

Independence Facilitator Assistance (IFA) Policy

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act affords students the right to attend school in the Least Restrictive Environment. This means that, to the maximum extent appropriate, school districts must educate students with disabilities in the regular classroom with appropriate aids and supports, referred to as "supplementary aids and services," along with their non-disabled peers in the school they would attend if not disabled, unless a student's IEP requires some other arrangement.

It adds that, "special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs" only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

IDEA further defines related services as the utilization of aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. This applies to any general education program or special education program in which the student may participate (34 CFR § 300.550-300.556).

Every school district or charter LEA within the Butte County SELPA is required to provide a full continuum of placement options for students with identified disabilities who are receiving special education services. Districts must provide a full continuum of alternative placements to ensure that students receive services in the least restrictive environment. This includes the following:

- (1) Regular class placement;
- (2) Regular class with resource or itinerant instructional services;
- (3) Regular class with special education related services;
- (4) Special classes or special schools (either of which often also involve the provision of related services);
- (5) Nonpublic schools;
- (6) State schools for students with "low incidence" disabilities; &
- (7) Instruction in settings other than classrooms (such as in homes or hospitals). (34 CFR § 300.551(b)(1)).

Each school district and/or charter LEA is comprised of highly qualified employees to serve students with special education needs. Individual LEA Board Policies determine conditions for employee's duties, hours and contractual agreements.

There may be special circumstances when a student may need additional adult support in order to be successful in his/her educational placement. When this occurs, staff shall refer to this Board Policy to assist them in making decisions for allocating additional staff support, which in Butte County SELPA is termed, "Independence Facilitator Assistance," or "IFA" support.

The Butte County SELPA Procedures will provide guidance to staff in assessing and determining the need for IFA support, although the final determination of what will be required as part of the assessment may be specialized by each LEA. When assessing student need for IFA support, staff will utilize best practices, which should include a review of student's current program and academic and behavioral record, interviews with staff and parents, observations of the student in the environment(s) of concern, and appropriate assessment measures.

IFA staff may be utilized to provide support services to a special education student who is placed in a less restrictive educational environment who may need support transitioning into a new classroom placement. IFA support services may include monitoring of attending behaviors including cueing, maximizing social interaction, daily toileting and classroom participation per the IEP. Additionally, IFA support can assist with specific behavior management of targeted behaviors consistent with IEP goals and/or a behavior intervention plan. Finally, IFA staff can provide specialized health care procedures as documented in the IEP and authorized by a physician.

The Butte County SELPA's believes that it is important for staff and parents to understand the following:

1. A goal for any student with special needs is to encourage, promote, and maximize independence. The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team is responsible for developing and implementing a program that promotes that independence. Natural supports and existing staff supports should be used whenever possible.
2. Additional support services or personnel are valuable resources for the educational community and some students; however, educational/behavioral support personnel are not a replacement for the teacher in providing direct instruction in academics and/or behavior.
3. Additional support staff shall not become the communication link between school and home.

Prior to making a referral, each member of the IEP team should consider whether (1) the additional support staff interfere with the typical peer-to-peer process of interaction and/or communication; (2) the use of the additional support staff will be a barrier to the pupil receiving direct instruction from the teacher; (3) the approach used by the additional support staff increase the pupil's dependency, including over-reliance on prompting and redirecting of attention; and (4) the original need for additional support staff has changed and a re-evaluation of the assignment appropriate.

Legal References:

United States Code, Title 20 Sec 1400-1482, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
Education Code § 56195.8 Adoption of policies for programs and services
Education Code § 56300-56381 Identification and referral, assessment, instructional planning, implementation, and review
CCR, Title 5, § 3000-3089
34 CFR § 300.550-300.556
34 CFR § 300.551(b)(1)