

Special education due process hearings are conducted by impartial private practice attorneys and Administrative Law Judges from the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH) who meet the standards outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and additional standards set by the Texas Education Agency. Below are the names of the current special education hearing officers and descriptions of their professional experience.

HEARING OFFICER	PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
<p>Brad Areheart</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2005 • Graduate of the University of Texas School of Law • Full-time law professor since 2010 (teaching disability law, labor law, employment law, employment discrimination, and contracts) • Part-time neutral • In addition to special education law, experience in labor law, employment law, and disability law • Former middle school English teacher • Special education hearing officer since 2023
<p>Erin Bakker</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2000 • Graduate of the University of South Carolina School of Law • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2021 • County Prosecutor handling DFPS and Crimes Against Children criminal cases for over 7 years • Municipal Court Judge for 12 years • Adjunct Professor University of North Texas Dallas School of Law in Negotiations, Counseling, and Interview techniques for 3 semesters • Special education hearing officer since 2026
<p>Christian Bourgeacq</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 1996 • Also licensed attorney in Missouri (1986) and Illinois (1987) • Graduate of Washington University School of Law in St. Louis, Missouri • Full-time neutral • Prior employment included work as an associate in private practice, in-house counsel, and solo practice • In addition to special education law, experience in administrative law, disability and civil rights law, education law, civil litigation, and board certified in labor and employment law • Special education hearing officer since 2022
<p>Dee Marlo Chico</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2006 • Graduate of the St. Mary’s University School of Law • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2021 • In addition to special education law, experience in administrative law and litigation • Special education hearing officer since 2024

HEARING OFFICER	PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
Steve Elliot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2003 • Graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2017 • In addition to special education law, experience in Medicaid, juvenile law, insurance law, and the Americans with Disabilities Act • Special education hearing officer since 2017
Kimberly Gamble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 1994 • Graduate of Texas Tech University School of Law • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2021 • In addition to special education, experience in civil and criminal litigation, municipal law, real estate law, mediation and arbitration • Special education hearing officer since 2025
Sheena Hood-Aguilar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2012 • Graduate of South Texas College of Law • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2020 • In addition to special education law, experience in administrative law, family law, guardianship, and child support • Special education hearing officer since 2026
Patricia Hollis McGruder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2009 • Licensed to practice law in Indiana since 2000 • Graduate of Indiana University School of Law • In private practice at FMS Mediation, LLC dba FMS Dispute Resolution Services • Experience in employment and labor law, consumer law, administrative law, civil and family mediation, and arbitration • Special education hearing officer since 2023
Kimberlee Kovach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 1981 • Graduate of Capital University Law School • In private practice at Kovach Dispute Resolution • In addition to special education law, experience in civil litigation, family law, employment law, health care matters and mediation • Special education hearing officer since 2017
JNean Lacey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2006 • Graduate of the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University • Administrative Law Judge since 2022 • In addition to special education law, experience in administrative law, family law, and child welfare law • Former elementary & middle school Special Education teacher • Special education hearing officer since 2025

HEARING OFFICER	PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
Kathryn Lewis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2005 • Graduate of the Golden Gate University School of Law • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2017 • In addition to special education law, experience in disability benefits entitlement, Medicaid, guardianship, and mental health law and policy • Special education hearing officer since 2017
Sandy Lowe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 1992 • Graduate of the University of Texas School of Law • In addition to special education law, experience in administrative law, employment law, teacher contract hearings, civil rights law, and mediation • Former classroom teacher • Special education hearing officer since 2017
Stacy May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2016 • Licensed to practice law in Arizona and California since 1993 • Graduate of the University of Iowa, College of Law • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2020 • Certified teacher in special education since 2011 • Certified dyslexia specialist • In addition to special education law, experience in intellectual property, commercial litigation, and family law • Special education hearing officer since 2020
Deborah McElvaney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 1983 • Graduate of South Texas College of Law • In private practice at DHMcElvaney Law, PLLC • In addition to special education law, experience in administrative law, commercial law, mediation, civil litigation, arbitration, and state and federal appellate law • Special education hearing officer from 1996-2013, 2018-Present
Amber Morgan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 1999 • Graduate of Baylor Law School • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2023 • In addition to special education law, experience in disability law (Social Security disability, Veteran’s compensation and pension claims, and worker’s compensation), administrative law, and mediation • Special education hearing officer since 2025

Caroline Nelson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2006 • Licensed to practice law in California since 1997 • Graduate of UC Berkeley Law, University of California Berkeley • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2025 • In addition to special education law, experience in school law, Section 504/Americans with Disabilities Act, special needs planning, supported decision-making and mediation • Special education hearing officer since 2025
Veronica Ruberto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2000 • Graduate of Thurgood Marshall School of Law • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2025 • Experience in administrative law, workers’ compensation law, Veterans law, and surface mining and reclamation law • Former Administrative Law Judge for the Texas Department of Insurance-Division of Workers' Compensation and the Railroad Commission from 2004 to 2024 • Special education hearing officer since 2025
Shannon Saucedo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 1997 • Graduate of Thurgood Marshall School of Law • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2018 • In addition to special education law, experience in school law, employment law, attorney ethics, civil litigation, and mediation • Special education hearing officer since 2025
Ian Spechler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2007 • Graduate of the University of Texas School of Law • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2017 • In addition to special education law, experience in child welfare law, juvenile law, housing law, and Medicaid law • Special education hearing officer since 2017
Jacob Wallace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2007 • Graduate of Baylor University School of Law • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2022 • In addition to special education law, experience in administrative law, consumer and commercial law, civil litigation, and mediation • Special education hearing officer since 2023
Kasey White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas practicing attorney since 2003 • Graduate of Texas Tech University School of Law • Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2017 • In addition to special education law, experience in criminal and civil litigation, family law, and child support • Special education hearing officer since 2017

<p>Amy Wright</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Texas practicing attorney since 1991• Graduate of the University of Texas School of Law• Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2024• Former classroom teacher certified in Special Education and secondary Mathematics; National Board Certified in Early Adolescent Mathematics• In addition to special education law, experience in school law, family law, civil litigation, criminal prosecution, appellate law and former clinical professor at UT Law School• Special education hearing officer since 2024
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