



## SELPA MEMBER DISTRICTS

Almond Acres Charter Academy  
(805) 467-2095

Atascadero Unified School District  
(805) 462-4230

Bellevue-Santa Fe Charter  
(805) 595-7169

Cayucos Elementary School District  
(805) 995-3694

Coast Unified School District  
(805) 909-0641

SLO County Office of Education  
(805) 593-3186

Lucia Mar Unified School District  
(805) 474-3000 ext. 1152

Paso Robles Joint Unified School District  
(805) 769-1000 Ext 30415

Pleasant Valley JUESD  
(805) 467-3453

San Luis Coastal Unified School District  
(805) 549-1220

San Miguel Joint Union School District  
(805) 227-1040

Shandon Joint Unified School District  
(805) 238-0286

Templeton Unified School District  
(805) 434-5853

### ADR is Voluntary

All ADR activities are voluntary and mutually agreed to by the parents and district. The goal is to reach local resolution of disputes, maintain positive relationships, and ensure an appropriate education for the student.

The **San Luis Obispo** County SELPA is committed to helping families and schools solve problems and conflicts in the fastest and easiest way. As part of this commitment, we are proud to offer the following services:

Coaching  
Conferencing  
Workshops  
Facilitated IEPs  
Problem Solving/Resolution Sessions  
Ombudsperson

### How do I start the process?

Contact the SLO SELPA at (805) 782-7301

### How do I benefit from ADR options?

#### Confidential

Everyone involved in the ADR process is bound by agreement and law to maintain confidentiality.

#### Satisfaction

The process is more satisfying than legal action because ADR allows parties in conflict to control and shape their own agreements.

#### No Cost

ADR options are provided at no cost to families.

#### Fast

Formal state-level Due Process has a 45 day timeline. ADR options do not delay the 45 day timeline for Due Process, but can move action forward more quickly.

Liz Smith, SELPA Director  
San Luis Obispo County SELPA  
(805) 782-7301

# Guide to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY  
**SELPA**

Include • Engage • Inspire

8005 Morro Road  
Atascadero, CA 93422  
(805) 782-7301  
[www.sloselpa.org](http://www.sloselpa.org)  
@SLO\_SELPA

## Informal Alternatives to Resolve Special Education Disputes

ADR Helpline  
(805) 593-3122

## Local ADR Components

### Coaching

Staff is available to meet with teams or parents to coach on helpful resolution strategies, effective communication techniques and options for resolving conflicts.



### Staff/Parent Workshops

A variety of opportunities are available, including team and relationship building.

### ADR Intake

The SELPA staff will listen to your concerns, help you identify your interests and identify a process to help.

### Conferencing

When requested, the SELPA staff will conference with parents or district staff to intervene early, offer suggestions, and resolve concerns.

### Facilitated IEP Meetings (FIEP)

This is a formal IEP meeting facilitated by a neutral facilitator. The process is designed to help the IEP team to build relationships, focus on the IEP content and the student, and work toward a positive IEP team outcome..

### Problem Solving/Dispute Resolution Session

A problem-solving method that brings disputing parties together to reach a mutually satisfying agreement with the guidance of a trained facilitator. The session allows both parties to listen and express their points of view.

The local parties decide whether on the terms. When agreement is reached, the specifics are put in writing and signed by all parties to signify the commitment of both parties to uphold the agreement. If agreement is not reached, either party can file for a Due Process hearing.

ADR is an informal method of settling disagreements that may arise during an IEP meeting. ADR uses specific options of this process to open communication, promote understanding, and reach agreements that support and strengthen relationships. ADR is designed to meet the interests of the parties involved that result in a mutually agreeable outcome, rather than a decision solely made by a third party, hearing officer, or judge.

## SELPA's Role In Disputes

The San Luis Obispo SELPA, through a grant from the California Department of Education (CDE), has been charged with providing Alternative Dispute Resolution activities for parents and schools within this county.

In addition to the processes listed on the left, the SELPA provides other services, such as:

**Information.** The SELPA 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. Student specific disputes between parents and districts can often be resolved by providing information and options to avoid state mediations, due process hearings, and/or compliance complaints. The SELPA staff work with parents to explore issues and find solutions. Upon request, SELPA provides technical assistance to districts for compliance.

## What is the Difference Between Local ADR and a State Due Process Hearing?

**A Problem Solving/Dispute Resolution** session is a voluntary, confidential, informal meeting at which the parties agree to communicate and cooperate in a non-adversarial atmosphere with an experienced facilitator who will guide them through a process to seek consensus and a local, legally binding agreement.

**Due Process** refers to the legal procedures that can be raised when there is a concern that certain principles or practices have not been followed for children with special education services. Due Process ensures that specific procedures and timelines are followed and is guaranteed by federal law.

A parent can request state mediation with an Administrative Law Judge, provided by the Office of Administrative Hearing with the goal of reaching a mutually agreeable settlement.

Otherwise, the Due Process Hearing has three levels: a resolution session, mediation meeting, and formal administrative fair hearing. Once a school district receives notice that a parent has filed a Due Process Hearing Request, the district has 15 days to offer a resolution session with the parents to resolve the dispute before a hearing is held. The district's lawyer is not allowed to attend the resolution session unless the parent brings a lawyer.

If the issue is not resolved in a resolution session, the matter will proceed to mediation, in which both parties voluntarily agree to meet with an Administrative Law Judge from the Office of Administrative Hearing. If an agreement is not reached, then the issue will proceed to a Due Process hearing.