

Introduction to Sonoma County SELPA and Sonoma County Charter SELPA Procedural Manual

The Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) of Sonoma County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) are committed to meeting the needs of students, their families, and their staff. In order to assist in implementing this goal, the SELPA Procedural Manual describes policies, procedures, and guidelines which ensure that students being referred for and/or enrolled in special education programs receive a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

The SELPA Procedural Manual is organized into sections. Each section should be read in its entirety to ensure a thorough understanding of how its legal requirements are implemented. This electronic guide is accessible by clicking on the title links on the website. You can also download the entire manual by clicking [here](#).

The purpose of the Special Education Procedural Manual (“Manual”) is to assist school personnel to understand and practice procedures that are consistent with Federal, State, and LEA requirements. Consistent with its vision, mission and core beliefs, the Sonoma County SELPA is committed to ensuring compliance with such policies and procedures. It is expected that District personnel will serve students with disabilities and their families in a manner consistent with this manual.

The manual is designed in a structured way to assist staff in implementing special education policies, and we hope this becomes a valuable reference for answering any and all questions. It includes information on timelines, programming, and procedures necessary for the completion of new, interim, partial annual, and triennial assessments. The manual also covers Individualized Education Programs (IEP) following legal procedural best practices, as well as information that can improve practice as a special educator. The manual was significantly rewritten to accommodate new federal and state mandates. We acknowledge the hard work of many others in the creation of this manual, in particular, the California Department of Education’s comprehensive guidelines for special education, the Butte County SELPA, the Riverside County SELPA, School and College Legal Services, and others. More importantly, we acknowledge that legal issues and procedural rights are extremely important in the field of special education; however, they are only the framework, not the foundation of special education. The foundation of special education is our collective belief that all children, regardless of the challenges presented by their disabilities, have strengths and the ability to learn and connect with others.

Our vision for special education is to provide a nurturing environment where students can perform to the best of their abilities, and even beyond. We hope that this manual will make it

easier to provide services to children and families effectively. Building relationships with families is an essential part of the special education process. A good relationship with families will ensure you have more time and energy to get to the important work of serving children with special needs. This is our collective commitment.

Note: This manual is a living document and changes will be made as new law and regulations are enacted. The live copy is made available on the SELPA website at www.sonomaselpa.org

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