

IMPORTANT UPDATE ON CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM ATTENTION: CLASSES OF 2008 AND 2009

Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) has been working for years to protect the rights of students with disabilities who have been required to take the California High School Exit Exam. We want to alert you to recent legal developments that impact students with disabilities from the classes of 2008 and 2009.

Students with disabilities in the classes of 2008 and 2009 were required to pass the Exit Exam in order to receive a high school diploma, even if they met all other graduation requirements. Prior to 2008, students with disabilities could obtain a diploma if they met all other graduation requirements, even if they did not pass the Exit Exam. Beginning with the 2009-10 school year, eligible students with disabilities will again be permitted to obtain a diploma if they meet all other graduation requirements, even if they do not pass the Exit Exam.

Many people have asked whether anything can be done for students with disabilities from the classes of 2008 and 2009. **There is a way for students with disabilities from the classes of 2008 and 2009 who otherwise met all graduation requirements to receive their diplomas without passing the Exit Exam, but its future is uncertain, so students should act soon.**

The California Department of Education (CDE) says on its website that: "Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students are entitled to special education services until age 22 or until they receive a diploma. Thus, a district may be required to reopen and revise an IEP for a student who left high school without receiving a diploma, if the student has not reached age 22...Students with IEPs or 504 plans who completed all graduation requirements, except passing the CAHSEE, and received a certificate of completion in 2008 or 2009, are eligible for this exemption." More information is available on the CDE website at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/cahseefaqexempt.asp>.

We encourage you to look into this opportunity as soon as possible. The requirements may change, and the opportunity only applies to students who have not reached age 22. We encourage you to talk to your school district about reopening your IEP or 504 plan for the purpose of obtaining a diploma. In the event you encounter difficulties or require individual assistance, you may contact Disability Rights California (DRC) to discuss your individual circumstances in more detail. You can contact DRC toll-free at 1-800-776-5746. Ask to speak to the Information and Referral Advocate about your "Exit Exam" or "CAHSEE" issue. The Advocate will give you more detailed information or set up a phone appointment for further consultation. This service is free. If you are unable to get an appointment set up and you still have a problem with getting a diploma, please call Attorney Steve Rosenbaum at (510) 267-1200.