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Introduction

This information provides parents, legal guardians, and surrogate parents of children with disabilities from three years of age through age 21 an overview of their educational rights, sometimes called procedural safeguards. This information is your Notice of Procedural Safeguards as required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This notice is also provided for students who are entitled to these rights at age 18. (NOTE: The term LEA (local education agency) is used throughout this document to describe any public education agency responsible for providing your child's special education program. The term assessment is used to mean evaluation or testing.)

This information is also available in 19 other languages on the [SELPA Administrators of California CAC and Parent Engagement webpage](#).

The IDEA is a Federal law that requires LEAs to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to eligible children with disabilities. "A free appropriate public education" means special education and related services provided as described in an individualized education program (IEP) and under public supervision, to your child at no cost to you. When you have a concern about your child's education, it is important that you call or contact your child's teacher or administrators to talk about your child and any problems you see. Staff in your LEA or special education local plan area (SELPA) can answer questions about your child's education, your rights and procedural safeguards. When you have a concern, it is this informal conversation that often solves the problem and helps maintain open communication. You may also want to contact one of the California parent organizations (Family Empowerment Centers and Parent Training Institutes), which were developed to increase collaboration between parents and educators to improve the educational system. Contact information for these organizations is found on the California Department of Education Parent Organizations web page (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/aq/capntorg.asp>).

Prior Written Notice

The LEA must inform you about proposed evaluations of your child in a written notice or an assessment plan within 15 days of your written request for evaluation that is understandable and in your native language or other mode of communication unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. This notice must be given when the LEA proposes or refuses to initiate a change in the identification, assessment, or educational placement of your child with special needs or the provision of a free appropriate public education. If you refuse consent for the initial or continued placement and receipt of special education and related services for your child, the LEA is not required to develop an IEP and is not considered to be in violation of the requirement to make available a free and appropriate public education. You may only revoke consent in writing and the LEA must then provide you written notice that services for your child will be discontinued. The LEA must also provide reasonable written prior notice that your child will be aging out (reaching age 22) or graduating from high school with a regular high school diploma because graduation from high school constitutes a change in placement.

The Prior Written Notice Must Include the Following:

A description of the actions proposed or refused by the LEA; an explanation of why the action is proposed or refused; a description of any other options considered and the reasons those options were rejected; a description of each assessment procedure, test, record or report used as a basis for the action proposed or refused; a description of any other factors relevant to the action proposed or refused; and a statement that you as a parent of a child with a disability are protected by the procedural safeguards. If the notice is not in regard to an initial referral for assessment, the notice must provide a statement that you have protections under procedural safeguards; information on how you can obtain a copy of described procedural safeguards; and sources of additional assistance in understanding the procedural safeguards.

The Notice of Procedural Safeguards must be given to you (Education Code section 56301(d)(2):

- Upon initial referral for special education
- Once each year
- When you request them
- Your request for an evaluation
- The first occurrence of mediation or a due process hearing
- Decision made to make a removal that constitutes a change of placement

Parent Participation

You have the right to refer your child for special education services. You must be given opportunities to participate in any decision-making meeting regarding your child's special education program. You have the right to participate in IEP meetings about the identification (eligibility), assessment, and educational placement of your child and other matters relating to your child's free appropriate public education. You also have the right to participate in the development of the IEP and to be informed of the availability of free appropriate public education including all program options and of all available alternative programs, both public and nonpublic. You have the right to record electronically the proceedings of the IEP team on an audiotape recorder. The law requires that you notify the LEA at least 24 hours prior to meeting if you intend to record the proceedings. If the LEA initiates the notice of intent to audio record a meeting and you object or refuse to attend the meeting because it will be audio recorded, the meeting shall not be audio recorded.

Surrogate Parents

LEAs must ensure that an individual is assigned to act as a surrogate parent for the parents of a child with a disability when a parent cannot be identified and the LEA cannot discover the whereabouts of a parent. A surrogate parent may be appointed if the child is an unaccompanied homeless youth, adjudicated dependent, or ward of the court under the State Welfare and Institution Code and the child is referred to special education or already has an IEP (34 CFR 300.519; EC 56050; GC 7579.5 and 7579.6).

Parent Consent

You must give informed, written consent before your child's first special education assessment can proceed and before the LEA can provide your child's special education program. You have 15 days from the receipt of the proposed assessment plan to arrive at a decision. The assessment may begin immediately upon receipt of your consent and must be completed and an IEP developed within 60 days of your consent. In the case of reevaluations, the LEA must document reasonable attempts to obtain parental consent. If the parents do not respond to these attempts, the LEA may proceed with the reevaluation without consent (34 CFR 300.300; EC 56506(e) and (d), and 56346). If you do not provide consent for an initial assessment or fail to respond to a request to provide consent, the LEA may pursue the initial assessment by utilizing due process procedures. If you refuse to consent to the initiation of services, the LEA will not provide special education and related services and will not seek to provide services through due process. If you consent in writing to the special education and related services for your child but do not consent to all of the components of the IEP, those components of the program to which you have consented must be implemented without delay. If the LEA determines that the proposed special education program component to which you do not consent is necessary to provide a free appropriate public education to your child, a due process hearing must be initiated. If a due process hearing is held, the hearing decision shall be final and binding.

Consent to Bill California Medi-Cal

Release/Exchange Information for Health Related Special Education and Related Services. LEAs may submit claims to California Medi-Cal for covered services provided to Medi-Cal eligible children enrolled in special education programs. The Medi-Cal program is a way for LEAs and/or County Offices of Education (COEs) to receive Federal funds to help pay for health related special education and related services.

Your consent is voluntary and can be revoked at any time. If you do revoke consent, the revocation is not retroactive. Consent will not result in denial or limitation of community-based services provided outside the school. If you refuse to consent for the LEA and/or COE to access California Medi-Cal to pay for health related special education and/or related services, the LEA and/or COE is still responsible to ensure that all required special education and related services are provided at no cost to you. As a parent, you need to know that:

- You may refuse to sign consent.
- Information about your family and child is strictly confidential.
- Your rights are protected under Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations 300.154; Family Education Rights Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA); Title 20 of the United States Code Section 1232(g); and Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations Section 99.
- Your consent is good for one year unless you withdraw your consent before that time. Your consent can be renewed annually at the IEP team meeting.

Furthermore, as a public agency, the LEA may access your public benefits or insurance to pay for related services required under Part B of the IDEA for a free appropriate public education. For related services required to provide FAPE to an eligible student, the LEA:

- May not require you to sign up for or enroll in public benefits or insurance programs (Medi-Cal) in order for your child to receive FAPE under Part B of the IDEA (34 CFR 300.154(d)(2)(i)).
- May not require you to incur an out-of-pocket expense such as the payment of a deductible or co-pay amount incurred in filing a claim for services and reimbursement through Medi-Cal (34 CFR 300.154(d)(2)(ii)).
- May not use your child's benefits under Medi-Cal if that use would:
 - Decrease available lifetime coverage or any other insured benefit;
 - Result in the family paying for services that would otherwise be covered by the public benefits or insurance program (Medi-Cal) and are required for your child outside of the time your child is in school;
 - Increase premiums or lead to the discontinuation of public benefits or insurance (Medi-Cal); and/or
 - Risk loss of eligibility for home and community-based waivers, based on aggregate health related expenditures.

Parental Revocation of Consent after Consenting to Initial Provision of Services

You may only revoke your consent in writing and this action cannot be retroactive. Once you revoke consent to the initial provision of services, the LEA will provide prior written notice before ceasing the services. If in the future you seek re-enrollment in special education for your child, the assessment will be treated as an initial evaluation. The LEA may not use the procedures in subpart E of Part 300, 34 CFR (including the mediation procedures under 34 CFR 300.506 or the due process procedures under 34 CFR 300.507 through 300.516) to obtain agreement or a ruling that the services may be provided to your child. The LEA will not be in violation of the requirement to make a free appropriate public education available to your child because of the failure to provide the child with further special education and related services. The LEA is not required to convene an IEP team meeting or develop an IEP under 34 CFR 300.320 and 300.324 for your child for further provision of special education and related services. In accordance with 34 CFR 300.9(c)(3), if you revoke consent in writing for your child's receipt of special education services after your child is initially provided special education and related services, the LEA is

not required to amend your child's education records to remove any references to your child's receipt of special education and related services because of the revocation of consent.

Child Participation/Right

As part of the participation of an individual with exceptional needs in the development of an individualized education program, as required by Federal law, your child has the right to meet with his/her IEP team at any time, to provide confidential input to any representative of his/her IEP team (EC 56341.5(d)).

Age of Majority

When your child reaches the age of 18, all rights under Part B of the IDEA will transfer to your child. The only exception will be if your child is determined to be incompetent under State law.

Nondiscriminatory Evaluations

You have the right to have your child assessed in all areas of suspected disability. Evaluations are conducted prior to an initial placement, triennially, but not more frequently than once per year unless the parent and the school agree otherwise. Materials and procedures used for evaluations and placement must not be racially, culturally, or sexually discriminatory. Tests must be administered in your child's native language or mode of communication and in the form, most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. No single procedure can be the sole criteria for determining eligibility and developing a free appropriate public education for your child. (20 USC sections 1414 (b)(1-3), 1412(a)(6)(B); 34 CFR section 300.304; EC sections 56001(j) and 56320).

Access to Educational Records and Other Rights Related to Records

You have a right to inspect and review all of your child's education records without unnecessary delay before any meeting about your child's IEP or before any due process hearing. The LEA must provide you access to records and copies if requested, within five business days after the request has been made orally or in writing (Education Code sections 49060, 56043(n), 56501(b)(3), and 56504).

Independent Educational Evaluation

If you disagree with the results of the evaluation conducted by the LEA, you have the right to ask for and obtain an independent educational evaluation (IEE) for your child from a person qualified to conduct the evaluation at public expense. You are entitled to only one independent educational evaluation at public expense each time the LEA conducts an evaluation with which you disagree. The LEA must respond to your request for an independent educational evaluation and provide you information upon request about where to obtain an independent educational evaluation. If the LEA disagrees that an independent evaluation is necessary, the LEA must request a due process hearing to prove that its evaluation was appropriate. If the LEA prevails, you still have the right to an independent evaluation but not at public expense. The IEP team must consider the results and recommendations of independent evaluations. LEA evaluation procedures allow in-class observation of students. If the LEA observes your child in his or her classroom during an evaluation or if the LEA would have been allowed to observe your child, an individual conducting an independent educational evaluation must also be allowed to observe your child in the classroom. If the LEA proposes a new school setting for your child and an independent educational evaluation is being conducted, the independent evaluator must be allowed to first observe the proposed new setting (20 USC sections 1415(b)(1) and (d)(2)(A); Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations section 300.502; Education Code section 56329(b) and (c)).

Local Mediation/Alternative Dispute Resolution

LEAs have the opportunity to resolve parent concerns and complaints at the local level through individual Uniform Complaint Process/Procedures which are described in the LEA's board policy or charter petition. Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) is another voluntary method of resolving a dispute at the local level and is requested by the parent or LEA. It provides the opportunity for both the parent and LEA to meet at a convenient location and time to resolve concerns. It is facilitated by a trained ADR Coordinator. A request to schedule an ADR session is made to the Desert/Mountain Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), office of the Program Manager for Due Process. A request for Mediation Only is made by the parent or LEA to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) before a due process complaint is filed. Mediation Only is a voluntary process and all discussion during a mediation session is confidential. Attorneys or advocates are not in attendance during a Mediation Only session. An Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) from OAH is assigned to facilitate this confidential process. The Uniform Complaint Process, ADR, and Mediation Only are voluntary methods of resolving a dispute and may not delay a parent's right to a due process hearing. All three methods are less adversarial and allow all parties to resolve the concerns in a timely manner. The mandatory early resolution session (ERS) and mediation are the first two steps in the three-step process initiated when a parent files a due process complaint with OAH. Attorneys and advocates are invited to attend both the ERS and Mediation session when a due process complaint has been filed.

Due Process Hearing

You have the right to request an impartial due process hearing regarding the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or the provision of a free appropriate public education for your child. The request for a due process hearing must be filed within two years from the date you knew, or had reason to know of the facts that are the basis for the hearing request (Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations section 300.507; Education Code sections 56501 and 56505(l)). There is an exception to this timeline if you were prevented from requesting a hearing earlier because the LEA misrepresented that it had resolved the problem or withheld information that should have been provided to you. Requests for a hearing are to be sent to the Special Education Headquarters, Office of Administrative Hearings, 2349 Gateway Drive, Suite 200, Sacramento, CA 95833-4231. Requests must include the student's name; residential address; the name of the student's school; in the case of a homeless child, available contact information and the name of the school the child is attending; and a description of the problem, facts about the problem, and a proposed resolution. A due process hearing may not take place until the party or the attorney representing the party files a notice that meets these requirements.

Due Process Rights

You have a right to:

- A fair and impartial administrative hearing at the State level before a person who is knowledgeable of the laws governing special education and administrative hearings;
- Be accompanied and advised by an attorney and/or individuals who have knowledge about children with disabilities;
- Present evidence, written arguments, and oral arguments;
- Confront, cross-examine, and require witnesses to be present;
- Receive a written or electronic verbatim record of the hearing, including findings of fact and decisions;
- Have your child present at the hearing;
- Have the hearing open or closed to the public;
- Be informed by the other parties of the issues and their proposed resolution of the issues at least 10 calendar days prior to the hearing;
- Within five business days before a hearing, receive a copy of all documents, including assessments completed by that date and recommendations, and a list of witnesses and their general area of testimony;
- Have an interpreter provided;
- Request an extension of the hearing timeline;

- Have a mediation conference at any point during the hearing; and
- Receive notice from the other party at least 10 days prior to the hearing that it intends to be represented by an attorney.

Filing a Written Due Process Complaint

In order to file a request for due process hearing, you or your representative must submit the following information in your request: