

Preparing for a Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion Hearing

- You should go to the hearing with your child. It is important for your child to have a chance to tell the school what he thinks happened.
- Your child should think about what happened and write down any important information. Help your child gather any documents you think will help your child present her side of the story.
- Help your child decide whether to have any witnesses testify about what happened.
- Prepare yourself and your child. The school staff will have documents and may have witnesses, like teachers. Usually the school staff present their side of the story first. They will bring school records about your child to the hearing.
- Ask to see your child's school records before the hearing. If you think that the school does not have all the facts, bring your own evidence.
- Present any discipline alternatives you think would be more appropriate.
- If your child is in Special Education, under a 504 plan or the school has knowledge that your child has a disability, contact a disability advocacy organization (see below). You and your child have special rights under federal and state law. Make sure the school holds an IEP called a manifestation determination review before the suspension hearing which may stop or delay the suspension hearing.
- If your child is not in Special Education, but you think that she may need special services to do well in school, you should ask for an evaluation for special education. Make your request in writing, asking for an expedited evaluation and special education services. Sign it and date it. Fax it or hand deliver it to the special education director of the school district.

If you need help, call an advocacy group immediately. If they cannot help you, they may know someone who can. If you keep trying, you should be able to find someone to answer your questions.

Resources:

- Law Access New Mexico: 988-4529 or (800)340-9971
- Educating Parents of Indian Children with Special Needs (505) 867-3396
- New Mexico Family Network (Formerly PBDC): 256-0430 or (800) 273-7232
- Parents Reaching Out (PRO): 247-0192 or (800) 524-5176
- Pegasus Legal Services for Children: 244-1101
- Disability Rights NM(DRNM) (Formerly P&A): 256-3100 or (800) 432-4682