

POWAY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Parent Handbook for Special Education

Developed by



CAC Mission Statement

Promoting and encouraging positive connections among students, parents, and PUSD and providing guidance in special education, so all students become successful life-long learners.

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Section I: Parent to Parent

As you read this handbook, it is our hope that it will answer some of your questions regarding Special Education. The Poway Unified School District Community Advisory Committee (CAC) developed the handbook so that you might better understand your role as a member of your child's special education team.

The CAC consists of parents of Poway special education students, as well as school personnel and other interested community members. The CAC meets on a regular basis to provide input to the school district regarding development and implementation of Special Education programs, to assist and educate parents, and to encourage community involvement. Anyone is welcome to attend these meetings and we encourage you to do so.

Section II: Record Keeping

A. Why record keeping is important

Record keeping is not mandatory for parents of children with special needs, but good records prove helpful in day-to-day contact. You will be receiving a lot of documents during the IEP process and you will need to have a system for keeping those documents organized. A very simple way to do this is to place all of the information in a 3-ring binder that you can take with you to formal and informal meetings with school staff and outside professionals.

Difficulties arise during the IEP process when parents and/or school representatives misunderstand or forget what they agreed upon, or when communication between parents and school representatives is difficult or strained. A written record of your interactions with the public school system will help to clarify confusion and strengthen your position if you feel the school has failed to implement any portion of the IEP.

B. What you should keep a record of

You should document all actions you take on behalf of your child, including any relevant communication, formal or informal. Specifically, keep copies of all letters and email messages you send to the school or an outside agency, including dates. If you make any decisions concerning your child's education through an informal conference or telephone conversation, send a letter confirming these decisions and state exactly what has been decided. Include a copy of the letter in your records. Also include a copy of any written requests you make, such as a request for an IEP meeting or a request to see your child's school records. Finally, take notes at any meeting you attend concerning your child.

C. What you should include in your binder

Including the following items in your binder will make it easier to prepare for IEP meetings, track your child's progress, and provide support for changes you want to make to your child's IEP. Four basic categories may be useful in organizing the material:

1. Medical

- Developmental history, including pregnancy and birth
- Doctor's reports (pediatrician, allergist)
- Therapy reports (speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy)
- Agency reports (Regional Center, County Mental health)

2. School

- Copies of all IEPs
- Records of phone calls made on behalf of your child, including the date of the correspondence and the names of anyone you spoke with
- Copies of emails or letters written on behalf of your child
- Results for any test or assessment given to your child by school staff
- Educational history
- Progress reports
- Report cards

- Dated examples of school work
- Copies of vocational testing
- Your notes from any meeting you attended on behalf of your child
- The school system chain of command, including names, phone numbers, addresses, and email information for easy reference.

3. Personal/Social history

- Personal notes and observations concerning your child
- Your child's interests
- Clubs, organizations, and camps your child participates in
- Family history
- Special awards your child has received
- Pictures.

4. Other Resources

- Financial resources
- Legal documents
- Community agencies
- Copies of Federal and State laws and regulations.

School System Chain of Command

School Year: _____

Profession	Name	Phone/E-mail
SELPA		
SELPA Director		
SELPA Co-Chair		
SELPA Co-Chair		
Parent Facilitator		
School District		
Superintendent		
Director of Special Education		
Psychologist		
Principal		
Program Specialist		
General Ed. Teacher		
General Ed. Teacher		
General Ed. Teacher		
General Ed. Teacher		
General Ed. Teacher		
General Ed. Teacher		
Resource Teacher		
Resource Teacher		
Resource Teacher		
Special Education Teacher		
Special Education Teacher		
Special Education Teacher		
Physical Therapist		
Occupational Therapist		
Speech Therapist		
APE Teacher		
Teacher Aide		
Teacher Aide		
Teacher Aide		
Teacher Aide		
School Nurse		
Transportation		
Room Parent		

Section III: What is Special Education?

A. Defined

Special Education is defined in the California Education Code as:

“Specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of individuals with exceptional needs, whose educational needs cannot be met with modification of the regular instructional programs, and related services at no cost to the parents, which may be needed to assist such individuals to benefit from specially designed instruction.

Special education is an integral part of the total public education system and provides education in a manner that promotes maximum interaction between pupils with disabilities and those without disabilities in a manner which is appropriate to the needs of both.”

B. Options available in the Poway Unified School District

Special Education programs in the Poway Unified School District are designed to provide varied program options to meet the educational needs of all students with disabilities. The program options include:

1. Resource Specialist Program (RSP)

Under the Resource Specialist Program, students with specific learning problems are assigned to regular classrooms for the majority of the school day but receive supportive instruction and consultation services by the Resource Specialist Teacher, either in a learning center or the general education classroom.

2. Special Day Classes (SDC)

These classes provide services to students with more intensive needs than can be met within the general education class or the Resource Specialist Program. Students are enrolled in this special class for a majority of the school day and are grouped according to similar instructional needs. The two types of Special Day classes are non-severely handicapped, (NSH) and critical skills (CS).

3. Designated Instruction and Services (DIS)

These services include speech therapy, adaptive physical education, counseling, audiological services, and services for students with visual or hearing impairments.

4. Full Inclusion

Full inclusion and partial inclusion services are additional options. A student may participate in a general education class for all or part of the day with special education support to promote interaction with nondisabled peers in a manner that is appropriate to the needs of both.

5. Nonpublic (NPS) or State Special Schools

If a student’s special education needs cannot be met through the local programs, a nonpublic school program may be provided. State special schools may be an option for some students. This is the most restrictive option. The IEP team determines placement.

In planning for the type of educational placement your child will receive, you have the right to request that your child, to the maximum extent appropriate:

1. Be educated with children who are not disabled.
2. Be in the general education setting as much as possible.
3. Be educated in the neighborhood school.

Section IV: How Children Are Placed in Special Education

A. Step 1: Identification

School personnel are responsible for identifying children who may have special needs. A referral may also come from parents, teachers, doctors, or community agencies. If your child is not in special education and you suspect there might be a disability, establish an appointment with the classroom teacher to discuss your concerns. As a result of this discussion, your child may be referred to the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT).

B. Step 2: Referral

The schools use a two-step referral process. The first step is referral to the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT). IAT members may consist of general education teachers, school administrators, Special Education teachers, and other specialists such as speech pathologists, counselors, or reading specialists. The IAT reviews what has been done in the general education class and determines if the child's needs can be met by changing curriculum or methods in the general education program. If the IAT determines the child might be disabled and require Special Education, a request for Special Education assessment is made. You will be contacted by your school asking for your written consent prior to any assessment. A copy of Procedural Safeguards will be included with the assessment plan. The assessment must be completed and a placement meeting conducted within 50 days of the date the school receives your written consent for assessment.

C. Step 3: Assessment

The Assessment of your child should be a well-rounded process conducted by a team of specialists that will tell how your child is doing in all areas of the suspected disabilities. Information about your child may be gathered in different ways: by talking to people who know him or her, including doctors and professionals; by conferring with classroom teachers; by meeting with you; by observing your child; and by administering psychoeducational tests to him or her. No single test procedure may be the sole means of making a decision about placement in an educational program. Your firsthand knowledge of your child is important information. Talk to members of the assessment team about your own observations of your child's behavior.

All methods used for testing and assessment must be racially and culturally non-discriminatory. If a child's language is other than English, tests must be given in that primary language or other mode of communication. The results of testing and assessment should be explained to you in clear terms and in your own language. Ask questions if anything is not clear to you.

D. Step 4: Placement

Placement decisions are made by the consensus of the Individualized Education Program team (IEP team) including parents, teachers, school officials and psychologists or others who have conducted the assessments. If the IEP team determines that your child is eligible for Special Education, then an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be written. The development of the IEP is an important step in the process because this written plan outlines the services to be provided for your child. See Section IV for more information about the IEP.

It is important to understand that not all students with school difficulties require Special Education services. Some can be served in general education school programs with modifications and/or accommodations. You and the people at your local school form a team. It is the responsibility of this team to look at the needs of your child, to determine eligibility and the need for Special Education services.

Section V: What is an Individualized Education Program? (IEP)

A. Defined

The law requires that an Individualized Education Program (IEP) be written for each child who is eligible for Special Education. Each student's IEP must be reviewed at least once a year and must be changed as the student's needs change.

B. What the IEP must include

- **A statement of the student's present level of educational performance, and special needs**
Those working with your student will share information about what the student has accomplished and is able to do as well as what he or she needs to learn based upon the assessment results.
- **Annual education goals and short-term instructional objectives/benchmarks**
Goals and objectives/benchmarks will be established for the student for the coming year.
- **Related services**
All services necessary for the child to benefit from special education will be delineated.
- **The amount of time the child will participate in regular classes or activities.**
- **Implementation, frequency and duration of placement**
When will a program start? How long it will continue? How often it will take place?
- **Provisions for career, vocational education, and alternatives for meeting requirements for graduation if required**
At age 14 an individual transition plan (ITP) will be established.
- **Placement**
Following a discussion of available options, the appropriate setting for meetings, as well as the goals and objectives of the IEP, will be determined by the team.

C. The IEP Team

The IEP must be written by a team, including the parents or guardians, the student's general education teacher, and a school official. When appropriate, the student is also included. Sometimes one or more specialists may be on the team. The first time your child is eligible for services, someone who is knowledgeable of the testing must be included on the IEP Team.

Section VI: The IEP Meeting

The team's responsibility is to review the student's assessment(s) and any observations made about the student, and determine eligibility for Special Education services. Discussion will include the present level of the student, and applicable goals and objectives that are decided upon by the team. Relevant services will be presented. The frequency and duration of those services will be determined along with the start date, person responsible, the expected completion date, and the date the objectives hope to be completed. A rationale for eligibility will be stated indicating the 'handicapping condition' and the 'least restrictive environment' to be utilized.

Remember, decisions are made only with the active participation of all team members during the meeting.

A. Preparing for the meeting

Planning for an IEP will be one of the most helpful things you can do for yourself and your child. Organizing your concerns, issues and questions ahead of time will help significantly during the meeting.

STEP 1

- Organize your paperwork.
- Familiarize yourself with the current copy of the IEP.
- Write down any questions that you may have.
- Write down any areas of challenge that you would like the IEP team to address.
- Gather copies of assessments or schoolwork you would like to share with the IEP team.
- Bring any outside assessments to share with the team.
- Communicate any concerns with the case manager.

Understanding/interpreting test results and paperwork can often be confusing. Please request clarification as needed.

STEP 2

Questions you may have

1. Look at the meeting notice and determine if you understand each person's role. If not, ask your case manager.
2. Have you thought about bringing a relative or a friend to the meeting?
3. Will you tape record the meeting? You must let your case manager know 24 hours in advance of the meeting.
4. Do you need an interpreter? Have you asked the school to provide one?
5. Have you received a copy of the "Procedural Safeguards?"

B. The IEP Meeting

Developing an IEP gives the parents, teacher, and school official the opportunity to review the assessment and educational history of the child and make plans that will meet the needs of the student.

You may bring additional individuals to the IEP meeting. Examples are someone who is specially trained as a parent facilitator, or as an advocate for the rights of students with disabilities; another parent who has experience with IEP meetings; or anyone familiar with the needs of your child. The IEP meeting is scheduled at a time that is convenient for both parents and school personnel.

Specific items that will be discussed during the IEP meeting are listed below. Remember that you are part of the team and you make ask questions at any time during the meeting.

1. Formal and Informal Assessments

- Discussion of your child's strengths, preferences, and interests.
- What helps your child learn?
- What limits or interferes with learning?
- Informal observations?
- Present level of education performance (below, at, or above grade level).
- Interpretation of test scores.
- Your child's primary disability will be identified.

2. Impact of Disability on Academics and Social Skills

- How disability affects your child's academic abilities.
- How disability affects social skills/behavior.
- Communication, gross/fine motor, sensory, health, and self-help skills.

3. Goals

- Baseline (Your student's current level of performance).
- Goals (all identified areas of need have goals).

4. Placement:

- Your child's participation in the general education curriculum.
- When services will be provided and how it will impact amount of time you child is in the classroom.
- Your child's primary disability and the degree to which it impacts learning will be a factor in the types of in and out classroom programs he or she will participate.

5. Support Services, Accommodations, and Modifications:

- Support services that will be provided.
- Supplementary aids (i.e., extended time on tests, preferential seating).
- These support services are identified on the **Special Factors Section** of the IEP.

Suggestions for Participating in Your Child's I.E.P.

1. Listen closely to what the IEP team members are saying. Don't hesitate to ask them to repeat, give additional explanation, or define terms in everyday language. Before you sign the IEP, you should understand and agree with the following:

- The placement and plan
- The goals

- The information in the special factors section
 - The modifications and or accommodations
 - How progress will be monitored
 - Who is responsible for providing services and how they are coordinated
 - What can be done at home to reinforce goals of the IEP
2. Bring a list of questions and any information you would like to share about your child.
 3. If you have a question or concern about any part of the IEP, you may sign for the parts you want to be implemented and plan a subsequent meeting to discuss remaining concerns.
 4. You may take the IEP home before signing; however, if you have additional concerns that warrant changes, the IEP team will need to reconvene. In any case, an IEP must be in effect before special education and related services are provided. Once you have signed the IEP, make sure to get a copy for your personal records.
 5. You are an important member of the IEP team. Keeping good communication with those working with your student is essential.

** For additional information, refer to the IEP Checklist for Parents in the back of this handbook.*

C. Other reasons an IEP team might meet:

- To review the results of a formal assessment
- When the student's placement or instruction is initiated, changed or terminated
- When lack of progress exists in Special Education Program
- Within 30 days of a written request by a parent for a review
- When a teacher requests a review
- At least annually
- For reevaluation every 3 years to reestablish eligibility for Special Education
- Within 30 days of the student's transfer into PUSD from another special education placement
- Within 60 days of receipt of written parental consent for initial assessment

D. Individualized Education Program Checklist For Parents

A. How to use this checklist:

1. Read it over before the IEP Meeting.
2. Take it to the IEP Meeting.
3. Compare proposed IEP to checklist

B. IEP requirements questions you should ask

- Are the areas covered that you think are important? Some Examples of these are:
 - math
 - daily living skills
 - vision
 - speech and language
 - functional academics
 - hearing
 - social
 - vocational/career
 - difficulties with emotional development
 - learning environment
 - school adjustment
 - self concept
 - peer/adult interaction
 - physical skills
 - general health
 - psychological/general intelligence

- Did the testing seem appropriate?
- Was your child assessed in his/her area of suspected disability?
- Do the results correspond to your knowledge of your child's ability?
- Is there a long-term goal for each area in which your child is presently having difficulty?
- Is a short term, measurable, instructional objective/benchmark included for each goal?
- What changes are expected for your child and within what time frame?
- Given your knowledge of your child, are the goals and objectives appropriate and realistic?
- Could you tell if your child mastered the objective?
- What methods and materials will be used to achieve the objectives?
- What other services do you feel your child needs? Ex. speech therapy, counseling, transportation. Will they be provided? By whom? Are they adequate?
- When will services begin and end?
- How often?
- Do you think this placement is right for your child?
- Will your child be in contact with peers who are non-disabled? How often?
- Does the placement address your child's career development and physical education needs?
- Within the next year, when will the team meet to review/revise the IEP?

SECTION VII: The IEP Forms

This section gives a brief explanation of the IEP forms to help you prepare for the IEP meeting.

A. Front Page of the IEP

The first portion of the IEP contains demographic information about the student and the student's family.

The lower portion of the first page contains information concerning eligibility, the primary service location and percent of time services will be provided, the specific services to be provided, and other important program information.

B. State and District Testing Accommodations

Information about the State and District tests used to evaluate educational progress, with specific accommodations and/or modifications that may be available to help your student be successful when taking these tests.

This is the last page reviewed in an IEP meeting. The parent(s) and anyone who has participated in the IEP provide their signatures on this page.

C. Present Levels of Educational Performance

This section of the IEP is two pages in length. It reflects how the student is performing currently with respect to academics, communication development, motor development, social/emotional, health, pre-vocational/vocational, skills, and self-help skills.

In addition, on the bottom of the second page you can find how the student's disability affects their involvement and progress in general curriculum.

On the bottom of the page you will find areas of need to be addressed in goals and objectives.

D. Special Factors

Provides information on what specific classes the student will be attending. In addition, it will list supplemental aides and services that will be provided so that the student can be successful within the general education environment. Assistive technology, communication, behavior, transition, and graduation are other areas covered and explained on this page.

E. Annual Goals and Bench Marks/Short-Term Objectives

A student may have a variety of goals as long as the needs are documented in the Present Levels of Educational Performance section of the IEP. The IEP team discusses and agrees upon the goals.

Individualized Transition Plan

(For student 16 years of age)

This page is completed by interviewing the student. It helps the student think about where they

see themselves in the future. It also helps the IEP team to think about what classes and training the student might need in order to meet the student's needs.

IEP Meeting Notes

This page should represent what has been spoken at the IEP. Every member of the team has the right to hear the notes read at the conclusion of the meeting. If a member of the team prefers to read the notes he /she can request this.

This page also requires signatures from all the attendees.

Section VIII: The Parent Facilitator

A. Defined

The role of a Parent Facilitator is to help and support parents as they try to understand and obtain the most appropriate services for their child.

Ways in which a Parent Facilitator can assist you include: going to IEP meetings; helping parents understand information about their child; formulating a plan to meet the child's individual needs; meeting with parents and teachers to try to find solutions to difficult situations; identifying community resources; starting a parent support group for parents of young adults; taking parents to visit classrooms for decision making about placement; helping parents to understand the referral/screening process for special education services; making home visits to meet with parents; listening to parents as they process decisions they are making about their child.

B. A Letter From the Parent Facilitator

Welcome to the world of IEPs. You have just joined the ten percent of school age families who have a child using Special Education services. You are not alone and I am here to offer help and support. My name is Gina Zanolini and I am the Parent Facilitator for the Special Education Department of Poway Unified School District. I am a parent of a special needs child, so I understand the questions, concerns and bewilderment that you may be experiencing. My son had an IEP from age 4 until he graduated from high school. He is now a student at San Diego State University, so I come with a wide range of experience! I am including some basic resources, but this is a general list, so if there is something else that you need, please feel free to contact me.

- **Exceptional Family Resource Center (EFRC)** – resources and support groups. Call (760) 489-5536 or www.efrconline.org
- **San Diego Regional Center (SDRC)** - additional services for special needs individuals and their families. Call (858) 576-2996 or www.sdrc.org
- **COMPASS Family Center** - help for the whole family. Call (619) 260-7658 or www.sandiego.edu/COMPASS
- **Learning Disabilities** - www.LDASanDiego.org (includes local classes), www.ldonline.org or www.schwablearning.org
- **Harmonium** - classes to help parents and students with attention and social skills needs. Call (858)566-5740
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder** – call (858) 966-7707 for the Children’s Hospital free guide, or www.sd-autism.org/resourcesdirectory/therapy.htm
- **San Diego Autism Society** – call (619) 298-1981 or www.sd-autism.org

You will also begin to receive periodic newsletters and email from our Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC is a state mandated group established in each Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) to work as a liaison between special needs families and the school district. The group is comprised of parents and school district representatives. We meet each month. If you are available, join us at a meeting. Please check the PUSD website at http://www.powayusd.com/teaching/spec_ed/community_advisory_committee.shtml for more information.

Please remember I am here to help in any way that I can. Whether it is for additional resources, help understanding the IEP process, or you just need another parent to talk to, please let me know. Leave a message, and I will get back to you soon! I look forward to working with you.

Gina Zanolini (858) 668-4191 or gzanolini@powayusd.com

Section IX: How To Be Your Child's Best Advocate

A. Advocate Defined

An advocate is someone who speaks up for someone else, or someone who acts on behalf of another person. Naturally, a parent can be their child's best advocate because the parent knows their child better than anyone else and is in the best position to speak for their child on his or her behalf. Here are some tips that may help you to become the most effective advocate for your child.

1. Be informed by reading about your child's disability, asking questions and seeking answers, and attending meetings. The more you know about your child, the more comfortable you will be helping others understand your child.
2. Understand the local and state special education system and laws governing services for your child. Know your rights! Here are two wonderful resources that may be helpful in learning the laws:
 - a. Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy - <http://www.wrightslaw.com>
 - b. A Composite of Laws (California Special Education Programs – Department of Education) - call 1-800-995-4099.
3. Be a good record keeper by taking notes, obtaining copies of everything, and keeping your records organized in a file or binder.
4. Educate those around you by developing and sharing a “snapshot” of your child which may include the milestones your child has reached, strengths, weaknesses, motivators, behavioral strategies, and likes and dislikes. Make sure to update your snapshot periodically as your child changes.
5. Research and recognize resources and services that may be available to your child.
6. Work together closely with those providing services to your child by keeping the lines of communication open and striving to maintain a positive and healthy working partnership.
7. Network with other parents and professionals by attending support groups, conferences, and workshops.
8. Be involved with your local organizations and your child's school life.
9. Help your child to learn how to advocate for him or herself.

Being an advocate for your child can be one of the greatest gifts. With the appropriate services and support our children can achieve so many good things in life if only given the opportunity to. We are our children's voices, so speak out and stay strong.

All About

Place photo here

B. Student Profile

You probably hear a lot of information about what your child doesn't do yet and about all the problems and challenges related to his or her delays or risk factors. When you assist with developing your child's IEP, it is important that everybody have a picture of your child as a whole person. Use these pages to list information about what your child likes and dislikes as well as anything else that would be helpful in getting to know your child. This will help you to be able to educate those around you about your child and at the same time be your child's best advocate.

All About _____

My Favorite.....
Toys:
Foods:
Color:
Books:
Places to go:
Activities:
Other favorites:

Likes

--

Dislikes/Behavior Triggers

--

Strengths

Weaknesses

Motivators

(Things you have successfully used that make a setting or experience more comfortable)

Best Learning Style

Behavioral Strategies

--

Interventions Used

--

C. What's Important To Our Family

As you get ready for your IEP meeting, think about what is important to you. What would help your family and support your child. Think about the difficulties your family faces and list some areas where you would like some support. The team can then explore options for finding those supports. Remember to consider your family and your child when listing priorities and concerns.

Family Photo

Most Important Concerns

Priorities

(Those things that are most important to us that we would like to be addressed in the IEP)

Strengths and Resources

(People who help us/Things we do well as family)

Outcomes

(Goals we want to achieve in the future – what we like our child to be able to do)

Section X: What Are My Legal Rights as a Parent?

A. Laws Governing Special Education

You, the parents, and your child with special needs have certain legal rights. Two laws have had the greatest impact on how special education programs are structured and administered. They are:

1. Individuals With Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA – 97).

This Federal law requires that states provide a free and appropriate public education for students with special needs.

2. Senate Bill 1870.

This 1980 California law describes the Master Plan for special education and the services available in California. One of the major features of the California Master Plan is parent involvement.

These laws protect your rights to be fully informed and to participate in all the planning for decisions about your child's schooling.

B. You Are Entitled To:

1. Receive written notice from the school asking for your consent to assess your child.
2. Participate in the planning and development of your child's Individual Education Program, and to receive a copy.
3. Receive a full explanation of your rights.
4. Written notice before any proposed changes to your child's IEP.
5. Review your child's school records with a school administrator.
6. Participate in the annual review and revision of your child's Individual Education Program.
7. File a complaint with the district and/or the state if you believe a law has been violated relative to special education services for your student.
8. Request a Due Process Hearing when you and the school cannot agree on what type of program will be most helpful for your child.

C. Due Process

The intent of special education law is to provide a free appropriate public education for each child that will meet his or her unique needs. School personnel will try their best to make changes in your child's program that you feel are needed. Sometimes, however, the school may not agree with you or may not be able to meet your request. If this happens, and you and the school are not able to agree over how to meet your child's educational needs, you have the right to use the Due Process procedures provided for by law.

Due Process is part of the special education law that spells out how parents and school personnel may formally pursue a disagreement. Due Process covers what to do if you and the school cannot through respectful communication agree about any one of the following:

1. The school's responsibility regarding their legal requirements to you and your child.
2. Identification of your child as a student who needs Special Education services.
3. The type of assessment proposed for your child and the test results.
4. The planning of the IEP.
5. Special Education services being denied, changed or stopped.
6. The belief that you or your child's legal rights have been violated.

Most problems can be resolved through discussion with the school team, program specialists, or special education administrators. Contact these people or the parent facilitator to address unresolved concerns. For more information contact the Special Education Office of the Poway Unified School District, (858) 668-4100.

If, after working closely with the school and district special education personnel the matter is not resolved, you may exercise the Due Process procedures guaranteed by State and Federal law.

D. Your Rights at a Due Process Hearing

1. The hearing must be held at a time and place, which is reasonably convenient for the parents and the student.
2. You have the right to legal counsel, including the advice and support of any advocate not necessarily a lawyer.
3. You have the right to examine witnesses, present evidence and ask questions of school representatives.
4. You have the right to obtain a record of the hearing and all of the findings.

Section XI: Frequently Asked Questions

Analyzing our children can be stressful for parents. We all want to do what is best, and we can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the information and decisions we need to participate in for our child's education. Here are some questions that I frequently hear, along with some answers that may be helpful:

1. I am so overwhelmed...my child is struggling in school. I don't know why and I don't even know where to start to get help.

Answer: Talk with your child's teacher. They may be able to help define what problem may exist and offer some possible remedies. Visit your physician, explain what you see happening and ask for their advice. Call the Parent Facilitator for assistance communicating your concerns.

2. How do I know if my child is receiving all the programs that may be beneficial for their condition? I don't think they are telling me about everything unless I know what to ask for.

Answer: Remember, you are a part of the IEP team that assesses testing result for your child. You are an active participant and can ask questions about services at any time. Come prepared to meetings with reports from your physician. The other members of the team want to provide all services that are available and applicable to your student's condition. Write questions down prior to the meeting to help you remember different points that you wish to present during the meeting. If you are not sure how to phrase your questions, contact the Parent Facilitator or assistance.

3. Who is the case manager in charge of my child's IEP?

Answer: The child's case manager is the person at the school site. Every child with an IEP is assigned a case manager. This is designated at the IEP meeting.

4. What if I am not sure whether my child should be considered for a Special Education program?

Answer: Talk to your teacher and principal about your concerns. See section III regarding the SEIC process.

5. What if school representatives think my child needs Special Education assistance but I don't?

Answer: Students cannot be assessed or placed in Special Education without signed parental consent.

6. What if I need more explanation of the law regarding my rights?

Answer: You might ask for further explanation from the Special Education Office of the local school district, your local school, your advisory council, or the State Department of Education.

5. How do I prepare for my child's IEP meeting?

Answer: Prepare for meetings by reviewing the information you have regarding your child and by writing down the questions you want answered. You may take a friend or professional person with you to the meeting. As a parent you have something unique to contribute to the team. A parent facilitator can provide assistance or attend the meeting with you (see Section VI).

6. What if you have questions about the recommendations of the IEP team?

Answer: You can refuse to sign the IEP until you have time to think about it. Your child's program will remain the same until agreement is reached and the IEP is signed. To discuss your concerns if the problem is not resolved, the law provides a process for resolving differences (see Section XII).

7. What if I need more information about my child's needs, program or related matters?

Answer: You may work with teachers, principals, program specialists, parent facilitators, or district administrators to answer your questions.

8. What if it is determined that my child is not eligible for Special Education?

Answer: The school may have other programs to assist your child. Ask for a conference with your child's teacher and principal to discuss alternatives, which may include a 504 accommodation plan.

9. What is a Program Specialist?

Answer: A special education staff member who has had advanced training and experience in one or more areas of special education. He/she works with a number of assigned programs and provides assistance to case managers, parents, and administrators.

SECTION XII: Community Resources

LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION – CALIFORNIA – (858) 467-9158
LDA – is a nonprofit organization made up of parents and professional dedicated to helping children with learning disabilities. They provide referrals to private sector testing, support groups, and information.

ASSOCIATION FOR RETARDED CITIZENS – North San Diego County, Vista – (760) 726-2250
ARC provides respite care, infant enrichment, parent education, and adult services.

BLIND RECREATION CENTER – San Diego – (619) 298-5021
The Center provides recreational activities for visually impaired individuals from ages kindergarten through adult. Activities include roller-skating, water skiing, trips to Disneyland, and others.

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION – Escondido Office – (760) 480-9692
This agency provides services for handicapped individuals seeking employment, such as assessment, training and placement.

DEAF COMMUNITY SERVICES – San Diego – (619) 398-2441
Services are provided for hearing impaired individuals such as interpreting, counseling, job information, weekly newsletter, and quarterly magazine.

SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION – San Diego – (619) 685-4413
The Orton Society links the learning disabled with other organizations that can help. They also sponsor support groups for learning disabled adults. They also have an 800 number for information on learning disabled services, 1-800-ABC-D123

PALOMAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE – Disability Resource Center – San Marcos – (760) 744-1150. Ext. 2375

SAN DIEGO REGIONAL CENTER FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED – (858) 576-2996
Provides information, referral, diagnosis, evaluation, program planning, and advocacy services for the developmentally disabled (mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, and others).

SPEECH, HEARING AND NEUROSENSORY CENTER – Solana Beach – (858) 793-9591
This agency is affiliated with Children’s Hospital and provides speech and language evaluation and therapy, as well as audiology and aural rehabilitation services for the hearing impaired. Free screenings are also available.

SAN DIEGO PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT – (619) 525-8247

The Department offers a variety of Programs and activities for handicapped children. Call for a calendar of activities.

UNITED CEREBRAL PALSY ASSOCIATION – San Diego – (858) 571-7803

UCP provides intake and referral services for the physically handicapped. Adult employment and independent living programs are also provided.

This list includes only some of the organizations that are available in the community. Contact the Special Education Office or the Parent-Partners group for additional resources.

