



SAN DIEGUITO UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
Engaged, Inspired, Prepared

Special Education Parent Handbook 2021-2022

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SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT HANDBOOK

SAN DIEGUITO UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Welcome to the San Dieguito Union High School District's Special Education Parent Handbook. We have developed this handbook to serve as a guide to and through the special education referral process. Special Education services are a group of specialized services for students who are identified through an educational assessment as having an educational disability.

REFERRAL PROCESS:

Every school has a Student Study Team (SST) that includes school staff who work with the student and the student's parents. The Student Study Team is the first resource to address concerns about student progress or performance at school. The SST gathers information and determines general education supports and accommodations to address any learning concerns. If those supports and accommodations don't resolve the learning concerns, or the team feels that the student may have a disability, the team can refer the student for a special education assessment. Parents can also request a special education assessment.

The first step in the special education assessment process is the Assessment Plan. The team will complete the Assessment Plan and submit it to the parent for approval. The Assessment Plan lists the areas of suspected disability to be assessed. Options include:

- Academic Achievement
- Health
- Intellectual Development
- Language/Speech Communication Development
- Motor Development
- Social Emotional Development
- Adaptive Behavior
- Post- Secondary Transition).

Relevant areas would be selected for each individual student. Students are not assessed in areas that are not suspected areas of disability. Cognitive ability, Academic Achievement and Health are included for all initial assessments.

PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS:

This document is a summary of your rights and responsibilities as a parent of a child with a disability. You will be provided this document at the time of the initial assessment, and at least annually after the initial assessment. Become familiar with this document as it highlights timelines, resolution processes, and other special education information.

ASSESSMENT:

Once the signed Assessment Plan is returned to the special education team, the assessors will schedule their assessments. Assessments must be completed within 60 days of receipt of parent consent to the assessment, not counting school vacations over 5 days. Each assessor will meet with the student individually to complete assessments and observations. Parents are often asked to complete questionnaires and rating scales as part of the assessment. Assessments are conducted at school during school hours. The length of testing sessions will depend on the student's needs, school schedule, etc., but each assessor will likely need to meet with a student for multiple hours. Assessors have access to a variety of testing instruments. Which instruments they use is determined by each assessor based on the areas of concern and the student's needs. Often the results on one assessment tool will guide the assessor on to the next assessment tool. At least one assessor must observe the student in the classroom.

An Individualized Education Plan meeting will be held to review the assessment results. At that meeting the various assessors will present their assessment results in writing. The IEP team is comprised of:

- Parents
- Student (when agreed upon)
- Assessors
- Administrative designee
- Anyone the parent brings along

This team will review the assessment results and determine whether the student meets the criteria to receive special education services, and if so, under which eligibility category.

SPECIAL EDUCATION ELIGIBILITY:

Not all students who are evaluated for special education will qualify. There are multiple requirements that must be met to qualify for special education services. The specific Education Code is 5 CCR § 3030, but will be paraphrased here for clarity.

1. The student must meet the eligibility criteria as an individual with a qualifying disability (see appendix A) as defined in the education code.
2. The severity of the disability must have an adverse impact on the student's educational performance
3. The student must require special education services to address that adverse impact. For example, a student who is diagnosed with a disability such as autism or ADHD by his physician, but is passing his classes and has no other areas of concern, would not qualify for special education services.

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES, AS DEFINED BY IDEA:

Generally, the primary special education service is either Specialized Academic Instruction, or Speech Language Therapy. Other “Related Services” might also be provided, depending on the individual students’ needs. Some Related Services can only be provided as an addition to one of the primary services listed above.

Related services can include, but are not limited to, any of the following:

- speech-language pathology and audiology services
- interpreting services
- psychological services
- physical and occupational therapy
- recreation, including therapeutic recreation
- early identification and assessment of disabilities in children
- counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling
- orientation and mobility services
- medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes
- school health services and school nurse services
- social work services in schools
- parent counseling and training

Which service or services a student receives is based on the assessment results and what the IEP team determines the student needs in order to make appropriate progress in school and on their IEP goals.

THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP):

If the student meets the criteria to be designated a student with a disability, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed by the IEP team. The IEP is updated at least once per year.

The IEP document lists:

- Demographic information
- Primary (and secondary when appropriate) category of disability
- Individualized Transition Plan (ITP)
- Present levels of performance
- Special factors such as Deafness, English Language Proficiency, and Behavioral concerns Specialized equipment the student needs.
- How the student will participate in statewide testing
- Educational goals for the coming year
- Accommodations
- Supports
- Services
- Service levels
- Placement, Some students may need to receive their services in a separate classroom or different school in order to make appropriate progress.

The team will usually come to the IEP meeting with a rough draft of the IEP which will be adjusted based on the discussions during the IEP meeting.

The IEP document is a living document that can be amended or changed as needed and agreed upon by the IEP team, including the parents. Some simple changes can be made without holding an IEP team meeting, but more substantial changes would require the team to meet and discuss the changes.

INDIVIDUALIZED TRANSITION PLAN (ITP)

When a student enters high school and prior to the student's 16th birthday, IEP teams collaborate to develop an Individualized Transition Plan or ITP. The ITP is a section of the IEP that outlines transition goals and services for the student with disability. The federal IDEA laws require that all students must have an ITP by the age of 16. The ITP is the template for mapping out short-term to long-term adult outcomes from which annual goals and objectives are developed.

The ITP has two main areas of focus for school teams. The first area is a plan that includes educational goals for a child after high school and employment (including supported employment) goals. The development of goals for college and career are based on student input and interests, as well as the present levels of performance.

The second area of focus, independent living, is completed for only a small percentage of students who will not be able to live independently when they are adults. The ITP can include goals associated with independent living or supported living situations, as determined by the IEP team. This portion of the IEP, along with the Educational Settings page, facilitate an inter-agency linkage. School teams facilitate collaboration between school and other government and public service organizations, such as Regional Center or the Department of Rehabilitation. Parents also can contact and invite professionals from the future programs for students after age 21. This inter-agency linkage is a key component ensuring a seamless smooth transition from school to adulthood for people with disabilities.

TRIENNIAL REVIEWS:

Every third year the district and parents must consider completing new assessments. New assessments are conducted whenever the team needs to know whether the student still meets the criteria to receive special education services, when there is a question about whether the student's disability category has changed, or when the team needs updated information about the student's needs. A new assessment plan would be created and submitted to the parent if either the district or the parent feels that a new assessment is needed for the triennial review.

REQUESTING MEETINGS:

You can request an IEP team meeting at any time. The team must convene a meeting within 30 days of your request, not counting school vacations over 5 days . We will do our best to meet as quickly as is feasible.

SERVICE DELIVERY:

All special education services must be delivered at school during regular school hours. Students can receive some services within the general education or “regular” classes. In SDUHSD many classes are co-taught by two teachers at the same time. One teacher is a content specialist and the other is a special education teacher who is an access specialist. Some students may need to have a period or periods per day of special education services designated in their school schedule.

Some students will be pulled out of other classes to receive related services such as speech/language therapy or occupational therapy. This will all be discussed and determined by the IEP team. Your student will be assigned to a “case manager”. This person will coordinate with all other service providers and the general education teachers. The case manager will be the one who schedules your child’s annual and/or triennial IEP meetings. The case manager may change from year to year. For students who have only speech therapy, the Speech-Language Pathologist is the case manager.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

The team will discuss and determine accommodations that can be provided to your student within their classes and other activities throughout the school day. These accommodations are documented in the IEP and can be things like taking tests in a quiet environment, or having preferential seating within the classroom. These accommodations are shared with all teachers that will see your student at the beginning of the school year, and revisited as necessary during the year.

For special education students who go on to college, some of the accommodations provided in the IEP can also be provided at colleges and universities. This is up to each individual institution and you will need to check with the specific college or university for its policies regarding students with disabilities.

CONTINUUM OF PLACEMENTS:

There is a continuum of placement options within every district, ranging from least amount of services to most. These placements include:

- General Education with Speech Therapy
- General Education with Specialized Academic Instruction
- General Education with Specialized Academic Instruction and related services
- Special Program classes with or without related services
- Special, Non-Public Schools for students with disabilities

- Residential School for students with disabilities

The most appropriate placement is the one closest to general education, in the student's neighborhood school, in which the student can make appropriate progress in school and on his or her IEP goals.

Additionally, there are a variety of means for students to receive support from SDUHSD:

- **Co-Teaching:** In Co-Taught classes, a General Education teacher is paired with a Special Education teacher. The goal is to provide academic instruction from a content expert (the General Education Teacher) with Differentiated Instruction from a case manager (the Special Education Teacher) in order to meet the needs of all students in the classroom.
- **Academic Support Classes:** These classes provide general academic support in a small group, separate (Special Education only) setting and taught by a Special Education teacher. Support is focused on executive functioning skills, transition skills, and specific support for homework.
- **Targeted Intervention Classes:** These classes are designed to supplement a Co-Taught class in Math or Language Arts, specifically for students who have considerable struggles in these areas. Core content is primarily taught in the Co-Taught classroom; then reinforced and supplemented in the Intervention classroom.
- **Modified Programs:** Courses aligned to general education content areas that do not meet graduation requirements.

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA VERSUS CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION:

Most students who qualify for special education services earn a high school diploma and attend college. Some students who aren't able to master the content in all of the required coursework due to the effects of their disabilities may earn a Certificate of Completion instead. The discussion of diploma versus certificate typically begins in 9th grade as a part of the IEP process, as the team develops the students Individualized Transition Plan (ITP)

The IEP team will discuss these options with you during the IEP team meetings. For special education students who go on to college, some of the accommodations provided in the IEP can also be provided at colleges and universities. This is up to each individual institution and you will need to check with the specific college or university for its policies regarding students with disabilities.

Students who earn a traditional diploma are exited from Special Education services on the date of their graduation. Students who earn a Certificate of Completion in lieu of the traditional diploma may remain eligible for special education services until the semester in which they turn 22 years of age. Those students are eligible to attend COAST Academy, the district's program for students with disabilities who have completed 4 years of high school, but who have not obtained a diploma.

GRADUATION:

When a student earns a high school diploma or a certificate of completion, they participate in the graduation ceremony at their school. Graduation is a time to celebrate and all students completing their course of study are recognized equally during the ceremony.

MOVING TO A NEW DISTRICT:

Your student's IEP follows them to any public school in which they enroll. When a student with an IEP enrolls in a new district, that district creates an Interim Placement form agreeing to provide as close as possible to what is in the current(or most recently agreed upon IEP) for a period of 30 days. The IEP team will meet after the 30 days to discuss and make any necessary changes or updates to the IEP.

There are situations where the Interim Placement might look different. Students transferring between schools within the same district, or between districts that are in the same SELPA would not require a 30 day review meeting. Other situations that may affect how the Interim Placement is handled include a student with an expired or incomplete IEP, a student transferring from a place that has significantly different laws, or when the student is due for an evaluation at the time of the transfer. In all of these cases, the IEP team and parents will collaborate to determine the best path forward.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

1. You can help the assessors to complete a comprehensive evaluation by providing all relevant information about your student including any outside services or supports that they access. Things like counseling, tutoring, etc. are relevant to the determination of whether or not a student meets the eligibility criteria. It is also important for the assessors to know about any social or emotional difficulties that your child has encountered, as well as any trauma or difficult life situations. All information obtained is confidential.
2. Quickly sign and return any Exchange of Information forms submitted to you.
3. Complete all of the questionnaires and rating scales that you are sent and return them as quickly as possible. Similar forms may be completed by the teachers, and it is important for the assessors to be able to see the similarities and differences between the home and school environments.
4. Participate in the meeting. The initial IEP meeting will take approximately one to two hours depending on a variety of factors. Sometimes it will take more than one meeting to complete the process. You are welcome to bring along anyone who knows your child. It may be good to make a list of questions that you want to ask prior to the meeting.
5. Ask questions! Let us know if you don't understand something. We use a lot of education jargon and sometimes forget that not everyone understands our lingo.

6. You will be asked to sign the IEP twice, once for attendance at the IEP team meeting, and again to indicate your consent to the IEP and implementation of services. We cannot implement the services without your written consent.

If you do not agree to the assessment results or IEP, the IEP team will work with you to come to an agreement. If an agreement cannot be reached, there is specific information in the Procedural Safeguards for how to proceed.

WHO TO CONTACT:

Please start by contacting the person most directly related to your question or concern.

1. General Education Teacher: for questions about a class, grades, homework, assignments, etc.
2. Special Education Case Manager: for questions about special education services or the IEP, or to request an IEP team meeting
3. Related Service Providers: for questions about a specific related service
4. School Site Administrator: there is at least one school site administrator assigned to oversee special education services at every school. Contact this person for help with broader school related questions, discipline or when you need information that one of the teachers can't provide.
5. Special Education Program Supervisor: When you need more help with special education than the teachers or site administrator can provide.

The contact information for all of these people is on the school website and the Program Supervisor for each school is listed on the district website on the special education page. You can also call the general phone number for the school and ask to be directed to the person you need to speak with.

NORTH COASTAL CONSORTIUM FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION (NCCSE):

San Dieguito is part of the North Coastal Consortium for Special Education (NCCSE), a Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). NCCSE is composed of 14 school districts in North San Diego County. Each SELPA must have an Administrative Unit which is the legal entity that receives funds and is responsible for seeing that every eligible child receives appropriate services. The Administrative Unit for the North Coastal Consortium for Special Education is the San Diego County Office of Education.

NCCSE offers many opportunities for parent education and engagement throughout the school year. Information about NCCSE's workshops for families can be found at <https://nccse.org/Families/Families-Home>.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

Parents have many opportunities to be involved with their child's school. Each school site has parent representatives who support and advise schools on specific issues, in several capacities. The District also has a parent committee with one parent representative from each site. If you are interested in participating in one of these opportunities, please reach out to your student's case manager or the school site administrator. Finally, SDUHSD has representatives who advise the special education local plan area (SELPA) via the Community Advisory Committee (CAC).

The SDUHSD staff will send out a quarterly newsletter via email with updates on school events and important information about things happening at school. If you do not have email and would like a paper copy sent home, please contact your Case Manager.

CONCLUSIONS:

The award-winning San Dieguito Union High School District is one of the nation's finest districts, offering a wealth of academic and extracurricular opportunities in which its students can engage and excel. Students are most successful when a strong partnership exists between school and home and we are very fortunate to live in a community that places a high priority on supporting our young people and a first-rate educational program. The Special Education Department employs a team of professionals to implement wide-ranging educational and support programs that provide instruction and services to the students of the San Dieguito Union High School District. We hope that this Parent Handbook will support you and your student as you consider special education services with the SDUHSD.

APPENDIX A: FEDERAL AND STATE DISABILITY CATEGORIES

- Autism (AUT)
- Deaf-blindness(DB)
- Deafness (DEAF)
- Emotional Disturbance (ED)
- Hearing Impairment(HI)
- Intellectual Disability (ID)
- Multiple Disability (MD)
- Orthopedic Impairment (OI)
- Other Health Impaired (OHI)
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Speech and Language Impairment (SLI)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Visual Impairment (VI)

APPENDIX B - GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acronym/Title	Definition
AERIES	Student information system for all students in the district.
Amendment	A SEIS document to amend the annual IEP
Annual IEP (Annual)	Every IEP must be re-created at least once per year. If changes are made during that year, an amendment to the IEP must be completed.
APE	Adapted Physical Education-service to provide modifications to the PE curriculum
AT/AAC	Assistive Technology/Augmentative-Alternative Communication--technological support for students, provided in our district by an AT specialist-currently Kelly Dunn
ATP	Adult Transition Program-Sped Students aged 18-22 who have not earned a diploma are eligible to remain in public school until age 22.
Certificate of Completion	Students who are not able to earn the standard diploma due to their disabilities earn a Certificate of Completion
CM	Case Manager-Teacher who oversees the program and services for a special education student
Co-Teaching/ Co-Taught	General education courses taught by two teachers - one general education, content teacher and one special education teacher
DHH	Deaf or Hard of Hearing--services and/or classes to support students with hearing loss
ERMHS	Educationally Related Mental Health Services-counseling and other supports provided at school to students with mental health issues that interfere with their learning.
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education--what we are required to provide to each student, based on his/her unique needs.
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act--the over-arching law that guides all of special education

IEP	Individualized Education Plan-Every student who receives special education services must have a written plan, developed by a specific group of people, renewed at least once per year.
ITP	Individualized Transition Plan -
Interim Placement	A document offering services for a period of 30 days made when a student with an IEP moves into a district.
ITP	Individual Transition Plan - All students aged 15.5 must have an ITP as part of their IEP.
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment-Federal mandate to keep students in the least restrictive environment possible as long as they can make appropriate progress.
NPS	Non Public School-non-profit "private" schools for students with special needs.
OAH	Office of Administrative Hearings--the body that adjudicates due process cases (like court-but for special education disagreements between parents and school districts
OT	Occupational Therapist--school based occupational therapy (fine motor, sensory)
PS	Program Supervisor-special education administrators who are assigned to school sites and fulfill various other responsibilities within the district.
PT	Physical Therapy/Therapist--addresses gross motor delays
RTC	Residential Treatment Center-Non Public residential school for students with special needs
SAI	Specialized Academic Instruction-the academic service for special education
SEIS	The electronic IEP system that our district uses. Most districts in the state use SEIS, but not all.

SELPA	Special Education Local Plan Area/Agency--Each district in CA lies within a SELPA. SELPAs oversee special education supports and services for their districts. We are in the NCCSE SELPA (North Coastal Consortium for Special Education). The DHH and VI services provided in our district are provided by the SELPA and their staff.
SLP	Speech Language Pathologist--school based speech therapy provider and/or service
Sped Site Admin	The administrator at each school site who oversees special education. In most of our schools it is the Assistant Principal, but some schools have designated the principal.
Strategic Plan	The special ed strategic plan is posted on the district website. This document guides us as we plan and develop sped programs and supports
Triennial IEP (Tri)	Every third year the IEP team must at least review records or conduct a re-assessment and develop a new IEP.
VI	Visually Impaired/Teacher of the Visually Impaired--a related service to address vision issues or blindness