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By:  Howard H.B. No. 4126

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to a required training course for persons serving as special education representatives and hearing officers at impartial due process hearings.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Section 29.0162(b), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(b)  The commissioner by rule shall adopt additional qualifications and requirements for a representative for purposes of Subsection (a)(2). The rules must:

(1)  prohibit an individual from being a representative under Subsection (a)(2) opposing a school district if:

(A)  the individual has prior employment experience with the district; and

(B)  the district raises an objection to the individual serving as a representative;

(2)  include requirements that the representative have knowledge of:

(A)  special education due process rules, hearings, and procedure; and

(B)  federal and state special education laws;

(3)  require, if the representative receives monetary compensation from a person for representation in an impartial due process hearing, that the representative agree to abide by a [~~voluntary~~] code of ethics and professional conduct during the period of representation; [~~and~~]

(4)  require, if the representative receives monetary compensation from a person for representation in an impartial due process hearing, that the representative enter into a written agreement for representation with the person who is the subject of the special education due process hearing that includes a process for resolving any disputes between the representative and the person; and

(5)  require, if the representative is not a parent of or person standing in parental relation to the student being represented in an impartial due process hearing, that the representative complete a special education law training course in accordance with Section 29.0165 before the hearing.

SECTION 2.  Subchapter A, Chapter 29, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 29.0165 to read as follows:

Sec. 29.0165.  SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW TRAINING COURSE FOR DUE PROCESS HEARINGS. (a) The agency shall develop and offer a training course on special education law for persons serving as representatives for students or as hearing officers for impartial due process hearings. The course must be approved by the commissioner and require a participant to:

(1)  complete at least 30 hours of instruction in special education law; and

(2)  pass an examination at the end of the course.

(b)  The commissioner must approve any examination administered under this section.

(c)  A person may not serve as a representative for a student or a hearing officer at an impartial due process hearing under this chapter unless the person has completed the training required by this section and satisfactorily passed the course examination.

SECTION 3.  (a) This Act applies beginning with the 2020-2021 school year.

(b)  As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act:

(1)  the commissioner of education shall adopt rules necessary to implement the changes in law made by this Act; and

(2)  the Texas Education Agency shall develop the special education law training course required by Section 29.0165, Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 4.  This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2019.