

Re: Invitation to Participate in Due Process Pilot

Dear [Exec]

The Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) administers the mediation and due process systems for parents and local educational agencies in Pennsylvania. ODR also offers alternative dispute activities for local education agencies and parents to resolve special education disagreements in less formal ways than due process.

In an effort to offer services on the continuum of dispute resolution options, ODR currently offers IEP Facilitation to IEP teams. We are now excited to embark upon a new pilot project that will offer the use of a facilitator at Resolution Meetings at no cost to participants.

Resolution Meetings are mandated by IDEA 2004 for due process requests initiated by parents unless both parties waive participation in the meeting. When a due process hearing is requested, a dispute already exists and the parties may have difficulty reaching agreement at a resolution meeting. Like in mediation, the presence of a neutral facilitator at the resolution meeting may yield more effective and successful meetings.

Accordingly, we have designed a pilot project to determine the efficacy of utilizing facilitators at Resolution Meetings. We are extending invitations to select IUs across the state based upon diverse factors so as to ensure a representative sample of our constituents in the pilot. There will be no cost to LEAs or parents for the use of a facilitator. Facilitators for this pilot will be with individuals under contract with this office to provide IEP Facilitation and Mediation services.

We have enclosed a Fact Sheet which provides detailed information about the project, as well as an agreement to participate in the pilot. Please sign and return the form to ODR by October 31, 2007 to indicate your interest in participation. We are optimistic that, with the use of a facilitator at Resolution Meetings, parents and educational agencies will be more successful in reaching agreement on the student's educational program.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. Please contact us if you have any questions. We look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours,

Kerry V. Smith, Esquire  
Director

Dixie Rider  
Dispute Resolution Coordinator