

## **My Child's School/Program is Closing- What are my Rights?**

Due to declining enrollment, many Districts across California are looking at closing schools or programs. Sonoma County has found itself in a similar situation. With the exception of (2 or 3) Districts in Sonoma County that are growing, the rest have either stagnant growth or are experiencing declining enrollment.

School or program closures can be significantly disruptive and emotional for staff, students, their families, and communities. For special education students, there are additional challenges when their class or program moves. Transitions can be difficult, and learning new campuses, schedules and becoming familiar with new staff and peers will take some time.

Districts are fully aware of the impact and do not make these decisions lightly. However, they do have the authority to close or move programs if it is financially necessary or responsible to do so.

### **So what are my rights?**

You may ask the District to provide details of their plan for the transitions. Attend any informational meetings and read notifications related to moves. You may voice your opinions and concerns at School Board Meetings. Additionally, you always have the right to call for an IEP meeting to be held within 30 days. Plans can be developed to support the transition to the new school/program. Strategies like Social Stories, visits to the new site, or other accommodations can be planned. But all the goals and services on your child's IEP should remain the same.

### **Can I opt to go to another school/program?**

You have the right to ask for an interdistrict or intradistrict transfer per your District's policies. While a transfer cannot be denied simply because a student has a disability, a District could deny a transfer if their special education program is impacted. If your request is denied and you believe it is due to some other reason than program impact, you can either appeal to your District's School Board or the Sonoma County Office Board of Education.

While a non-public school might be appropriate for some students, concerns about the challenges of a move should not outweigh the rights of your child to be educated to the greatest extent possible with typically developing peers, also known as the least restrictive environment (LRE).

## **How can I support my child?**

Your child's feelings about a move will likely reflect your feelings about the move. While it is understandable that big changes like this are stressful and can cause anxiety, if you are able to be optimistic about the move, your child may be more optimistic as well. Try to focus on the positives when you can. Remind your child of their tools and supports. Reach out to other parents at your school or connect with Common Ground Society ([commongroundsociety.org](http://commongroundsociety.org)) or Matrix Parent Network ([martixparents.org](http://martixparents.org)).