

SECTION A

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 129 regions or Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA) in California. The San Luis Obispo County SELPA serves ten school districts, two LEA charters, and the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education. There are over 4,300 students with special education services in 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 LEAs in the form of:

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

SELPA also provides support for LEAs through program specialists. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

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

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6. Provide coordination, consultation, and program development
7. Assure that students have access to equitable educational opportunity regardless of the LEA of residence
8. Serve as a resource to parents and LEAs in providing free appropriate public education (FAPE)
9. Provides Alternative Dispute Resolution

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). It ensures 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 SELPA LEA members, which includes ten school districts, the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education and two LEA charters, 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 SELPA LEA members. 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

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7. Support legislation which is favorable to students with disabilities
8. Recognize positive achievements by special education staff
9. Advisory Committee for the WorkAbility 1 program in the county

SELPA Services

Child Find

1. The SELPA has the responsibility to ensure 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)

Project WorkAbility 1 (WA1) is mandated by the California State Legislature through Ed Code Section 56470, which reads: "The Legislature finds and declares...(a) that an essential component of transition services developed and supported by the State Department of Education is Project WA1...(d) WA1 project applications shall include, but are not limited to, the following elements: 1) recruitment, 2) assessment, 3) counseling, 4) pre-employment skills training, 5) vocational training, 6) student wages for try-out employment, 7) placement in unsubsidized employment, 8) other assistance with transition to a quality adult life, and 9) utilization of an interdisciplinary advisory committee to enhance project goals."

The program is only available to students enrolled in public schools within San Luis Obispo County SELPA who have a current Individualized Education Program (IEP). The goals of this program are to:

1. Afford students the opportunity to participate in classroom instruction, developing pre-employment skills
2. Provide students with worksite training, in conjunction with their school schedule

Target Population Served

- Must be 16-21 years of age with a current IEP indicating vocational and transitional goals
- Must be a high school junior or senior
- Priority is given to previous WA1 students, seniors and students preparing to exit the public school system

Student Referral Process

- Special education staff, counselors, administrators, students, and parents refer students to the WA1 program based on the student's ability to meet program guidelines and their

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willingness to participate in competitive employment. The WA1 Job Placement Specialist (JPS) collaborates with special education staff to determine the student's priority for vocational education services.

Priority Criteria (after referral)

- Student is able to start work immediately
- Business Partners match student's skills
- Work availability is not limited due to other activities

Prerequisites for Participation

- Must be eligible for special education services with a current IEP
- Clear discipline records
- Excellent attendance in school and all classes
- Positive attitude toward employment
- Willingness to participate in employment preparation sessions
- Prompt completion of all necessary forms
- Cooperation with WA1 JPS and employer
- Ability to participate independently in competitive employment
- Appropriate behavior and hygiene for work and community settings
- If under 18 years old, eligible for a work permit
- Valid Social Security Number and picture identification or Alien Registration Card, if applicable
- Must be 16-21 years of age and enrolled in school
- Must be able to arrange transportation to and from the work site

Student Selection Process

- Students will be served on a first-come, first-served basis as funding allows
- Preference will be given to previous WA1 students and seniors
- Job placements are completed by WA1 JPSs based on individual interviews and how well the student meets the prerequisites above

WA1 has a limited number of slots in San Luis Obispo County. Any student who is unable to be served will be prioritized for the subsequent school year. The WA1 JPS will contact the student the next year to see if the student is still interested in the WA1 program.

Subsidized Paid Placements

- Meet all criteria for participation
- Must be able to work independently after training period
- Subsidized wages are limited to no more than 75 hours per student
- Limited number of paid placements per school site

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- Good citizenship and attendance

WA1 builds partnerships with local businesses and community services to provide students with paid employment experience. Part of these partnerships may include a subsidized student work experience (i.e. the student is paid by WA1 for the work with a local business). These arrangements are made through collaboration efforts between local business', students and the WA1 JPS. Collaboration between the students, WA1 JPS, and other relevant staff, are used to determine a suitable and meaningful work experience. Subsidized hours and length of work experience are determined by the WA1 JPS, as grant funding is available.

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 (FIEP) 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. Resolution Sessions: The Resolution Session uses a problem solving method that brings disputing people or parties together, guided by a neutral facilitator, usually the SELPA Director, to reach a mutually satisfying agreement. The facilitator 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. Resolution Sessions may be held prior to or after a due process is filed by either party.
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 confidential to the extent the parent requests. The goals of all the activities are to reach local resolution of disputes, maintain positive

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relationships between parents and the LEA, and ensure an appropriate education for the student. ADR activities are never intended to impede or slow the IEP process. Districts and parents may choose to proceed without a facilitator when one is not available. (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 surrogate parents.

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.

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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 contact the SELPA when they need to appoint a surrogate parent for a special education student in their LEA. The SELPA makes the initial contact with the trained surrogate.

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 SELPA LEA members 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 disabling condition. CCS is a statewide, tax-supported program of specialized medical care and rehabilitation for children with disabilities 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 children with disabilities who may need medical care and to encourage all families with such 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 disabling 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.

Behavioral Health Services

Parent Access to Services

Parents may access Behavioral Health Services for students and their families by directly contacting the County Mental Health Services. 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 offices are located in the following three (3) locations:

North County Mental Health Clinic	(805) 461-6060
San Luis Obispo - Youth Services	(805) 781-4179
South County – Youth	(805) 473-7060

Educationally Related Social-Emotional Supports and Services

A LEA, IEP, or parent may initiate a referral for assessment of a student's social and emotional status. Based on that referral, the IEP team may refer to Behavioral Health Services or other providers, a student with disabilities who is suspected of needing Educationally Related Social-Emotional Supports and Services if they meet all of the following criteria:

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 behavioral 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, and participate in, behavioral 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 Behavioral 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 Behavioral Health Services and maintain a copy for student files.
7. Eligibility for Educationally Related Social-Emotional Supports and Services is an IEP team decision, with the school psychologist playing a key role in providing documentation and information. In some cases, ERSESS is determined by school psychoeducational assessments alone.

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 is 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 made by the IEP team.
5. **Vicente Intensive School Linked Behavioral Health Program:**
This is a five-day per week intensive day treatment program for eligible students. The students shall be eligible for special education and unable to benefit from less-restrictive services, including the Regional Therapeutic Learning Classes provided by the SELPA LEA Regional Providers unless otherwise determined by the IEP team. These students may be at imminent risk of hospitalization or out-of-county educational placement, or are returning from such a placement.

This is a structured, integrated program in which behavioral 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.

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Placement in the Vicente Program is accomplished as follows. After consultation with Behavioral 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 as well as be designated eligible for Emotional Disturbance under education criteria unless otherwise determined by the IEP team. 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 an IEP meeting including Behavioral Health Services designated staff 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 behavioral 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 people with developmental disabilities and their families in San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties. Any resident of the three counties suspected of having a developmental disability may receive diagnostic services. Only individuals who are diagnosed as "developmentally disabled" by definitions within the law are eligible to receive program services. A developmental disability is defined under the Lanterman Act as: "a person whose disability is attributable to intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or other conditions similar to intellectual disability that require treatment similar to that required by intellectually disabled 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 client with the developmental disability 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 under Part C of IDEA. 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 SELPA LEA members.

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 SELPA LEA members 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 (DR) 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.

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