

Sonoma County SELPA
Notification of Purpose of Special Education Assessment

Date: _____

District of Location of Private School: _____

Dear Private School Staff/Parents of Children Attending Private Schools:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the California Education Code require school districts to conduct an assessment, to determine the child's eligibility for special education services, of a child upon referral by a parent, teacher or service provider of the child when the school district believes that the student may have an educational disability. This requirement of law applies equally to students enrolled in public and private schools. Should the school district choose not to conduct the assessment when it has evidence that the student does not have an educational disability based on various performance measures, parents must be given written notice of the district's decision and their rights to appeal the district's decision.

The purpose of a special education assessment is to determine if a child is eligible for special education and related services. Unless a school district believes a child may possess a special education disability, a district is not otherwise required to conduct an assessment to provide to the parent or private school staff information regarding the child's functioning in educational, psychological, health, communication, emotional, or other areas. While such information may be helpful for instructional purposes, this is not the purpose of a special education assessment.

This letter is written to clarify that the purpose of a special education assessment is:

- (1) to determine if the child is a child with a disability, and
- (2) to determine the educational needs of the child.

In order to receive special education services, the district must determine through the assessment process that the child meets the eligibility criteria specified in state and federal laws for possession of an educational disability in one or more disability categories. If the child meets the criteria, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team must determine if the child requires specially designed instruction (special education and related services) to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's educational disability.

If the IEP team determines that a student requires special education and related services, an IEP will be developed and the school district will offer services within the public schools. A parent of a child enrolled in a private school may choose to: 1) enroll the child in the public school in order to access the special education and related services proposed in the student's IEP; or 2) keep the child in the private school.

If a parent opts to keep the child in the private school, there is no individual entitlement to receive some or all of the special education and related services that the child would

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receive if the child were enrolled in a public school. The Sonoma County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) makes a determination each school year regarding the proportionate share of federal IDEA dollars to be spent with eligible children enrolled at private schools and the determination of the kind of special education and related services to be provided to eligible private school children.

We would like to discuss with you further your referral for a special education assessment so that we are mutually clear on the purpose of the assessment and to determine if your request meets the criteria outlined in this letter. Thank you for your cooperation.

District of Location Representative: _____

District of Location: _____ **Phone #:** _____

Address: _____