

# A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

Presented by:

Amador County SELPA  
Community Advisory Committee  
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Jackson, CA 95642  
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***Dedication***

*This handbook is dedicated to parents who must meet the challenge of active participation in their child's education.*

*It is our goal that this handbook be an effective tool in the parents' partnership with the school as they jointly develop and implement an educational program for their child.*



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## What is Special Education?

Special Education is an individualized education program designed to help children reach their highest potential. It is provided for children, birth through age 21, who qualify according to laws and regulations outlined by the state and federal governments.

Children received special education instruction and services according to their specific needs. Children are placed in special education programs only after resources of the regular education program have been considered and utilized when appropriate. The following is a brief description of the special education programs available to the Amador County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). Severely Disabled: These programs are for children who have severe disabilities in learning and/or behavior.

The following categories are:

- Intellectually Disabled
- Multiple Disabilities
- Autism
- Emotionally Disturbed
- Deaf/Blind



**Physically Disabled:** Children placed in this program have a physical condition that interferes with learning and include:

- Orthopedically Impaired
- Other Health Impaired
- Visually Impaired
- Traumatic Brain Injured

**Communicatively Disabled:** Children in these programs have a language disability which interferes with academic achievement. Categories are:

- Speech/Language Impaired
- Deaf
- Hard of Hearing
- Severe Disorder of Language

**Learning Disabled:** This program is for children with significant disabilities in learning. Categories are:

- Specific Learning Disability
- Mild/Moderate Disability

Low Incidence funds are granted to the SELPA based on the number of students in the following categories: Deaf, Deaf/Blind, Hard of Hearing, Visually Impaired, and Severe Orthopedically Impaired. Students in these categories can access these funds for specialized equipment and materials.

## Types of Special Education Services

Special Education students may be served in a variety of settings depending upon needs as determined by the IEP team. Settings and services may include the following:

**Special Day Classes:** This is a service provided for students with more intensive needs. Students in special day classes spend the majority of their school day within that setting. The pupils are grouped according to similar instructional needs. Each special day class teacher is provided an instructional assistant whose time is spent assisting the special day class students. Students are mainstreamed or integrated into the regular education program as much as possible, based on the individual student's ability and input from staff members involved in the student's education.

**DIS:** Designated Instruction and Services (DIS) and related services are support services deemed necessary by the IEP team to help a student benefit from the regular classroom situation. DIS services may be provided by the regular classroom teacher, the special day class teacher, the resources specialist, or a variety of other qualified professionals. Specialized help is offered in individualized programs for students needing modified program or skill support in order to better benefit from the regular classroom instruction. DIS services include, but are not limited to:

- Language and speech development and remediation
- Audiological services
- Orientation and mobility instruction
- Instruction in the home or hospital
- Adapted Physical Education
- Physical and Occupational Therapy
- Vision Services
- Specialized driver training instruction
- Counseling and guidance
- Psychological services other than assessment and development of the individualized education program
- Parent counseling and training
- Health and nursing services
- Social worker services
- Specially designed vocational education and career development
- Recreation Services
- Transportation



**Resource Specialist Program:** Students in this program remain in the regular education classroom for most of the day. They attend the resource class for intensive work in specific areas of need. These areas are determined by observation and test results. The teacher provides instruction to each student, either individually or in small groups. Instruction can be delivered within the regular classroom or on a “pull-out” basis.

**Non-Public Schools:** These services may be provided to a student with exceptional needs that are unable to be met by public education. School districts are required to try all appropriate special education settings within the Public School environment before recommending non-public school placement. Upon placement in a non-public school, parents are notified that they are responsible for notifying their local school district of any change of residence.

**State Special Schools:** Residential schools for the blind and deaf, as well as the Diagnostic Center, are located in Fremont, CA. All are operated by the State of California and offer complete diagnostic workups. Decisions to place students in these programs are based on the IEP team recommendation when no appropriate placement is available in the local area.

**Extended School Year:** Extended school year services shall be provided for each individual with exceptional needs who have unique needs and require special education and related services in excess of the regular academic year. This service is offered to help the students maintain their educational progress during summer recess as indicated by the IEP Team. The extended school year is for a minimum of 20 days.

**Infant Development Program:** Children with exceptional needs from birth to three years of age are eligible to receive these services. Parent involvement is a strong component of the “Infant Program” and services are offered in a variety of ways to accommodate each family’s unique needs. A team of trained specialists provides an individualized program to meet the needs of the infant and family. To make a referral for a child who is younger than three years of age please contact.....

**Vocational/Transitional Program:** This program provides job readiness experience in diversified occupations. Classroom experiences and on-the-job training opportunities are carefully planned according to each student’s abilities. All 15-year-olds must have individual transition plans in place.

## **Least Restrictive Environment**

Special Education is an integral part of the total public education system. It provides education in a manner that promotes maximum interaction between children with disabilities and children who are not disabled, and does so in a way that is appropriate to the needs of both.



## **Procedure for Referral and Possible Placement**

**Referral:** Parents of children attending school are encouraged to talk with school staff when it appears their child is not making progress. The vehicle for discussing these concerns is the Student Study Team.

**Student Study Team:** The SST is a regular education function. The team includes teachers, administrators, parents, and support staff. The team's task is to explore all available resources and make recommendations for regular program modifications.

**Referral for Assessment:** If the regular education modifications suggested through the SST meeting are unsuccessful, the parent is notified and a Referral for Assessment is completed. A parent may directly refer his or her child for an educational assessment.

**Permission to Assess:** Parents are then informed of their due process rights and the contents of the proposed assessment plan, and they are asked to give written permission to assess their child's educational skills. This written permission to assess will be secured within 15 days after the referral is received.

**Assessment:** A multidisciplinary team is designated by the SST chairperson to conduct the assessment. The team includes at least one teacher or specialist knowledgeable in the area of the suspected disability. The assessment team maintains a complete written record of all procedures, suggestions, and conclusions as to the pupil's future programming. Parent participation in the development of the assessment plan is encouraged to provide an optimum view of the student's unique needs.

**Parent Notification:** The parent will be notified and an IEP team meeting will be scheduled to discuss assessment and IEP results within 60 days of receipt of the written consent for assessment. Test information and observational data, including input from the parent and all staff members working with the child, will be present at the IEP meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to develop an educational plan that is individualized to meet each child's needs. This plan may or may not include a special education program.

**Parent Consent:** No educational placement or plan can occur without the written permission of the parent, parent representative or surrogate parent. If the parent consents in writing to special education and related services but not all of the components of the IEP, those components of the program to which the parent consented must be implemented without delay.

**Parent Hints:** It is important for you to participate and be informed in order to help plan your child's education.

- Conference with your child's teacher
- Offer some possible suggestions to motivate and stimulate your child
- Ask someone to accompany you to the IEP meeting, if you wish
- Ask questions to understand terms if you are unfamiliar with them.
- Make sure all areas are addressed that you feel are important.
- Be sure to keep all documents from your child's IEP team meeting.

## Community Advisory Committee

The Amador County SELPA's Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is made up of parents of children with disabilities, members of the community, students, and special education professionals who advise the school board and school district administration about special education programs.



The CAC acts in an advisory capacity to the Sacramento County SELPA with regard to:

- Developing and reviewing programs and services outlined in the local plan
- Assisting in parent education
- Promoting community awareness of individuals with exceptional needs.
- Supporting activities on behalf of children with exceptional needs.
- Facilitating communication between schools, parents, and the community.
- Assisting in parent awareness and the importance of regular school attendance.

All meetings are open to anyone interested, and we encourage your participation. Call the Amador County SELPA office for the location and time of the meetings.



## Parent Rights/Due Process

Parents and guardians have many rights when it comes to gathering information and making decisions regarding their child's education. A complete list of these rights is available through your special education department and accompanies the assessment plan and IEP forms. Parents also have the right to exercise a legal procedure called "due process" which allows the parent to disagree with any part of the child's special education program, ensuring implementation of the law.

It is strongly recommended that a parent try to resolve any conflicting issues through informal meetings with the district as this effort promotes better understanding and cooperation.

If there is a disagreement regarding a child's program, as determined through the IEP process, that cannot be resolved between the parent and the school district, the parent and/or the school district may initiate a due process hearing in hopes of resolving the conflict in any of these areas: assessment, program planning, placement, implementation practices, and timeline restrictions. Resolution Sessions are highly recommended at this point.

Each district has established Uniform Complaint Procedures to address complaints. This procedure is used to allege a matter, which if true, would constitute a violation of the federal or state laws or regulations governing special education and related services,



including allegations of unlawful discrimination. A parent may allege a violation by the district of federal or state law or regulation by filing a written complaint with the district's superintendent.

When a parent requests a meeting of the IEP team to review the IEP, it shall be held within 30 days from the date of receipt of the written request (not counting days in July and August). Continuous contact with the personnel at your child's school may avoid the need for additional formal meetings.

Parents may present the IEP team with information concerning their child, or they may send a representative to do so. Parents are encouraged to exercise their right to participate with the IEP team in developing the IEP for their child and in determining eligibility for special education and related services.

Parents may have the right to electronically record the IEP team meeting if other members of the IEP team have been notified at least 24 hours in advance. Other members of the IEP team may also electronically record an IEP team meeting with 24 hours notice and parent permission.

Each child receiving special education services will be reviewed formally at least one time per year to determine the appropriateness of the placement, the progress made toward mastery of goals and objectives designated on the child's IEP, and any modifications of the current plan necessary to make the child as successful as possible.

Continuing special education students will be assessed by the appropriate personnel every three years (Triennial) to ensure appropriateness of placement and plan.



## Special Education Terminology

**Adapted Physical Education (APE):** a related service provided by an adapted physical education specialist who assists children with motor activities such as balance, climbing, and ball skills.

**Assessment:** observations and testing of children in order to identify the strengths and needs of the child, develop an appropriate education program, and monitor progress.

**Audiological Services:** related services provided by a licensed audiologist who identifies children with hearing loss and helps them to use their strengths and abilities.

**Autism:** a disability; a child with autism is extremely withdrawn, has difficulty communicating, and exhibits behaviors unique to this disorder (e.g., ritualistic behaviors, hand flicking, compulsive need for "sameness").

**Behavior Disorder:** a disability; extreme behaviors a child has that may interfere with that child's ability to learn. See also ED.

**Cognition, Cognitive Skills:** Intellectual abilities such as thinking, reasoning, and understanding skills.

**Communication Handicap (CH):** a disability; difficulty with receptive (understanding) language or expressive (speaking) language to the extent that it interferes with a child's ability to learn.

**Community Advisory Committee (CAC):** a group of parents of children with disabilities, members of the community, students, and special education professionals who advise the school board and school district administration about special education programs.

**Compliance Complaint:** a complaint against a public school agency filed by a parent or other individual, or by a public agency or organization, when it is believed that the public educational agency has violated federal or state law or regulations relating to special education (e.g., not implementing the IEP as developed). The complaint may be filed either with the superintendent of the local school district or with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

**Criterion Referenced Tests:** tests that measure a child's ability to perform a variety of tasks according to specified criteria. These tests are not "standardized" to the performance of other children.

**Deaf-Blind (D/B):** a disability; an impairment of both vision and hearing that affects a child's ability to learn.

**Designated Instruction Services (DIS)/Related Services:** instruction and services that are determined to be necessary for the child to benefit educationally from his/her instructional program (e.g., language, speech and hearing (LSH) therapy, occupational/physical therapy (OT/PT), vision services, and specialized physical health care (SPHC) procedures).

**Due Process:** the procedures used to make sure that parents and educators make fair decisions about the identification, assessment and placement of children with disabilities; due process rights are guaranteed by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).

**Emotional Disturbance (ED):** a disability; a behavior problem that prevents a child from learning or from getting along with other people; the behavior must occur for a long period of time and be severe.

**Fair Hearing/Due Process Hearing:** a formal hearing conducted by the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) to resolve a disagreement about a child's educational program; Mediation is recommended prior to the hearing, which is a formalized process.

**Fine Motor Skills:** those skills involving hand use or the use of small muscle groups (manipulating toys, drawing, buttoning, etc.).

**Full Inclusion:** a term meaning that children with disabilities spend their entire day in a general education classroom.

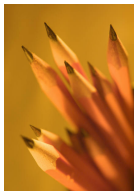
**Gross Motor Skills:** those skills involving the use of large muscle groups (rolling, crawling, sitting, walking, etc.).

**Hearing Impairment (DEAF, HOH):** a disability; hearing loss which interferes with a child's ability to understand or use language and that affects his/her learning.

**Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA):** calls for all procedural safeguards to be established and maintained by each non-educational and educational agency that provides education, related services, or both, to children who are individuals with exceptional needs (formally called PL94-14).

**Individual Education Program (IEP):** a written document that states a child's current level of educational performance, specifies annual goals and short-term instructional objectives, and identifies appropriate services needed to meet the goals.

Other agencies that have their own individualized plans:



Individualized Care Plan – Medicaid

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) – all agencies, for ages birth to three years old

Individualized Program Plan (IPP) – Department of Developmental Services, Regional Center

Individualized Transition Plan – all agencies, for ages 15 and over;  
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan – Vocational Rehabilitation  
Treatment Plan – Health Department

**Informed Consent:** a parent's written permission to assess or place a child in a special education program.

**Integration:** the joining of two groups that were previously separated; in this case, non-disabled children and children with disabilities. A child who is placed in a special day class (SDC) has opportunities to interact and learn with non-disabled peers. These interactions can occur in the regular education classroom or during non-academic activities such as recess and lunch.

**Intellectual Disability (Formerly MR):** a disability; a delay in a child's ability to learn and to function independently in his/her every day environment; the disability can be mild/moderate or severe/profound; previous terms used include Educable Mentally Retarded (ER) and Trainable Mentally Retarded (TMR).

**Language Delay:** a lag or slowness in the development of a child's ability to use or to understand language.

**Learning Disability (LD/LH):** a disability; problem using language, remembering, concentrating, following instructions, reading, calculating, or learning through listening or looking.

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** a term meaning that children with disabilities must be educated (to the maximum extent appropriate) with children who are not disabled.

**Mainstream/Inclusion/Integration:** terms meaning that children with disabilities spend as much time as is appropriate in a regular education classroom.

**Mediation:** an informal meeting that is held when parents and school district personnel cannot agree on a child's educational program; this step comes before a due process hearing.

**Multidisciplinary:** assessment of a child that involves a number of different professionals.

**Multi-handicapped:** a disability; a child with two or more disabilities.

**Nursing Services:** a related service provided by a school nurse who focuses on health-related concerns.

**Occupational Therapy (OT):** a related service provided by a licensed occupational therapist who assists children with fine motor activities and every day tasks like eating, dressing, and hand use.

**Orientation and Mobility (O&M, O/M):** a related service provided by an orientation and mobility specialist who teaches children with visual impairments how to know their position in space and how to move from place to place.

**Orthopedic Impairment (OI):** a physical disability; a child's difficulty getting around his/her environment without adaptive equipment.

**Parent Counseling/Parent Training:** a service in which parents receive help in understanding the special needs of their children.

**Pervasive Development Disorder (PDD):** a neurological disorder that causes difficulty in talking, playing with other children, and relating to others, including their family.

**Physical Therapy (PT):** a related service provided by a licensed physical therapist who assists children with gross motor activities such as rolling, sitting, and walking.

**Placement:** when a child is assigned to a special education classroom or to other special education services; placement occurs after the IEP is written.

**Preschool:** refers to classrooms that serve children ages three to five years old.

**Program Specialist:** a specialist who is knowledgeable about special education and available programs, and is responsible for assuring that children receive needed available services and full educational opportunity.

**Psychological Services:** related services provided by a school psychologist, which include educational assessment and support for children and parents.

**Referral:** a recommendation for assessment to determine if a specialized service is required and at what level.

**Related Services/Designated Instructional Services (DIS):** a term referring to support services children may need in order to benefit from their educational program.

**Resource Room:** a special education classroom for children who are in a regular classroom for more than half of the school day.

**Reverse Mainstreaming:** when non-disabled children go to the special education classroom to play and learn with children who are disabled.

**Self-Help Skills:** a term relating to those skills associated with feeding, dressing, and toileting.

**Self-Contained Classroom:** a special education classroom where children receive instruction in all developmental and academic areas.

**Severe Disorder of Language (SDL):** see CH

\*Note: Listed on IEP under Specific Learning Disorder.

**Social Skills/Socialization:** those skills associated with how children get along with adults and peers in home, school and community settings; with young children it also refers to their play skills.

**Special Day Class (SDC):** a classroom that is appropriate for children who would benefit from specialized services for over half of the school day; the children receive most of their instruction from a special education teacher.

**Special Education:** instruction that is adapted to teach children with special needs.

**Special Needs:** children with special needs are children who must have special adaptations made to their instruction in order to learn and reach their potential.

**Specialized Physical Health Care (SPHC) Services:** medical procedures required by a child while at school (e.g., tracheotomy care, gastrostomy tube feeding, catheterization, oxygen, etc.).

**Speech Therapy/Speech, Language, Hearing (SLH) Services:** related services provided by a remedial language and speech therapist or a speech pathologist that helps children learn to communicate.

**Standardized Tests:** tests used to measure a child's abilities in relationship to other children.

**Transdisciplinary Team:** a number of professionals working together, often with a parent, teaching each other while working with children with disabilities.

**Transition:** a time in a person's life when he/she moves from one educational program to another.

**Traumatic Brain Injured (TBI):** a disability due to acquired injury to the brain by an external physical force.

**Vision Services:** related services provided by a teacher of the visually impaired who helps children use their visual abilities efficiently and provides specialized instruction to blind and visually impaired children.

**Visually Impaired (VI-Blind):** a disability; a vision loss that affects a child's ability to learn. **Functionally Blind:** The child acquires most information through actual and auditory means. **Functionally low vision:** The child acquired most information through vision.

## Resources

The Resource Connection  
10877 Conductor Blvd.  
Sutter Creek, CA 95685  
209-223-1624  
[theresourceconnection.net](http://theresourceconnection.net)

Family Resource Network  
5250 Claremont Ave Suite 239  
Stockton, CA 95207  
209-472-3674  
[www.frcn.org](http://www.frcn.org)



HARP Learning Institute  
Valley Springs, CA  
209-772-3771  
[www.harpinstitutue.com](http://www.harpinstitutue.com)  
[www.learning-aids.com](http://www.learning-aids.com)

The USAA Educational Foundation  
[www.ussaedfoundation.org](http://www.ussaedfoundation.org)

Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency (ATCAA)  
209-223-1485  
[www.atcaa.org](http://www.atcaa.org)

Children's Inclusive Care Council (CICC) of Amador and Calaveras  
209-257-5338

Early Start Amador Early Intervention Specialist  
209-472-3674

Valley Mountain Regional Center (VMRC)  
209-754-1871

California Department of Education (CDE)  
[www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov)

C.H.A.D.D. of Greater Sacramento  
2795 E. Bidwell St Suite 100-221  
Folsom, CA 95630  
[888-759-9758](tel:888-759-9758)  
[CHADD.net](http://CHADD.net)



Developmental Disabilities Area Board  
Area VI 2529 West March Lane Suite 105  
Stockton, CA 95207  
[209-473-6930](tel:209-473-6930)  
[areaboard6.ca.gov](http://areaboard6.ca.gov)

Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH)  
2349 Gateway Oaks Drive Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 95833  
[916-263-0550](tel:916-263-0550)  
[dgs.ca.gov](http://dgs.ca.gov)

NorCAL Center on Deafness  
4708 Roseville Suite 111  
North Highlands, CA 95660

[916-349-7500](tel:916-349-7500)  
[916-993-3048](tel:916-993-3048)  
[www.norcalcenter.org](http://www.norcalcenter.org)

Disability Resources Agency for Independent Living  
67 Linoberg Street suite A  
Sonora, CA 95370  
[209-532-0963](tel:209-532-0963)  
[www.rehab.cahwnet.gov](http://www.rehab.cahwnet.gov)

Sacramento InAlliance, Inc.  
6950 21st Ave.  
Sacramento, CA 95820  
[916-381-1300](tel:916-381-1300)  
[inallianceinc.com](http://inallianceinc.com)

Head Start Amador  
975 Broadway  
Jackson, Ca 95642  
[209-223-7333](tel:209-223-7333)

First 5 Amador  
1001 Shopping Dr  
Jackson, CA 95642  
[209-257-1092](tel:209-257-1092)  
[www.first5amador.com](http://www.first5amador.com)

## Recreation

Girl Scouts  
[girlscoutschcc.org](http://girlscoutschcc.org)  
[risa.burmich@girlscoutschcc.org](mailto:risa.burmich@girlscoutschcc.org)

Parks & Recreation Department  
Amador County Recreation Agency  
10877 Conductor Blvd Suite 100,  
Sutter Creek, Ca 95685  
[209-233-6349](tel:209-233-6349)  
[www. goarca.com](http://www.goarca.com)

Arc of Amador County  
75 Academy Drive,  
Sutter Creek, CA 95685  
[209-267-5978](tel:209-267-5978)





California's Protection and Advocacy System  
[800 776-5746](tel:8007765746)  
[www.disabilityrightsca.org](http://www.disabilityrightsca.org)

National Information Center for Children and Youth With Disabilities  
P.O. Box 1492  
Washington, DC 20013  
[800-695-0285](tel:8006950285)  
[www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)

