

Section A

San Luis Obispo County SELPA
(Special Education Local Plan Area)

SELPA Background Information

In the late 1970s, legislation required that all Local Education Agency(s) (LEAs) and county offices of education from geographical regions of sufficient size and scope provide special education services. There are approximately 116 regions or Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA) in California. The San Luis Obispo County SELPA serves the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education (SLOCOE) and ten LEAs. There are approximately 4,000 special education students served by the SELPA. For additional information or clarification regarding SELPA services or special education procedures, contact your LEA Special Education administrator, SELPA program specialist, or SELPA director.

SELPA responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

1. Program availability for all children with disabilities.
2. Procedural safeguards.
3. Data collection/management.
4. Fiscal management.
5. Staff development.
6. Community awareness.
7. Community Advisory Committee (CAC) support.
8. Program evaluation/review.
9. Curriculum/program development.
10. Assist LEAs in complying with local responsibilities.
11. Program coordination.

The SELPA also provides support to LEA's in the form of:

1. Alternative Dispute Resolution.
2. WorkAbility (vocational services).

SELPA also provides support for LEA's through Program Specialists. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

Observe, consult with, and assist special education teachers, including those providing designated instructional services

1. Consult with and assist general education teachers with special needs students in the general education setting.
2. Plan programs, coordinate curricular resources, and evaluate effectiveness of programs for individuals with exceptional needs.
3. Autism Services Support.
4. Participate in school staff/program development and provide support for innovative teaching methodology.
5. Provide coordination, consultation, and program development.

6. Assure that students have access to equitable educational opportunity regardless of the LEA of residence.
7. Serve as a resource to parents and LEAs in providing free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Governing and Administration

Governing Council

The Governing Council is composed of the San Luis Obispo County Superintendent of Schools and each LEA superintendent within the county or their designees. This body functions as the SELPA governing board. The Governing Council is responsible for approving SELPA regulations and procedures, the distribution of special education funds, and the fiscal operation of the SELPA.

Special Education Operations Committee

The Special Education Operations Committee (SEOC) facilitates the responsibility of the SELPA for ensuring that each individual with exceptional needs is provided appropriate special education and related services (regardless of the LEA of residence) and to ensure cooperation among the educational agencies within the county in providing special education. The SEOC makes specific recommendations regarding SELPA-wide procedures and services, the disbursement and allocation of special education funds for programs, operations of regionalized services, staff development activities, and fiscal operations to the Governing Council.

SELPA Director

The SELPA director is responsible for the coordination of special education and related services within the SELPA. The director provides support to all LEAs, which includes school district and San Luis Obispo County Office of Education programs, but is not directly responsible for their operation.

Community Advisory Committee

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is composed of members appointed by school boards of the LEA and the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education. Membership on this committee includes parents, teachers, administrators, and others. The committee has the following responsibilities:

1. Advise the SELPA regarding the Local Plan.
2. Recommend priorities to be addressed by the Local Plan.
3. Assist in parent education.
4. Encourage community involvement.
5. Support activities on behalf of individuals with exceptional needs.
6. Assist in parent awareness of the importance of school attendance.

7. Support legislation which is favorable to students with disabilities.
8. Recognize positive achievements by special education staff.

SELPA Services

Child Find

1. The SELPA has the responsibility to insure that each LEA has an established procedure for referral, assessment, and identification of students suspected of having a disability who reside within their boundaries, including those not enrolled in public school programs. Annual notices are published in the local newspapers within the SELPA to inform parents of their rights relative to special education. For information on child find, contact your LEA special education administrator.
2. LEAs have the responsibility to find and identify students suspected of having a disability.

WorkAbility 1 (WA1)

High school students in special education programs have access to the WorkAbility I program as outlined below.

WorkAbility I is a vocational program available to special education students at many high schools throughout San Luis Obispo County SELPA. The WorkAbility I program provides prevocational skills training, job placement, and subsidized wages (for a limited number of hours). Students are monitored by job placement specialists. Frequently at the conclusion of the WorkAbility placement, students are directly hired by their employers. Referrals to WAI are made through special education teachers.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

1. 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.
2. Problem Solving: The SELPA staff will work with parents to explore issues and find solutions. This may extend to contact the child's LEA to gather further information or find directions to alleviate the dispute
3. Neutral Observation: The 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.
4. Facilitated IEP Meeting: A Facilitated Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting is one in which:

- a. An IEP is developed by a collaborative team whose members share responsibility for the meeting process and results
 - b. Decision-making is managed through the use of essential facilitation skills
 - c. The Facilitator guides the IEP team towards their objective, assists the team in building understanding and agreement, and brings out the best in all group members
5. Solutions Panels: 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.
 6. Resource Parents: Resource parents are parents who have worked through the challenges of special education or are working through them. They are parents who have been identified as positive problem solvers and have gone through the SELPA training modules. The SELPA assists in selecting, training and monitoring resource parent activities.

Like all ADR activities, these are voluntary and is confidential to the extent the parent requests. The goal of all the activities is to reach local resolution of disputes, maintain positive relationships between parents and the LEA, and insure an appropriate education for the student. (see *Section J*)

Forms and Data Management

The SELPA is responsible for standardization of forms used by the LEAs and state required data collection activities.

Parent Rights

The SELPA is responsible for the development of and provisions of a parent rights document for use by the LEAs. (see *Section E*)

Surrogate Parents for Educational Rights

The SELPA is responsible for certification of parent rights.

A surrogate parent for educational rights is a person appointed by the LEA to represent a student (birth to age 18) in the IEP process and to ensure the student's rights to FAPE. A surrogate parent is needed if the student:

1. Is younger than age 18 and does not have a parent, legal guardian, or conservator who can be located
- OR -

2. Is a ward or dependent of the court under the laws of the state and the court has removed the parent's rights to make educational decisions for the student. Wards or dependents of the court continue to be represented by their parents unless the court has specifically removed the parent's educational rights.

Children in need of surrogates may be living in foster homes, group homes, state hospitals, correctional facilities, residential treatment centers, or with other family members.

A surrogate is **not** needed when the student:

1. Has a legal guardian.
2. Has another adult acting as the student's parent at the request of the parent or legal guardian.
3. Is an emancipated minor.
4. Is married.
5. Is an adult student (over 18 years of age).

The San Luis Obispo County SELPA conducts trainings and provides support for surrogate volunteers in the areas of special education regulations and procedures, IEP process, procedural safeguards, and cultural sensitivity.

Upon the successful completion of training, a certification letter is sent to each surrogate parent volunteer. A list of certified surrogates is maintained at the SELPA office. The individual LEAs utilize the SELPA list when they need to appoint a surrogate parent for a special education student in their LEA.

Community Agencies (for individual interagency agreements see the San Luis Obispo SELPA Local Plan)

The SELPA has the responsibility of developing interagency agreements with various agencies that function within San Luis Obispo County. Interagency agreements spell out how the LEA's and SLOCOE work with the specific agency. Copies of the interagency agreements may be found in the Local Plan for Special Education.

California Children's Services (CCS)

This program is open to anyone under 21 years of age who is a California resident and has a qualifying handicapping condition. CCS is a statewide, tax-supported program of specialized medical care and rehabilitation for handicapped children whose families are unable to provide for such services. The State Department of Health Services has legal responsibility for the program.

It is the objective of all CCS programs to locate handicapped children who may need medical care and to encourage all families with disabled children to obtain comprehensive medical care at the time care will be most effective.

Two basic types of direct services are provided by the program, diagnostic services and treatment services.

All services are provided by qualified specialist physicians on the CCS panel. Related activities include case finding, maintenance of high standards of care, and case management. Some of these related activities may involve many programs and agencies: health, social services, rehabilitation, school and private organizations. Children who receive medical care through Medi-Cal and who have a CCS eligible condition are automatically eligible for case management and other services not covered by Medi-Cal.

Diagnostic evaluations for children having suspected physically handicapping conditions are provided regardless of financial status. Treatment services include physicians' services, medicines, hospital and surgical care, physical and occupational therapy, laboratory tests, x-rays, appliances, and other rehabilitative services. Physical and occupational therapy and clinical services are provided in medical therapy units and satellite centers located in public schools. CCS therapy services do not require financial eligibility or repayment. CCS staff who provide therapy to children with an IEP are considered part of the IEP team and therefore shall receive notice of annual and triennial meetings.

Contact the CCS coordinator for more information.

Mental Health Services

Parent Access to Services

Parents may access Mental Health Services for students and their families by directly contacting the County Mental Health Department. Services are available by appointment at all clinic locations during regular business hours. Clinics are open 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. There is a 24-hour telephone service by calling the following numbers. After hours, calls are automatically forwarded to San Luis Obispo. Mental Health services are located in the following four (4) locations:

Atascadero area	461-6060
San Luis Obispo - Youth Services	781-4179
Paso Robles area	237-3170
South County	473-7060

IEP Related Mental Health Services (AB 3632 or Chapter 26.5)

A LEA, IEP, or parent may initiate a referral for assessment of a student's social and emotional status. Based on that assessment, the IEP may refer to Community Mental Health, a student with disabilities who is suspected of needing mental health services if they meet all of the following criteria (EC 60040):

1. They have been assessed by school personnel.
2. The LEA has obtained written parental consent for the referral, including release and exchange of relevant information and for observation of the student by mental health professionals in the educational setting.
3. The student has emotional or behavioral characteristics that are:
 - a. Observed by qualified educational staff.
 - b. Impediments to the student's ability to benefit from educational services.
 - c. Significant as indicated by rate of occurrence and intensity.
 - d. Not solely caused by social maladjustment.
 - e. Not temporary adjustment problems than can be resolved with less than three months of school counseling.
4. Using educational assessments the student's functioning, including cognitive, is at a level that the pupil is able to benefit from mental health services.
5. The LEA has provided counseling, psychological, or guidance services to the student and the IEP team has determined that the services do not meet the student's educational needs or the IEP team has determined and documented that such services were considered and the reason they were determined inappropriate.
6. The case manager or school psychologist from the LEA shall complete the SLO SELPA Referral for Mental Health Assessment packet in duplicate. The completed packet will be forwarded to the LEA special education director for review and signature. The LEA director or designee will forward the packet directly to Mental Health, maintain a copy for student files, and forward a copy of the front page of the packet to the SELPA office.

Agency services for students are listed below:

1. **Consultation and Education:** These services are available to agencies and organizations upon request.
2. **Inpatient Services:** Limited hospitalization is available for crisis stabilization to students who need intensive 24-hour, immediate treatment/evaluation.
3. **Residential Services:** Referral as part of the IEP process for services are available for children and adolescents who are in need of placement away from their own homes when in home services are exhausted and intensive services are required. The level of service is determined by the individual's needs.
4. **Youth Services:** This is an interdisciplinary team that provides outpatient and case management services to students with emotional disturbances who range in age from preschool to age 22. The Youth Services' clinical staff consists of licensed clinical social

workers, marriage, family and child counselors, psychologists, psychiatric technicians, psychiatric nurses, and a consulting psychiatrist. Services may be provided at the clinics, on school campuses, or at the student's residence. Determination of service is through an evaluation by Mental Health and the IEP team.

5. **Vicente Intensive School Linked Mental Health Program**

VISLMHP is a five-day per week intensive treatment program for eligible students. The students shall be eligible as Emotionally Disturbed (ED) based on both mental health and education criteria and who are unable to benefit from less-restrictive services, including the ED classes provided by the LEA and SLOCOE. These students may be at imminent risk of hospitalization or out-of-county educational placement, or are returning from such a placement. Students must also have been found eligible by Mental Health for IEP driven services (3636/26.5)

VISLMHP is a structured, integrated program in which mental health and educational interventions are incorporated to provide corrective emotional/relational experiences for students. The focus is on the student developing more effective and socially appropriate behavior and relationship skills. Students participate in daily group and/or individual counseling and weekly individual therapy sessions. Family therapy is an important component of the program.

Placement in the Vicente Program is accomplished as follows. After consultation with Mental Health staff, the student's LEA of residence's school psychologist or designee completes the *Request for Review/Change of Placement* form and forwards the completed IEP packet with appropriate assessments to the SELPA as indicated on the back of the form. Students must meet the target population criteria defined by mental health as well as be designated eligible for ED under education criteria. In addition, the student and family must be willing to participate in the treatment plan and therapy.

The Vicente Committee meets monthly to review referrals, be advised of interim placements, and review students who may be exiting the program. Following the Vicente advisors' meeting, the LEA of residence convenes for an IEP meeting with Mental Health to discuss the possibility of a Vicente placement.

Interim placements follow LEA procedures. If the LEA determines that there is not a program that meets the student's interim placement needs, the LEA contacts the Mental Health case manager. An IEP must be held within 30 calendar days of completing the *Interim Placement Form*.

Tri-Counties Regional Center

The Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC) is a nonprofit organization that provides diagnostic evaluation, counseling, and availability for lifelong planning services for the

developmentally disabled and their families in San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties. Any resident of the three counties suspected of being developmentally disabled may receive diagnostic services. Only individuals who are diagnosed as “developmentally disabled” by definitions within the law are eligible to receive program services. A developmentally disabled person is defined under the Lanterman Act as: “a person whose disability is attributable to mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or other conditions similar to mental retardation that require treatment similar to that required by mentally retarded individuals. Such disability must also originate before an individual attains age 18, continues, or can be expected to continue indefinitely, and constitutes a substantial handicap for such individuals.” There is no charge for diagnosis, evaluation, supplemental, and counseling services. TCRC acts primarily as the coordinator of, and a broker for, services on behalf of the developmentally disabled client and his/her family.

The SELPA develops two interagency agreements with TCRC. One agreement outlines interaction between the SLOCOE and TCRC in reference to infant services. This agreement also identifies the responsibilities of the LEAs in reference to transition from infant services. The other agreement delineates the relationship of TCRC and the LEAs and the SLOCOE.

Head Start

Head Start is a federally funded program that provides comprehensive health, educational, and social services to low-income young children under five and their families. Head Start programs have a limited enrollment based on age, income, and other priorities including disabilities.

The SELPA and Head Start have a local interagency agreement, which guides the interaction of the LEAs and SLOCOE with Head Start preschools within the county. Cooperative arrangements between LEAs that provide preschool programs and Head Start preschools within San Luis Obispo County are encouraged in this agreement.

Department of Rehabilitation (DR)

The California Department of Rehabilitation serves clients with physical or mental disabilities that result in substantial impediment to employment. Eligible DR clients are those who have a reasonable expectation of employment as a result of having received vocational rehabilitation services. Students may be referred as they get ready to graduate or complete high school. Questions regarding services should be directed to the Rehabilitation Service Office at 805-549-3361.

Revised and approved by SEOC on August 24, 2006

Revised and approved by SEOC on September 26, 2006