the Education Law may be read to divest IHOs and SROs of jurisdiction over these types of disputes.

Based on the foregoing, the district's argument in its cross-appeal asserting that IHOs and SROs lack subject matter jurisdiction to adjudicate the parent's claims is rejected.

¹⁰ On November 1, 2024, the Supreme Court Albany County issued a second order clarifying that the temporary restraining order applied to both emergency actions and activities involving permanent adoption of the rule until the petition was decided (Order, O'Connor, J.S.C., Agudath Israel of America, No. 909589-24 [Sup. Ct., Albany County, Nov. 1, 2024]).

¹¹ Neither the guidance nor the district indicated if this jurisdictional viewpoint was conveyed publicly or only privately to the district, when it was communicated, or to whom. There was no public expression of these points that the undersigned was aware of until policymakers began rulemaking activities in May 2024; however, as the number of allegations began to mount that the district's CSEs had not been convening and services were not being delivered, at that point the district began to respond by making unsuccessful jurisdictional arguments to SROs in the past, which decisions were subject to judicial review but went unchallenged (see, e.g., Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 23-121; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 23-069; Application of a Student with a Disability, Appeal No. 23-068). The guidance document is no longer available on the State's website; thus, a copy of the August 2024 rate dispute guidance has been added to the administrative hearing record.

B. Dismissal due to District of Residence

Turning to the IHO's dismissal of the parent's due process complaint notice because neither the parent nor the student resided within the district of location of the nonpublic school attended by the student, I find that the IHO erred.

State guidance issued in September 2007 explains that a parent may submit a due process complaint notice to the school district of location. The September 2007 State guidance provides:

C. Due Process Complaints

A parent of a student who is a NYS resident who disagrees with the individual evaluation, eligibility determination, recommendations of the CSE on the IESP and/or the provision of special education services may submit a Due Process Complaint Notice to the school district of location.

("Chapter 378 of the Laws of 2007 - Guidance on Parentally Placed Nonpublic Elementary and Secondary School Students with Disabilities Pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 and New York State (NYS) Education Law Section 3602-c" at p. 10).¹²

Education Law § 3602-c[1][f] defines "[s]chool district of location" as the school district in which the nonpublic elementary or secondary school attended by the student is located.

Here, it is not disputed that the that the parent submitted a due process complaint notice with the district of location of the nonpublic school attended by the student (Parent Ex. A). Based on the foregoing, the IHO's determination must be reversed.

When an IHO has not addressed claims set forth in a due process complaint notice, an SRO may consider whether the case should be remanded to the IHO for a determination of the claims that the IHO did not address (8 NYCRR 279.10[c]; see Educ. Law § 4404[2]; F.B. v. New York City Dep't of Educ., 923 F. Supp. 2d 570, 589 [S.D.N.Y. 2013] [indicating that the SRO may remand matters to the IHO to address claims set forth in the due process complaint notice that were unaddressed by the IHO], citing J.F. v. New York City Dep't of Educ., 2012 WL 5984915, at *9 n.4 [S.D.N.Y. Nov. 27, 2012]; see also D.N. v. New York City Dep't of Educ., 2013 WL 245780, at *3 [S.D.N.Y. Jan. 22, 2013]). Here, the IHO admitted evidence into the hearing record from the parent during the impartial hearing held on November 8, 2024 and should make determinations regarding the issues in the first instance.

VII. Conclusion

For the reasons described above, the IHO possesses subject matter jurisdiction to adjudicate the parent's claim contrary to the district's arguments. In addition, the parent permissibly submitted a due process complaint notice within the district of location of the nonpublic school attended by

¹² A web-based copy of the September 2007 State guidance is available at <https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/guidance-parentally-placed-nonpublic-elementary-and-secondary-school-students> and the information is contained under a collapsible menu item labeled "Provision of Special Education Services."

the student. This matter must be remanded for a determination using the Burlington-Carter standard of whether the special education services unilaterally obtained by the parent were appropriate to address the student's needs under the totality of the circumstances and, if so, whether equitable considerations favor the parent.¹³

I have considered the remaining contentions and find it unnecessary to address them in light of my determinations above.

THE APPEAL IS SUSTAINED.

THE CROSS-APPEAL IS DISMISSED.

IT IS ORDERED that the IHO's decision dated November 19, 2024, dismissing the parent's due process complaint notice is reversed;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this matter is remanded to the IHO for further proceedings in accordance with this decision; and

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that in the event that the IHO cannot hear this matter upon remand, another IHO shall be appointed.

Dated: **Albany, New York**
 April 25, 2025

JUSTYN P. BATES
STATE REVIEW OFFICER

¹³ The district did not proffer any evidence at the impartial hearing held on November 8, 2024 (see Tr. pp. 1-13). Further, at the impartial hearing, the district did not challenge assertions by the parent that it failed to offer a FAPE or equitable services to the student for the 2023-24 school year (Tr. p. 8).