

Assembly Bill No. 2494

CHAPTER 859

An act to amend Sections 4711 and 4712 of, and to add Section 4714 to, the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to developmental services.

[Approved by Governor September 24, 1998. Filed with Secretary of State September 25, 1998.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2494, Aguiar. Developmentally disabled persons: developmental centers: client appeals.

Existing law requires every service agency, including regional centers and developmental centers, providing services to persons with developmental disabilities to have an agency fair hearing procedure for resolving conflicts between the service agency and recipients of, and applicants for, service.

Existing law provides for a state fair hearing procedure process for persons with developmental disabilities appealing service agency actions. Existing law requires the responsible state agency director, upon the receipt of a request for a fair hearing, to immediately provide notification concerning certain matters to the parties and certain other persons.

This bill would, in addition, require this notification to include the procedural rights and responsibilities governing these state agency fair hearings.

The bill also revises the procedures governing these fair hearings.

The bill would also require regional centers and developmental centers to submit specified data to the State Department of Developmental Services concerning each appeal filed against it, with the department to make this information available to the public upon request.

This bill would incorporate changes to Section 4712 of the Welfare and Institutions Code made by SB 1038, which would become operative only if both this bill and SB 1038 are chaptered and this bill is chaptered last.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 4711 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, as amended by Section 58 of Chapter 310 of the Statutes of 1998, is amended to read:

4711. Upon receipt of the hearing request form, where a fair hearing has been requested but mediation has not, the responsible



state agency director shall immediately notify the claimant, the claimant's legal guardian or conservator, the parent of a minor claimant, the claimant's authorized representative, and the service agency director in writing of all the following information applicable to fair hearings. Where the hearing request form contains a request for a fair hearing and mediation, the notifications shall be made separately, and each notice shall contain only the information applicable to the particular type of proceeding.

(a) The time, place, and date of the fair hearing or mediation, as applicable, if agreed to by the service agency.

(b) The rights of the parties at the fair hearing pursuant to Section 4710.6 or mediation, as applicable, pursuant to Section 4711.5.

(c) The availability of advocacy assistance pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (b) of Section 4710.6 for both mediation and fair hearings.

(d) The name, address, and telephone number of the persons or offices designated by the director of the responsible state agency, as applicable, to conduct fair hearings, mediate disputes, and to receive requests for continuance or consolidation.

(e) The rights and responsibilities of the parties established pursuant to subdivisions (d) to (m), inclusive, of Section 4712.

SEC. 2. Section 4712 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, as amended by Section 61 of Chapter 310 of the Statutes of 1998, is amended to read:

4712. (a) The fair hearing shall be held within 50 days of the date the hearing request form is postmarked or received by the service agency, whichever is earlier, unless a continuance based upon a showing of good cause has been granted to the claimant. The service agency may also request a continuance based upon a showing of good cause, provided that the granting of the continuance does not extend the time period for rendering a final administrative decision beyond the 90-day period provided for in this chapter. For purposes of this section, good cause includes, but is not limited to, the following circumstances:

(1) Death of a spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent of the claimant or authorized representative, or legal guardian or conservator of the claimant.

(2) Personal illness or injury of the claimant or authorized representative.

(3) Sudden and unexpected emergencies, including, but not limited to, court appearances of the claimant or authorized representative, conflicting schedules of the authorized representative if the conflict is beyond the control of the authorized representative.

(4) Unavailability of a witness or evidence, the absence of which would result in serious prejudice to the claimant.



(5) An intervening request by the claimant or his or her authorized representative for mediation.

(b) Notwithstanding Sections 19130, 19131, and 19132 of the Government Code, the department shall contract for the provision of independent hearing officers. Hearing officers shall have had at least two years of full-time legal training at a California or American Bar Association accredited law school or the equivalent in training and experience as established by regulations to be promulgated by the department pursuant to Section 4705. These hearing officers shall receive training in the law and regulations governing services to developmentally disabled individuals and administrative hearings. The State Department of Developmental Services shall seek the advice of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities in the development of training materials and the implementation of training procedures by the department.

(c) The hearing officer shall not be an employee, agent, board member, or contractor of the service agency against whose action the appeal has been filed, or a spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, legal guardian, or conservator of the claimant, or any person who has a direct financial interest in the outcome of the fair hearing, or any other interest which would preclude a fair and impartial hearing.

(d) The claimant and the service agency shall exchange a list of potential witnesses, the general subject of the testimony of each witness, and copies of all potential documentary evidence at least five days prior to the hearing. The hearing officer may prohibit testimony of a witness that is not disclosed and may prohibit the introduction of documents that have not been disclosed. However, the hearing officer may allow introduction of such testimony or witness in the interest of justice.

(e) The fair hearing shall be held at a time and place reasonably convenient to the claimant and the authorized representative.

(f) Merits of a pending fair hearing shall not be discussed between the hearing officer and a party outside the presence of the other party.

(g) The hearing officer shall voluntarily disqualify himself or herself and withdraw from any case in which he or she cannot accord a fair and impartial hearing or consideration. Any party may request the disqualification of the hearing officer by filing an affidavit, prior to the taking of evidence at a hearing, stating with particularity the grounds upon which it is claimed that a fair and impartial hearing cannot be accorded. The issue shall be decided by the hearing officer.

(h) Both parties to the fair hearing shall have the rights specified in subdivision (a) of Section 4710.6.

(i) The fair hearing need not be conducted according to the technical rules of evidence and those related to witnesses. Any relevant evidence shall be admitted. Both parties shall be allowed to



submit documents into evidence at the beginning of the hearing. No party shall be required to formally authenticate any document unless the hearing officer determines the necessity to do so in the interest of justice. All testimony shall be under oath or affirmation which the hearing officer is empowered to administer.

(j) A service agency shall present its witnesses and all other evidence before the claimant presents his or her case unless the parties agree otherwise or the hearing officer determines that there exists good cause for a witness to be heard out of order. This section does not alter the burden of proof.

(k) A recording shall be made of the proceedings before the hearing officer. Any cost of recording shall be borne by the responsible state agency.

(l) The fair hearing shall be conducted in the English language. However, if the claimant, the claimant's guardian or conservator, parent of a minor claimant, or authorized representative does not understand English, an interpreter shall be provided by the responsible state agency.

(m) The fair hearing shall be open to the public except at the request of the claimant or authorized representative or when personnel matters are being reviewed.

SEC. 3. Section 4712 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, as amended by Section 61 of Chapter 310 of the Statutes of 1998, is amended to read:

4712. (a) The fair hearing shall be held within 50 days of the date the hearing request form is postmarked or received by the service agency, whichever is earlier, unless a continuance based upon a showing of good cause has been granted to the claimant. The service agency may also request a continuance based upon a showing of good cause, provided that the granting of the continuance does not extend the time period for rendering a final administrative decision beyond the 90-day period provided for in this chapter. For purposes of this section, good cause includes, but is not limited to, the following circumstances:

(1) Death of a spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent of the claimant or authorized representative, or legal guardian or conservator of the claimant.

(2) Personal illness or injury of the claimant or authorized representative.

(3) Sudden and unexpected emergencies, including, but not limited to, court appearances of the claimant or authorized representative, conflicting schedules of the authorized representative if the conflict is beyond the control of the authorized representative.

(4) Unavailability of a witness or evidence, the absence of which would result in serious prejudice to the claimant.



(5) An intervening request by the claimant or his or her authorized representative for mediation.

(b) Notwithstanding Sections 19130, 19131, and 19132 of the Government Code, the department shall contract for the provision of independent hearing officers. Hearing officers shall have had at least two years of full-time legal training at a California or American Bar Association accredited law school or the equivalent in training and experience as established by regulations to be adopted by the department pursuant to Section 4705. These hearing officers shall receive training in the law and regulations governing services to developmentally disabled individuals and administrative hearings. Training shall include, but not be limited to, the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act and regulations adopted thereunder, relevant case law, information about services and supports available to persons with developmental disabilities, including innovative services and supports, the standard agreement contract between the department and regional centers and regional center purchase-of-service policies, and information and training on protecting the rights of consumers at administrative hearings, with emphasis on assisting, where appropriate, those consumers represented by themselves or an advocate inexperienced in administrative hearings in fully developing the administrative record. The State Department of Developmental Services shall seek the advice of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Organization of Area Boards, the protection and advocacy agency designated by the Governor in this state to fulfill the requirements and assurances of the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, contained in Chapter 75 (commencing with Section 6000) of Title 42 of the United States Code, the Association of Regional Center Agencies, and other state agencies or organizations and consumers and family members as designated by the department in the development of standardized hearing procedures for hearing officers and training materials and the implementation of training procedures by the department. The department shall provide formal training for hearing officers on at least an annual basis. The training shall be developed and presented by the department, however, the department shall invite those agencies and organizations listed in this subdivision to participate.

(c) The hearing officer shall not be an employee, agent, board member, or contractor of the service agency against whose action the appeal has been filed, or a spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, legal guardian, or conservator of the claimant, or any person who has a direct financial interest in the outcome of the fair hearing, or any other interest which would preclude a fair and impartial hearing.

(d) The claimant and the service agency shall exchange a list of potential witnesses, the general subject of the testimony of each



witness, and copies of all potential documentary evidence at least five days prior to the hearing. The hearing officer may prohibit testimony of a witness that is not disclosed and may prohibit the introduction of documents that have not been disclosed. However, the hearing officer may allow introduction of such testimony or witness in the interest of justice.

(e) The fair hearing shall be held at a time and place reasonably convenient to the claimant and the authorized representative. The claimant or the authorized representative of the claimant and the regional center shall agree on the location of the fair hearing.

(f) Merits of a pending fair hearing shall not be discussed between the hearing officer and a party outside the presence of the other party.

(g) The hearing officer shall voluntarily disqualify himself or herself and withdraw from any case in which he or she cannot accord a fair and impartial hearing or consideration. Any party may request the disqualification of the hearing officer by filing an affidavit, prior to the taking of evidence at a hearing, stating with particularity the grounds upon which it is claimed that a fair and impartial hearing cannot be accorded. The issue shall be decided by the hearing officer.

(h) Both parties to the fair hearing shall have the rights specified in subdivision (a) of Section 4710.6.

(i) The fair hearing need not be conducted according to the technical rules of evidence and those related to witnesses. Any relevant evidence shall be admitted. Both parties shall be allowed to submit documents into evidence at the beginning of the hearing. No party shall be required to formally authenticate any document unless the hearing officer determines the necessity to do so in the interest of justice. All testimony shall be under oath or affirmation which the hearing officer is empowered to administer.

(j) A service agency shall present its witnesses and all other evidence before the claimant presents his or her case unless the parties agree otherwise or the hearing officer determines that there exists good cause for a witness to be heard out of order. This section does not alter the burden of proof.

(k) A recording shall be made of the proceedings before the hearing officer. Any cost of recording shall be borne by the responsible state agency.

(l) The fair hearing shall be conducted in the English language. However, if the claimant, the claimant's guardian or conservator, parent of a minor claimant, or authorized representative does not understand English, an interpreter shall be provided by the responsible state agency.

(m) The fair hearing shall be open to the public except at the request of the claimant or authorized representative or when personnel matters are being reviewed.



(n) The agency awarded the contract for independent hearing officers shall annually conduct, or cause to be conducted, an evaluation of the hearing officers who conduct hearings under this part. The department shall approve the methodology used to conduct the annual evaluation. The agency awarded the contract shall annually submit to the department copies of administrative decisions reviewed by the superior court and a summary analysis of the rationale as to why the superior court affirmed or denied the decisions. Information and data for this evaluation shall be solicited from consumers who were claimants in an administrative hearing over the past year, their family members or authorized representative if involved in the hearing, regional centers, and nonattorney advocates, attorneys who represented either party in an administrative hearing over the past year, and the organizations identified in subdivision (b). The areas of evaluation shall include, but not be limited to, the hearing officers' demeanor toward parties and witnesses, conduct of the hearing in accord with fairness and standards of due process, ability to fairly develop the record in cases where consumers represent themselves or are represented by an advocate that does not have significant experience in administrative hearings, use of legal authority, clarity of written decisions, and adherence to the requirements of subdivision (b) of Section 4712.5. The department shall be provided with a copy of the evaluation and shall use the evaluation in partial fulfillment of its evaluation of the contract for the provision of independent hearing officers. A summary of the data collected and the summary analysis of superior court decisions shall be made available to the public upon request, provided that the names of individual hearing officers and consumers shall not be disclosed.

SEC. 4. Section 4714 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

4714. (a) Commencing July 1, 1999, for each appeal request submitted pursuant to Section 4710.5, regional centers and developmental centers shall submit information to the department including, but not limited to, all of the following:

- (1) Whether the case was resolved through an informal meeting or mediation.
- (2) Whether an informal meeting or mediation was declined, and if so, by which party.
- (3) The issue or issues involved in the case.
- (4) The outcome of the case if a fair hearing was held.

(b) The information collected pursuant to this section shall be compiled by the department and made available to the public upon request.

SEC. 5. Section 3 of this bill incorporates amendments to Section 4712 of the Welfare and Institutions Code proposed by both this bill and SB 1038. It shall only become operative if (1) both bills are



enacted and become effective on January 1, 1999, (2) each bill amends Section 4712 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, and (3) this bill is enacted after SB 1038, in which case Section 2 of this bill shall not become operative.

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