

For information call:

*Alternative Dispute Resolution Coordinator*

*SELPA Office*

*(805) 782-7301*

*Atascadero Unified School District*

*(805)462-4232*

*Cayucos Elementary School District*

*(805) 995-3694*

*Coast Unified School District*

*(805) 927-7148*

*County Office of Education*

*(805) 782-7321*

*Lucia Mar Unified School District*

*(805) 474-3000 ext. 1152*

*Paso Robles Joint Unified School District*

*(805) 238-2222*

*Pleasant Valley Jt. Union Elementary School District*

*(805) 467-3453*

*San Luis Coastal Unified School District*

*(805) 549-1218*

*San Miguel Joint Union School District*

*(805) 467-3216*

*Shandon Joint Unified School District*

*(805) 238-1782*

*Templeton Unified School District*

*(805) 434-5853*



## Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

*Informal alternatives to  
resolve special  
education disputes:*

- ◆ **Solutions Panel**
- ◆ **Facilitated IEP**

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**San Luis Obispo County  
Special Education Local Plan Area  
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## **SELPA's Role In Disputes**

The San Luis Obispo SELPA administrative office, both through a grant from the California State Department of Education (CDE) and direction from the superintendents of the districts within the county, has been charged with the responsibility of providing Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) activities for parents and schools within this county. Besides the structured processes discussed later in this flyer, the SELPA provides a variety of less structured approaches and are as follows:

- ◆ **Intake and Information:** The SELPA staff is available to discuss special education related issues on a confidential basis and provide information to parents relevant to their concerns or issues.
- ◆ **Compliance Assistance:** The SELPA staff offers conflict resolution related to special education compliance and placement issues for LEAs and other agencies. Problem-solving student-specific disputes between parents and districts can often be resolved by providing suggestions and options to avoid state mediations, due process hearings, and/or compliance complaints. The SELPA staff will work with parents to explore issues and find solutions. Technical assistance in state mediations, due process hearings, and compliance complaints is provided to LEAs.
- ◆ **Behavioral Consultation:** Positive Behavioral Support is a method of working with students with challenging behaviors that has been strongly supported by recent research. The method involves analyzing the environment in which students exhibit problem behaviors to determine environmental, skill, and reinforcement changes that may help students be more successful in their environment. The SELPA assists districts, schools, and individual classroom teachers in developing positive behavioral support plans for their students. SELPA staff may, in some circumstances, act as a neutral observer of the student in the classroom or during SST or IEP meetings. This is done to gain objective data concerning the student or to improve cooperation of the parties in the dispute.

Like all ADR activities, these are voluntary and as confidential to the extent the parent requests. The goal of all the activities listed on this flyer is to reach local resolution of disputes, maintain positive relationships between parents and the district, and insure an appropriate education for the student.

## **What is a Facilitated IEP Meeting?**

A Facilitated Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting is one in which:

- ◆ An IEP is developed by a collaborative team whose members share responsibility for the meeting process and results;
- ◆ Decision-making is managed through the use of essential facilitation skills.

This process of facilitation for IEP meetings enables the team to:

- ◆ Build and improve strong relationships among team members;
- ◆ Reach true consensus;
- ◆ Focus the IEP content and process on the needs of the student;
- ◆ Exercise an efficient, guided meeting process where effective communication and reflective listening are practiced.

The Facilitator:

- ◆ Guides the IEP team towards their objective;
- ◆ Assists the team in building understanding and agreement;
- ◆ Brings out the best in all group members.

## **What is a Solutions Panel?**

The panel uses a problem-solving method that brings disputing people or parties together, guided by a neutral panel, to reach a mutually satisfying agreement. The panel will not decide who is right or wrong, but will assist the parties in reaching a mutually satisfactory agreement. When agreement is reached, the specifics are put into writing and signed by all parties. Solutions Panels provide an informal, no-pressure setting for settling differences.

### **What happens when I call?**

The coordinator listens to your concerns and helps you clearly identify the problems and conflicts. Information about laws and regulations may be provided. Referral may be made to others who may more appropriately and directly work with your issues. With your permission, the coordinator contacts the other party and encourages participation in a Solutions Panel process. With the agreement of both parties, the coordinator will assign panel members and schedule a time and location acceptable to both parties. The coordinator continues to be available to assist as requested.

### **How does the Solutions Panel process work for you?**

At a scheduled session, you get to have your "say" and listen to the other party's point of view.

The Solutions Panel does not take sides, but acts as a neutral third party to ease the way to a solution. You and the other party work through a proven process to create your own written agreement. Your voluntary signature signifies your commitment to uphold the resolution. If an agreement cannot be reached, either party may request local or state level assistance. Parental rights are not compromised.

### **Who will help you?**

Trained and certified Solutions Panel volunteers work with you to find resolution. The panel is made up of a parent, a special educator, and an agency or community member, all from outside your school district.

### **Results in Agreement**

Eighty-five percent of community panels have resulted in agreements. Ninety-five percent of these agreements have held for a year or more.

## **How do I benefit from ADR options?**

- ◆ **More Satisfaction**  
The process is more satisfying than legal action. Courts dictate decisions. ADR allows the parties in conflict to control and shape their own agreement. A collaborative working relationship between parents and district personnel is maintained and often improved.
- ◆ **Less Cost**  
ADR options are provided at no cost. The expense of one panel is less than one hour of attorney time.
- ◆ **Faster**  
Formal state level Due Process has a 45-day timeline. Use of ADR options does not delay the timeline for Due Process.
- ◆ **Convenient**  
Meetings are held at a site agreeable to both parties.
- ◆ **Confidential**  
Everyone involved in the ADR process is bound by agreement and law to maintain confidentiality.



For special education issues there is a solution...