



# Special Education Contacts and Resources

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA CHARTER SCHOOLS

- 1 Charter schools are required to serve students with disabilities and ensure access to special education services under IDEA (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).
- 2 There are 136 SELPAs (Special Education Local Plan Areas) that coordinate services across districts, including some that are charter school-only. Each SELPA has a Local Plan outlining its special education delivery system, funding mechanisms, and governance structure.
- 3 IDEA Part B governs services for students aged 3–21, while Part C covers early intervention services for infants and toddlers up to age 3.
- 4 Charter schools must coordinate with their authorizer and assigned SELPA to fulfill their obligations for providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Every charter school must belong to a SELPA.

## WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO AUTHORIZERS, SCHOOLS, & PARENTS

SELPAs:	Regional Centers:	Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs):	Family Resource Centers (FRCs):	California Department of Education (CDE):
Provide direct support, compliance guidance, and training for schools and authorizers.	Offer assessment, eligibility, and coordination of services for individuals with developmental disabilities, including Early Start services.	Offer training and legal guidance to families.	Community-based centers offering localized support, skill training, and parent mentoring.	Offers guidance, technical assistance, and compliance monitoring for special education programs.

## CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SELPAS, STATE CONTACTS, FEDERAL CONTACTS, & PARENTS

Click the boxes below to access the resources. For hard copy, these URLs also are displayed on page 4.

<a href="#">SELPA Directory</a>	<a href="#">California Department of Education Special Education Division</a>	<a href="#">California Department of Developmental Services (DDS)</a>	<a href="#">U.S. Department of Education IDEA Resources</a>
<a href="#">Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)</a>	<a href="#">Matrix Parent Network &amp; Resource Center</a>	<a href="#">Family Resource Centers Network of California</a>	<a href="#">Regional Centers Directory</a>

MORE ABOUT SELPAs

What is a SELPA?

A SELPA is a regional entity, often encompassing multiple school districts and/or county offices of education, that work together to ensure special education services are available to all eligible students.

There are 136 SELPAs (Special Education Local Plan Areas) in California. SELPAs are typically geographical regions of sufficient size and scope to provide for all special education service needs of children residing within the regional boundaries. Each SELPA develops a local plan describing how it will provide special education services.

PURPOSE	GOVERNANCE	LOCAL PLANS
SELPAs were created to meet the minimum size and scope requirements for providing special education services.	SELPA structures can vary, including multi-district, multi-district/county, single-district, and charter-only SELPAs.	Each SELPA develops a Local Plan that outlines how it provides special education services and meets the requirements of federal and state law.

Contact information for all SELPAs: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp>

MORE ABOUT REGIONAL CENTERS

California's special education system includes 21 regional centers that provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. These non-profit organizations, funded by state and federal dollars, serve as the initial point of contact for accessing support. They offer a range of services, including assessment, eligibility determination, service planning, and coordination.

Regional Centers in California:

- **What they do:** Regional centers assess individuals, determine eligibility for services, and coordinate support for those with developmental disabilities.
- **Whom they serve:** They primarily serve individuals with developmental disabilities, including those with autism, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and intellectual disabilities, as well as their families.
- **Early Start:** They are also involved in California's Early Start program, providing services to infants and toddlers with developmental delays or at risk of developmental disabilities.
- **Family Resource Centers (FRCs):** Regional centers may also collaborate with or house Family Resource Centers (FRCs), which offer parent-to-parent support and information.
- Listing for all Regional Centers and directors in California: <https://www.dds.ca.gov/rc/listings/>

## MORE ABOUT PARENT TRAINING & FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS (PTIS & FRCS)

In California, several organizations work to empower parents and families of children with disabilities by providing information, training, and support. Key players in this network include the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center (Matrix Parents), and local Family Resource Centers (FRCs).

### DREDF and Matrix: Statewide hubs and technical assistance

- DREDF: As a Parent Training and Information (PTI) Center funded by the U.S. Department of Education, DREDF focuses on advocating for students with disabilities and their families. It empowers parents and caregivers to understand disability and civil rights laws, participate effectively in the special education process, and advocate for their children's needs. It serves families in multiple Northern and Central California counties.

**Contact information:** (510) 644-2555 / (800) 348-4232, email: [info@dredf.org](mailto:info@dredf.org)



**Website:** <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/california/>

- Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center: Operating as both a Family Empowerment Center (FEC) and a Family Resource Center (FRC), Matrix Parents empowers families of children with special needs to understand and access essential services. They serve families in Marin, Sonoma, Napa, and Solano counties. Matrix Parents also provides technical assistance to other Parent Training and Information Centers throughout the Western United States.

### Family Resource Centers (FRCs): Local support and region-specific assistance

- Network & Services: FRCs are community-based organizations that provide comprehensive support to families, especially those with infants and toddlers with disabilities. They offer parent-to-parent support, information, and referrals to services within their communities. Services often include parent skill training, early childhood education, health and wellness services, and community engagement activities. FRCs are staffed by parents who have children with special needs.
- Impact: Research highlights the effectiveness of FRCs in reducing child welfare involvement, improving parenting practices and child development outcomes, increasing access to services, and building stronger communities. Studies have shown that FRCs contribute to improved family self-sufficiency, health, and parental resilience.

**Website:** <https://frcnca.org/>



DREDF and Matrix Parent act as central hubs, providing specialized training and guidance for parents and professionals across a wider region. Local FRCs offer a more localized, community-driven approach, delivering a diverse array of services tailored to the specific needs of families within their respective areas, [according to the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare](#). Together, these organizations form a vital network that empowers families of children with disabilities in California.

## Quick Links

SELPA Directory: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp>

California Department of Education Special Education Division: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/>

California Department of Developmental Services (DDS): <https://www.dds.ca.gov>

U.S. Department of Education IDEA Resources: <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF): <https://www.dredf.org>

Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center: <https://www.matrixparents.org>

Family Resource Centers Network of California: <https://www.frcnca.org>

Regional Centers Directory: <https://www.dds.ca.gov/rc/listings/>