

THE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS PROVIDES A FORUM FOR A FAIR AND NEUTRAL RESOLUTION OF EARLY START DISPUTES.



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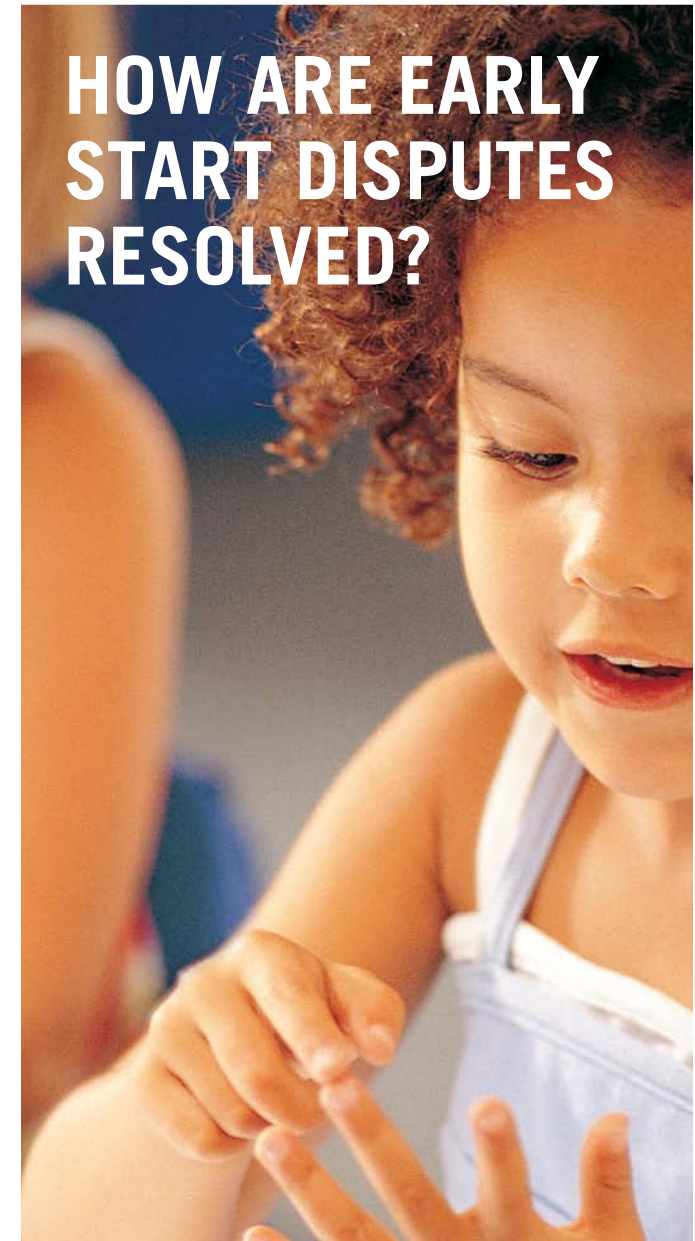
OFFICE OF
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
CA DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

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OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS



HOW ARE EARLY START DISPUTES RESOLVED?



MEET THE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS.

Fair and Neutral

Under the law, infants and toddlers with special needs, who are younger than three years of age, may be eligible for assistance under the Early Start program. When a disagreement develops between parents and the regional center about delivery of services under the Early Start program, a neutral third party is often needed to help resolve the dispute.

In California, the General Jurisdiction Division of the Office of Administrative Hearings fulfills that role.

Our administrative law judges are highly experienced legal professionals with extensive training to supplement their understanding of the complex issues arising under the Early Start program.

Our goal is to help resolve the disagreement as early in the process as possible.

Once a hearing request has been filed, the parties may agree to mediate the dispute. Our skilled mediators, who are also administrative law judges, meet with the parents and the regional center to help resolve their dispute by mutual agreement.

In the small percentage of cases where an outcome cannot be reached through mediation, a hearing is held before another administrative law judge, who decides the case and issues a detailed written decision.

Mediations and Hearings Involving Complex Issues

Our administrative law judges preside over disputes involving complex issues under the Early Start law. These issues include:

- Early Start Eligibility
- Right to Assessments and Evaluations
- Rights to Receive Services and Supports
- Level of Services and Supports

What You Should Do Next

If you are involved in a dispute under the Early Start law with the regional center, you may obtain detailed information about the entire process online at <http://www.oah.dgs.ca.gov/DDS+Mediation+and+Hearings/DDS+FAQs.htm> or the Office of Administrative Hearings will mail the information to you upon request.

Office of Administrative Hearings Mission

To provide a neutral forum for fair and independent resolution of matters in a professional, efficient and innovative way, ensuring due process and respecting the dignity of all.



UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

Conducting the Hearing

A highly trained administrative law judge will preside at your due process hearing. An administrative law judge is a neutral and unbiased judicial officer who ensures that all parties have received a fair hearing. The parties will have the opportunity during the hearing to present all relevant facts. After applying the laws and regulations to the facts that have been presented at the hearing, the administrative law judge will issue a detailed written decision.

Are Settlements Possible?

The parties may choose to mediate their dispute at any time. The Office of Administrative Hearings provides experienced and highly trained mediators to assist the parties in reaching a resolution of their dispute without the necessity of a hearing.

Need an Interpreter?

If you or a witness requires a sign or language interpreter, immediately contact the Office of Administrative Hearings. Normally, you will not be allowed to bring a friend or relative to act as an interpreter.

Representation

Many people represent themselves through the mediation and hearing process. Others employ an advocate or attorney. You should decide what would be best for you in achieving the best result and in presenting your case.