

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Daisy Bueno, individually and as guardian ad litem for S.B., a minor
v. Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District

Bueno · No. 1:21-cv-00436-HBK · Decided October 30, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California granted a joint petition approving the settlement of minor Plaintiff S.B.’s claims against Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and § 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The order approves a \$925,000 structured settlement, establishes a special needs trust, authorizes specified attorney fees and costs, and retains jurisdiction to enforce the settlement. The parties were directed to file a stipulation dismissing the action with prejudice after the initial settlement payment.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Helena M. Barch-Kuchta
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	October 30, 2025
DOCKET	1:21-cv-00436-HBK
DISPOSITION	approved
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The court considered an unopposed joint petition by a minor plaintiff, through her guardian ad litem, and the defendant school district for approval of a global settlement and minor's compromise.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court independently reviewed the proposed compromise and determined whether the minor's net recovery and the settlement as a whole were fair, reasonable, and in the minor's best interests.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

TOPICS

- guardianship procedure
- trusts
- ada / disability
- civil procedure
- remedies

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the proposed settlement and minor's compromise should be approved under the court's obligation to protect the interests of a minor plaintiff.
2. Whether the proposed settlement satisfies the requirements for establishing a special needs trust under California Probate Code § 3604(b).
3. Whether the proposed attorney fees and costs are fair and reasonable.

HOLDINGS

1. The court approved the proposed minor's compromise because the petition supplied the information required by Local Rule 202(b)(2), and the settlement served S.B.'s best interests and was fair and reasonable.
2. The requirements for establishing a special needs trust were satisfied because S.B.'s disability substantially impaired her ability to provide for her own care or custody, she was likely to have special needs that would not otherwise be met, and the amount placed in the trust was reasonably necessary to meet those needs.
3. The proposed attorney fees and costs were fair and reasonable in light of the litigation, the facts of the case, and the total settlement amount.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The purpose of requiring the Court’s approval is to provide an additional level of oversight to ensure that the child’s interests are protected.” (at 2)

“conduct its own inquiry to determine whether the settlement serves the best interests of the minor.” (at 3)

“requires only that the district court consider whether the net recovery of each minor plaintiff is fair and reasonable, without regard to the amount received by adult co-plaintiffs and what they have agreed to pay plaintiffs’ counsel” (at 3)

“the Court finds the settlement serves the best interests of the minor Plaintiff S.B. and is fair and reasonable.” (at 9)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

S.B. is a medically fragile minor with Trisomy 5p, developmental and intellectual impairments, chronic lung disease, and severe orthopedic limitations. The amended complaint alleged that, beginning in November 2019, she did not receive most services identified in her individualized education plan, including in-home instruction, physical therapy, positional equipment, and nursing services. The parties reached a global structured settlement totaling \$925,000, with the net recovery to be placed in a special needs trust after payment of attorney fees and costs.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

S.B., through Daisy Bueno as guardian ad litem, filed an action alleging violations of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and § 504 of the Rehabilitation Act based on the alleged failure to provide educational services and reasonable accommodations. The parties later mediated and reached a structured settlement. After plaintiff filed a first amended complaint, the parties jointly petitioned for approval of the minor's compromise, which the court granted.

DISPOSITION

approved

CASES CITED

- Robidoux v. Rosengren, 638 F.3d 1177, 1181-82 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Dacanay v. Mendoza, 573 F.2d 1075, 1080 (9th Cir. 1978)
- Salmeron v. United States, 724 F.2d 1357, 1363 (9th Cir. 1984)
- Becker v. Long Beach Unified School District, 2:20-mc-00098-DMG-E (C.D. Cal. Oct. 20, 2022)
- G.C. By & Through Clark v. San Diego Unified School District, 2021 WL 3630112, at *2-3 (S.D. Cal. Aug. 17, 2021), report and recommendation adopted sub nom. 2021 WL 4060534 (S.D. Cal. Sept. 3, 2021)
- A.A. on behalf of A.A. v. Clovis Unified School District, 2018 WL 1167927, at *3-4 (E.D. Cal. Mar. 6, 2018), report and recommendation adopted sub nom. 2018 WL 1453243 (E.D. Cal. Mar. 23, 2018)

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