



# Solano County SELPA January Newsletter

## Dispute Prevention: Respect, Trust, & Communication

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Respect, trust, and communication are the pillars of any healthy relationship. When working to resolve IEP disputes, one or all of these have likely been damaged. A common procedural error we see play out in IEP meetings is improper use of the excusal form. Federal regulations allow the district to excuse a mandatory member from attending IEP meetings, but only under specific conditions. Usually, the member simply provides written input prior to the meeting, and the case manager explains the excusal form at the meeting. However, in California the standard is significantly higher. Not only must staff provide input to the IEP team in writing, they also need to have a discussion with parents before the meeting, giving them a chance to ask questions and express concerns. When teams are not engaging in this practice, it can lead to breakdowns in communication and trust.

Concerned parents will inevitably learn about this process and recall their individual experience when they were asked to sign the excusal form during meeting introductions. Ultimately, this may lead to the parent feeling like something was hidden from them. Trust is now likely hanging by a thread and every future action by the district is subject to question. Unaware of these requirements, staff may perceive the parent's new skepticism as disrespect. Subsequent communication becomes curt and accusations ensue.

The take-away here is that information and no last-minute surprises at the IEP table are paramount to preventing dispute.

What can well-intentioned staff do to avoid this communication pitfall? We recommend:

1. Communicate with parents in advance of IEP meetings, email works and a personal connection with a phone call goes a long way!
2. If you plan to excuse a team member, make sure parents are aware in advance and can communicate with that staff member.

## Professional Development Opportunities

- 1/24 - 3:30-5:00 PM [Communication, Documentation, and Parent Participation](#)
- 1/31 - 1:00 - 3:00 PM [Evaluation and Eligibility Determination for English Learners](#)

## CAC Recognition Ceremony 2024!

The 18th annual Community Advisory Committee Recognition Ceremony will be held on May 6, 2024 at the Solano County Office of Education!

Do you know a school employee, student, or community member who goes above and beyond in service of students with disabilities?

Submit a [nomination](#) for them to be recognized at this spectacular annual event!

## January Events

Date	Meeting
1/17	Governor's Budget Workshop
1/17	SELPA Governance and Finance Committee
1/17	SELPA Special Focus Committee (SFC)
1/18	Council of Superintendents (COS)
1/18	Community Advisory Committee (CAC)