

AUSTIN ISD JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	ASSOCIATE OMBUDSPERSON FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION			PAY GRADE:	AP7
JOB CODE:		FLSA STATUS:	EXEMPT	DATE REVISED:	05/23/2024 HC
DUTY DAYS:	226	LEGACY JOB CODE:			
FUNDING SOURCE:	THIS POSITION IS LOCALLY FUNDED				

AUSTIN ISD EQUITY STATEMENT:

Austin ISD is committed to developing shared definitions and expectations of equity across our District that are consistent with our Board priorities. The definition of equity from the National Equity Project will guide our transformational work.

- *Educational equity means that each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential. Working Towards Educational Equity:*
- *Ensuring equally high outcomes for all participants in our educational system; removing the predictability of success or failures that currently correlates with any social or cultural factor:*
- *Interrupting [Disrupting] inequitable practices, examining biases, and creating inclusive multicultural school environments for adults and children; and*
- *Discovering and cultivating the unique gifts, talents, and interests that every human possesses.*

<https://nationalequityproject.org/>

-Austin ISD Board President, February 2019

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

A Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university is required, with coursework in education, special education, child development, social work, psychology, counseling, or related field preferred. A Master's degree in a related field, such as special education, child development, social work, psychology, counseling, community engagement, or educational administration is preferred. Four (4) years of directly related work experience in special education is required, preferably in K-12. Knowledge of special education programs, services, laws, regulations, policies, and procedures is required. Knowledge of local community agencies and informational resources available to individuals with disabilities and their families is preferred. Knowledge of Austin ISD systems and practices is preferred. Prior experience in an ombuds, alternative dispute resolution, or mediation role is strongly preferred. Membership in an appropriate professional association, such as the International Ombuds Association (IOA), the United States Ombudsman Association, the University and College Ombuds Association, or the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution, is preferred. Previous training in dispute resolution and mediation is preferred. Fluency in English is required, and fluency in Spanish is preferred. Travel, including local travel to meet with administrators, community organizations, and families, is required for this position.

JOB PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITY:

The incumbent serves as a confidential, informal, impartial, and independent resource to support families with students who have or may have a disability in understanding and navigating the special education processes at Austin ISD. Services include providing information and resources, explaining policies and procedures, promoting and facilitating communication and collaboration between relevant parties, assisting in developing strategies and options to address issues and concerns, and making referrals to both Austin ISD and community-based resources. The incumbent assists in the resolution of concerns and critical situations but does not advocate for individuals or for the district. Instead, the incumbent advocates for a fair process. The incumbent also conducts outreach and training, manages and tracks cases, identifies systemic concerns and makes recommendations to leadership to address them, and researches best practices in special education and ombuds work in the K-12 setting.

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SKILL REQUIREMENTS:

This position requires outstanding communication and presentation skills. Incumbent must have the ability to build relationships and communicate effectively with people of all cultures and backgrounds, Austin ISD staff at all organizational levels, and community partners that provide support and resources to students with disabilities and their families. Incumbent must have an understanding of disabilities, neurodiversity, and federal, state, and local special education programs, laws, and regulations, including but not limited to the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Incumbent must be or become knowledgeable about the organization, including its structure, culture, policies, practices, and resources as they relate to special education. The incumbent should also possess demonstrated leadership skills and a demonstrated ability to implement and manage a broad-based program. The incumbent must use strong analytical, conflict resolution, and critical thinking skills to apply logic to complex matters. The incumbent must be proficient in the use of technology and data compilation, analysis, and reporting. The position requires a self-starter who exercises good judgment, provides effective customer service, makes excellent decisions, and demonstrates professionalism, empathy, patience, and diplomacy. The incumbent must have excellent organizational, time management, and problem-solving skills and must be able to gather and analyze information to develop appropriate options and actions. This position requires excellent strategic thinking and conflict resolution skills, including a thorough understanding of sources of conflict, the nature of conflict, and methods for resolution. The incumbent must be able to read, write, and communicate in English in order to receive and provide information in a timely manner to address special education concerns with relevant parties. This position requires the incumbent to adhere consistently to IOA's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

- Create a safe and confidential space for students, families, and members of the school community to ask questions, share concerns, and seek assistance in resolving issues related to special education.
- Conduct outreach on an ongoing basis to promote the services of the Ombuds Office, connect and collaborate with community members and organizations, and increase informational and referral resources for students and families.
- Respond professionally and timely to telephone, email, and in-person inquiries to assist with programs, processes, and procedures related to special education services.
- Listen to concerns, clarify issues, and assist individuals in exploring and developing options to address special education related issues and conflicts in an informal setting. Help individuals assess the pros and cons of their options.
- Promote and facilitate communication and collaboration and engage in shuttle diplomacy or facilitate meetings between parties, if requested. Identify solutions that are fair and equitable to all parties.
- Share information and resources on formal options available for dispute resolution, such as mediation, state complaints, and due process hearings, when collaboration efforts are unsuccessful.
- Provide information about both internal and external programs, services, and resources for individuals with disabilities.
- Research and identify best practices to proactively address and resolve potential conflicts regarding Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), 504 Plans, and other special education services.
- Work with the Special Education Department and other departments within Austin ISD to develop cooperative strategies for informal resolutions and to increase opportunities to resolve issues early in the procedural safeguard process.

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- Identify systemic problems, trends, and gaps between the stated goals of the district and actual outcomes and recommend creative ways to address them. Prepare reports for senior leadership.
- Make recommendations for the modifications of policies or practices that will reduce or eliminate recurring problems and support the development and promotion of a campus culture and climate that is inclusive and equitable for all.
- Assist in formulating, managing, and monitoring the overall goals, direction, programs, and budget of the office.
- Ensure that the integrity of the office is maintained by consistently following IOA's fundamental principles of confidentiality, informality, impartiality, and independence and by resolving issues as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- Keep information secure in accordance with the recommendations of the International Ombuds Association and the applicable requirements of the district.
- Engage in ongoing professional development to enhance job-related knowledge, including but not limited to relevant laws, best practices, coaching and counseling, conflict resolution, restorative practices, implicit and explicit bias, and trauma informed practices.
- Provide an exceptional customer experience for all constituents with intentional and professional practices that promote a culture of dignity and respect, focusing on achieving equitable outcomes.

OTHER DUTIES AS ASSIGNED:

Perform other related duties as assigned. All employees are expected to comply with lawful directives in rare situations driven by need.

PHYSICAL EFFORT AND WORK ENVIRONMENT:

This position involves working in a normal office setting with no unusual physical demands or exposure to hazardous situations. This position may involve rare exposure to blood or body fluids. Regular attendance is required for this position.

PERSONAL WORK RELATIONSHIPS:

This position reports directly to the appropriate supervisor of the department but works independently, sometimes with minimal supervision. The incumbent has regular contact with central office staff, school administrators, students, parents, and community members.

The Austin Independent School District, as an equal opportunity educational provider and employer, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, or gender expression or any other basis protected by law in educational programs or activities that it operates or in employment decisions.

I have read & acknowledge the job description above.

**Employee
Signature:**

Date: