Information Sheet – 11/12/19 - Board of Trustees Meeting

TO: Board of Trustees Item: 8.6

FR: Celli Coeville

DATE: November 4, 2019

RE: Administrative Regulation Revision, AR 3320, Claims Against the District, Consider for Adoption

The Administrative Regulation, AR 3320, for Claims Against the District is being updated to add the statement requiring the use of district procedures for claims against the district prior to filing a lawsuit. The Regulation also defines “limited civil case” as one that is for an amount of $25,000 or less. The changes have been highlighted and indicated with red font.

Recommended Action: Approve the revised Administrative Regulation, AR 3320, Claims Against the District

CSBA Sample
Administrative Regulation
Claims And Actions Against The District

AR 3320
Business and Noninstructional Operations

Note: The Government Claims Act (Government Code 810-996.6) sets forth prelitigation requirements and deadlines for claims against public entities, including school districts. In City of Stockton v. Superior Court, the California Supreme Court held that the claim requirements in Government Code 900-915.4 also apply to claims for breach of contract.

Note: Because a district's insurance carrier or joint powers authority (JPA) may require the district to comply with certain claims management conditions as part of the district's contractual coverage obligation, it is strongly recommended that this administrative regulation be reviewed for consistency with any applicable conditions of coverage. A district's failure to follow those contractual conditions may result in a loss of coverage benefits. The district's risk manager and legal counsel should also be consulted, as appropriate.

Note: Pursuant to Government Code 935, district claims procedures may include a requirement that a claim be presented and acted upon in accordance with those procedures as a prerequisite to a lawsuit. Failure to include such a requirement may subject the district to increased liability.

Unless otherwise provided by law, prior to filing a lawsuit against the district for money or damages, a written claim shall be filed in accordance with the following administrative regulation.

Time Limitations

Note: Items #1-4 below list timelines for claims pursuant to the Government Claims Act and other applicable statutes. Pursuant to Government Code 935, the district's authority to adopt local claims presentation procedures for causes of action which are excepted from the Government Claims Act by Government Code 905 is not applicable to those excepted causes of action which have their claims presentation procedures specified in other statutes or regulations, such as childhood sexual abuse. Rather, claims for childhood sexual abuse are governed by the timelines and procedures specified in Code of Civil Procedure 340.1.

The following time limitations apply to claims against the district:

1. Claims for money or damages relating to ~~any cause of action which is governed by a statute or regulation, including~~ childhood sexual abuse or any other cause~~s~~ of action specifically excepted from the Government Claims Act by Government Code 905 and for which a statute or regulation provides a claims presentation procedure shall be filed in accordance with the

applicable governing statute or regulation. (Government Code 905, 935)

(cf. 4157.1/4257.1/4357.1 - Work-Related Injuries)
(cf. 5141.4 - Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting)

Note: Pursuant to Government Code 935, a district may establish its own procedure for the presentation of those claims which are excluded from the Government Claims Act as specified in Government Code 905 and which are not governed by any other applicable statutes or regulations. Optional item #2 below is for use by any district whose board has chosen to exercise the authority to establish district procedures for such claims; see the accompanying Board policy. Item #2 provides six months as the time limitation for filing such claims, which is consistent with the requirement in Government Code 935 that the district's procedure not require a shorter time for presentation of a claim than the time specified in Government Code 911.2. However, the Governing Board has the discretion to adopt a more flexible time limitation and may increase the amount of time allowed for filing such claims. If the Board adopts a more flexible time limitation, item #2 should be revised accordingly.

Note: If a claimant misses a deadline for a claim required to be submitted in accordance with item #2 or #3 below, the claimant may present an application to present a late claim pursuant to Government Code 911.4; see section below entitled "Late Claims."

2. In accordance with the Governing Board's authority pursuant to Government Code 935, claims for money or damages which relate to any cause of action specifically excepted from the Government Claims Act by Government Code 905 and which are not governed by any other claims presentation statute or regulation shall be filed not later than six months after the accrual of the cause of action. (Government Code 905, 935)

3. Claims for money or damages relating to a cause of action for death or for injury to person, personal property, or growing crops shall be presented to the ~~Governing~~ Board not later than six months after the accrual of the cause of action. (Government Code 911.2)

4. Claims for money or damages relating to any other cause of action shall be filed not later than one year after the accrual of the cause of action. (Government Code 911.2)

Receipt of Claims

A claim, any amendment thereto, or an application to present a late claim shall be deemed presented and received when delivered to the district office or deposited in a post office, mailbox, sub-post office, substation, mail chute, or other similar facility maintained by the U.S. government, in a sealed envelope properly addressed to the district office with postage paid, or when otherwise actually received in the district office or by the Board secretary or clerk. (Government Code 915, 915.2)

***Note: In most circumstances, a district's insurance provider or JPA is responsible for claims management, including investigating, defending, and managing a district's response to a claim presented under the Government Claims Act. The following paragraph requires the

Superintendent or designee to immediately forward any claims received to the district's JPA or insurance provider in order to help ensure compliance with any conditions of coverage.***

Upon receipt of a claim against the district pursuant to the Government Claims Act, the Superintendent or designee shall promptly provide written notice to the district's joint powers authority or insurance carrier in accordance with the applicable conditions of coverage.

Review of Contents of the Claim

Note: Most JPAs and insurance carriers provide a claim form. The person submitting the claim need not use the claim form provided by the district but, pursuant to Government Code 910 and 910.2, the claim must contain a signature and all the information listed below.

The Superintendent or designee shall review any claim received to ensure that the claim contains all of the following information as specified in Government Code 910 and 910.2:

1. The name and post office address of the claimant

2. The post office address to which the person presenting the claim desires notices to be sent

3. The date, place, and other circumstances of the occurrence or transaction which gave rise to the claim asserted

4. A general description of the indebtedness, obligation, injury, damage, or loss incurred insofar as it may be known at the time of presentation of the claim

5. The name(s) of the district employee(s) causing the injury, damage, or loss, if known

6. The amount claimed if it totals less than $10,000, including the estimated amount of any prospective injury, damage, or loss, insofar as it may be known at the time of the claim, together with the basis of computation of the amount claimed. If the amount claimed exceeds $10,000, the dollar amount shall not be included in the claim and the claimant shall indicate whether the claim is a limited civil case of $25,000 or less.

7. The signature of the claimant or the person acting on ~~his/her~~ the claimant's behalf

Notice of Claim Insufficiency

Note: Pursuant to Government Code 911, if the district, or the JPA or insurance carrier acting on the district's behalf, fails to give notice that the claim is insufficient, as specified below, then the district may not later raise that issue as a defense to the claim.

If a claim is found insufficient or not to satisfy the form requirements under Government Code 910 and 910.2, the Board or its designee shall, within 20 days of receipt of the claim, personally deliver or mail to the claimant, at the address stated in the claim or application, a notice that states the particular defects or omission in the claim. (Government Code 910.8, 915.4)

Note: Districts should be cautious before rejecting a claim because of insufficiency of information and consult legal counsel and/or the district's JPA or insurance provider, as appropriate. Courts have held that a claim is sufficient as long as enough information is disclosed to allow the district to adequately conduct an investigation of the claim's merits.

The Board shall not act upon the claim until at least 15 days after such notice is given. (Government Code 910.8)

Amendment to Claims

Within the time limits provided in the section "Time Limitations" above or prior to final action by the Board, whichever is later, a claim may be amended if, as amended, it relates to the same transaction or occurrence which gave rise to the original claim. (Government Code 910.6)

Late Claims

Note: The reference to item #2 in the following paragraph should be deleted if the district has not established district procedures pursuant to Government Code 935 for claims that are specifically exempted in Government Code 905 or adopted a time limitation that is not less than one year (see the accompanying Board policy and item #2 in the section "Time Limitations" above).

For claims under items #2 and #3 in the section "Time Limitations" above, any person who presents a claim later than six months after the accrual of the cause of action shall present, along with the claim, an application to present a late claim. Such claim and the application to present a late claim shall be presented not later than one year after the accrual of the cause of action. (Government Code 905, 911.4)

Note: If the claim is presented late and is not accompanied by an application to present a late claim, the Board or its agent should notify the claimant that "no action" was taken because the claim was presented late. If the Board were to state that the claim was "rejected," this would indicate that the Board had accepted the filing of the late claim and taken action to reject it.

If the claim is presented late and is not accompanied by an application to present a late claim, the Board or its designee may, within 45 days, give written notice that the claim was not presented timely and that it is being returned without further action. (Government Code 911.3)

The Board shall grant or deny the application to present a late claim within 45 days after it is presented. This 45-day period may be extended by written agreement of the claimant and the Board provided that such agreement is made before the expiration of the 45-day period. (Government Code 911.6)

The Board shall grant the application to present a late claim where one or more of the following conditions are applicable: (Government Code 911.6)

1. The failure to present the claim was through mistake, inadvertence, surprise, or excusable neglect and the district was not prejudiced in its defense regarding the claim by the claimant's failure to present the claim within the time limit.

2. The person who sustained the alleged injury, damage, or loss was a minor during all of the time specified for presentation of the claim.

3. The person who sustained the alleged injury, damage, or loss was physically or mentally incapacitated during all of the time specified for presentation of the claim and the disability was the reason the person failed to present the claim.

4. The person who sustained the alleged injury, damage, or loss died before the expiration of the time specified for the presentation of the claim.

If the application to present a late claim is denied, the claimant shall be given notice in substantially the same form as set forth in Government Code 911.8. (Government Code 911.8)

If the Board does not take action on the application to present a late claim within 45 days, the application shall be deemed to have been denied on the 45th day unless the time period has been extended, in which case it shall be denied on the last day of the period specified in the extension agreement. (Government Code 911.6)

Action on Claims

Note: Pursuant to Government Code 945.6, if the Board formally acts to reject a claim and provides notice of such rejection, the claimant has only six months from the rejection to initiate a lawsuit. If the Board takes no action or fails to provide written notice rejecting the claim, the claimant then has two years to initiate a suit against the district. The notice of rejection must comply with the notification requirements of Government Code 913 unless the claim has no address on it.

Note: Although the Board takes final action on claims as specified below, such action is based on the evaluation of the claim by the district's insurance provider or JPA.

Within 45 days after the presentation or amendment of a claim, the Board shall take action on the claim. This time limit may be extended by written agreement between the district and the claimant before the expiration of the 45-day period. If the 45-day period has expired, the time limit may be extended if legal action has not commenced or been barred by legal limitations. (Government Code 912.4)

The Board may act on the claim in one of the following ways: (Government Code 912.4, 912.6)

1. If the Board finds that the claim is not a proper charge against the district, the claim shall be rejected.

2. If the Board finds that the claim is a proper charge against the district and is for an

amount justly due, the claim shall be allowed.

3. If the Board finds that the claim is a proper charge against the district but is for an amount greater than is justly due, the Board shall either reject the claim or allow it in the amount justly due and reject it as to the balance.

4. If legal liability of the district or the amount justly due is disputed, the Board may reject or compromise the claim.

5. If the Board takes no action on the claim, the claim shall be deemed rejected.

If the Board allows the claim in whole or in part or compromises the claim and the claimant accepts the amount allowed or offered to settle the claim, the Board may require the claimant to accept it in settlement of the entire claim. (Government Code 912.6)

The Board or its designee shall transmit to the claimant written notice of action taken or of inaction which is deemed rejection. The notice shall be in the form set forth in Government Code 913 and shall either be personally delivered or mailed to the address stated in the claim or application. (Government Code 913, 915.4)

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