

**SPECIAL EDUCATION HEARING OFFICERS**  
(October 2023)

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
<b>Brad Areheart</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 2005</li> <li>• Graduate of the University of Texas School of Law</li> <li>• Full-time law professor since 2010 (teaching disability law, labor law, employment law, employment discrimination, and contracts)</li> <li>• Part-time neutral (arbitrator, independent hearing officer)</li> <li>• In addition to special education law, experience in labor law, employment law, and disability law</li> <li>• Former middle school English teacher</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2023</li> </ul>
<b>Christian Bourgeois</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 1996</li> <li>• Also licensed attorney in Missouri (1986) and Illinois (1987)</li> <li>• Graduate of Washington University School of Law in St. Louis, Missouri</li> <li>• Full-time neutral (arbitrator, mediator, independent hearing officer)</li> <li>• Prior employment included work as an associate in private practice, in-house counsel, and solo practice</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2022</li> </ul>
<b>Steve Elliot</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 2003</li> <li>• Graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School</li> <li>• Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2017</li> <li>• In addition to special education law, experience in Medicaid, juvenile law, insurance law, and the Americans with Disabilities Act</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2017</li> </ul>
<b>Patricia Hollis McGruder</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 2009</li> <li>• Licensed to practice law in Indiana since 2000</li> <li>• Graduate of Indiana University School of Law</li> <li>• In private practice at FMS Mediation, LLC dba FMS Dispute Resolution Services</li> <li>• Experience in employment and labor law, consumer law, administrative law, civil and family mediation, and arbitration</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2023</li> </ul>
<b>Kimberlee Kovach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 1981</li> <li>• Graduate of Capital University Law School</li> <li>• In private practice at Kovach Dispute Resolution</li> <li>• In addition to special education law, experience in civil litigation, family law, employment law, health care matters and mediation</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2017</li> </ul>

HEARING OFFICER	PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
<b>Kathryn Lewis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 2005</li> <li>• Graduate of the Golden Gate University School of Law</li> <li>• Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2017</li> <li>• In addition to special education law, experience in disability benefits entitlement, Medicaid, guardianship, and mental health law and policy</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2017</li> </ul>
<b>Sandy Lowe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 1992</li> <li>• Graduate of the University of Texas School of Law</li> <li>• In addition to special education law, experience in administrative law, employment law, teacher contract hearings, civil rights law, and mediation</li> <li>• Former classroom teacher</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2017</li> </ul>
<b>Stacy May</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 2016</li> <li>• Licensed to practice law in Arizona and California since 1993</li> <li>• Graduate of the University of Iowa, College of Law</li> <li>• Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2020</li> <li>• Certified teacher in special education since 2011</li> <li>• Certified dyslexia specialist</li> <li>• In addition to special education law, experience in intellectual property, commercial litigation, and family law</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2020</li> </ul>
<b>Deborah McElvaney</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 1983</li> <li>• Graduate of South Texas College of Law</li> <li>• In private practice at DHMcElvaney Law, PLLC</li> <li>• In addition to special education law, experience in administrative law, commercial law, mediation, civil litigation, arbitration, and state and federal appellate law</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer from 1996-2013</li> </ul>
<b>Claudette Rushing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 2023</li> <li>• Licensed to practice law in Maryland since 2011, New York since 2013 and Washington since 2021</li> <li>• Graduate of the University of Maryland School of Law</li> <li>• In private practice at Education Law Northwest and Education Resolutions, LLC</li> <li>• Former general and special education teacher</li> <li>• Gifted and Talented Education and Reading/ Dyslexia specialist</li> <li>• Experience in special education law, administrative law, mediation, education policy, employment law, intellectual property, civil rights, student privacy, and arbitration</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2019</li> </ul>

HEARING OFFICER	PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
<b>Ian Spechler</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 2007</li> <li>• Graduate of the University of Texas School of Law</li> <li>• Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2017</li> <li>• In addition to special education law, experience in child welfare law, juvenile law, housing law, and Medicaid law</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2017</li> </ul>
<b>Jacob Wallace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 2007</li> <li>• Graduate of Baylor University School of Law</li> <li>• Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2022</li> <li>• In addition to special education law, experience in administrative law, consumer and commercial law, civil litigation, and mediation</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2023</li> </ul>
<b>Kasey White</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 2003</li> <li>• Graduate of Texas Tech University School of Law</li> <li>• Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2017</li> <li>• In addition to special education law, experience in criminal and civil litigation, family law, and child support</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2017</li> </ul>
<b>Jessica Witte</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas practicing attorney since 2016</li> <li>• Licensed to practice law in New York since 2014</li> <li>• Graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Law School</li> <li>• Administrative Law Judge at SOAH since 2021</li> <li>• Former special education inclusion teacher</li> <li>• In addition to special education law, experience in school law, public law, civil litigation, employment law, civil rights law and policy, white collar criminal law, and state and federal appellate law</li> <li>• Special education hearing officer since 2021</li> </ul>