

	Mediation	Written state complaint	Due process complaint	Expediated hearing request
What issues are covered?	Any disagreement between parents and the school system about special education and/or related services	Anytime there is a concern about a particular child or a concern about a particular school or district	Disputes about evaluations, educational placements or providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE)	Disputes with the school regarding discipline-related decisions that impacts a child's educational placement, or whether the child's disability relates to his or her behavior. The school may use this process if they believe a child's behavior is dangerous to themselves or others.
Who begins the process?	A parent or the school division may request mediation.	A parent or organization may file a written state complaint.	A parent or a school system may file a due process complaint.	A parent or school system may file for an expediated hearing request.
Outcome of process	The process is legally binding and enforceable.	A written document that includes findings and conclusions, as well as reasons for the final decision. Includes action steps related to the child or the concern listed in the complaint.	A written decision with findings of fact and conclusion of law with specific activities that must be adhered to.	A written decision with findings of fact and conclusions of law which order the child to be provided with a specific educational placement.
Benefits of the process	Less adversarial than other methods. Shows a willingness to collaborate.	Easy to file. Complaint forms are available on the DOE website.	Legally binding decision. Your child "stays put" while the process goes on. The	Quickly addresses concerns with discipline and placement

			state educational agencies	
Who presides over the process and determines the outcome?	A trained mediator presides over the meeting. Both the parents and school work together to determine the outcome.	The Commonwealth is responsible for ensuring that the investigation into the complaint is complete and a decision is made regarding the complaint.	A hearing officer or administrative law judge makes the decision.	A hearing officer or administrative law judge makes the decision.
Time frame	No specified timeline. Should be completed in a "timely manner".	State complaints must be filed within one year of the date of the incident. A written decision must be issued no later than 60 CALENDAR days from the date the complaint was filed.	Due process complaints must be filed within TWO YEARS of the date that either party knew that there was an issue or concern. A written decision must be issued within 45 CALENDAR days from the end of the resolution period unless both parties agree to extend the time.	A resolution meeting must occur within 7 CALENDAR days, unless the parents and school agree in writing to not have the meeting or use mediation instead. The hearing timeline proceeds if the issue is not resolved within 15 BUSINESS days. The hearing must be held within 20 SCHOOL days of the request being filed, and the decision must be issued within 10 SCHOOL days of the hearing.
Financial considerations	No fee for mediation. The mediator is paid for at public expense.	There is no cost to file a complaint. Investigation is covered by public expense.	The hearing, hearing officer or administrative judge and facility are paid for at public expense.	The hearing, hearing officer or administrative judge and facility are paid for at public expense.

			Parents and the school division are responsible for their own expenses, including attorney fees.	Parents and the school division are responsible for their own expenses, including attorney fees.
How to prepare for the process	Create an agenda with your most important discussion points listed. Think of questions and determine what outcome would be best and what you would be willing to negotiate with.	Make copies of any documents to back up your claim. Follow all state regulations in completing the filing. Respond to any additional requests for information.	Gather and submit evidence. Prepare witness lists and make copies of all documentation.	Gather and submit evidence. Prepare witness lists and make copies of all documentation.