CALIFORNIA
SPECIAL EDUCATION LOCAL PLAN AREA
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) GUIDE

FIFTH EDITION
2022

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the fifth edition of the *California Special Education Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Guide.* Under legislative mandate California Education Code (EC) [Article 7. Community Advisory Committee [56190 – 56194]](#), Community Advisory Committees (CACs) provide the vehicle for active community involvement in the development and review of the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Local Plan, in parent training and education, and in bringing about positive changes in the educational system at both the local and state levels. Community Advisory Committees are each unique and individual and are at the heart of the Special Education system in California. This resource contains information and suggestions to support, enhance, and personalize your local CAC.

It is the very clear and strong intent of the *California Special Education Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Guide* Fifth Edition Review and Revision Committee to provide a framework for an effective CAC. This Committee would like to recognize and acknowledge the changing nature of education in general and special education, specifically, as laws change or are added to, budgets fluctuate, and various realities impact educators and families. Therefore, we would like to note that this is and will continue to be, a "work in progress", with more work to come and future amendments and editions to be developed and edited over time. Following many hours of examination and update over the 2020-21 through 2021–22 school year, we humbly present this revision.

We wish every CAC success with its individual and joint ventures throughout the state of California.

- Members of the Fifth Edition Review and Revision Committee

FOREWORD

Community Advisory Committees (CACs) are a vital component of effective Special Education programs in California. They are commissioned by law and are a reflection of the community they serve. CACs are composed mainly of parents, and may include educators, pupils and adults with disabilities, representatives of public and private agencies, and persons concerned with the needs of individuals with disabilities. They are appointed by their governing boards in accordance with locally determined selection procedures described in the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Local Plan.

CACs have specific and important roles and responsibilities which are reviewed in this *California Special Education Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Guide*. Every SELPA is required to establish a CAC. Across California, many CACs are vibrant, creative bodies that assist in advising local governing boards about the Local Plan, annual priorities, parent education, and other specified Special Education related activities.

CACs are designed to be a dynamic collaborative partnership of educators, parents, and community members. This mandated membership exemplifies the need for informed involvement among those who provide Special Education programs and services and those who receive Special Education programs and services. This guide provides excellent strategies for building a collaborative partnership where all partners are respected and valued.

The information in this handbook is provided as general guidance, and best practice. Each CAC is unique and reflects the community that it represents. The CAC Guide Review and Revision Committee encourages CAC voting members to discuss these elements with their SELPA Administrator and Administrative Unit to determine which elements are appropriate for their CAC. Priorities, activities, and resources may vary among neighboring CACs. Please reach out to your SELPA Administrator with questions or for clarification regarding your area. Contact information for all SELPAs can be found at the following web page https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp.

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SECTION 1: LEGISLATIVE MANDATE FOR CACs

Parents, school personnel, and community members learning and working together produce healthy, valuable home/school partnerships. Effective school systems must devote energy and resources when informing and educating parents and community members about how to support and contribute to the efforts of their schools. The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is designed in legislative spirit and intent to establish a local forum for active parent involvement. The California Education Code (Part 30, Chapter 2, Article 7) describes the roles and responsibilities of the CAC. The CAC is appointed by and functions in an advisory capacity to the governing board of the local Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA).

What is a Community Advisory Committee (CAC)?

Community Advisory Committees are vital components of effective Special Education programs in California. CACs have specific roles and responsibilities. Across California, CACs assist in advising the SELPA Governing Board, SELPA Administrator, and Special Education Administration about the Special Education Local Plan, annual priorities, parent education and other Special Education-related activities. Every Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) is required to establish a CAC. A SELPA is a consortium that is formed to ensure that the full continuum of Special Education services is available to all eligible students within its boundaries. It is comprised of an individual district, a group of districts, or districts and a county office(s) of education. CACs provide an important connection between the community and the SELPA.

Parents comprise a majority of the CAC membership and the majority of these parents are parents of children with disabilities. Other members may include Special Education teachers, general education teachers, other school personnel, other parents, other pupils and adults with disabilities, representatives from related public and private agencies, and school administrators. CAC members are initially selected by their peers, nominated through their district, or participate in an application or voting process. Candidates are then approved by their local Board of Education. The general education population should also be represented on the committee. CAC members should represent not only parents concerned with the quality of Special Education but the entire special education community. As such, the CAC must act responsibly to ensure fair representation and thorough evaluation of the issues and interests handled in the attainment of its goals. A well-rounded CAC membership should have a sound understanding of Special Education laws, issues, programs, and services. An effective CAC then shares this information with the district, the county administration or both, as well as with the community.

The Community Advisory Committee's responsibilities include advising the policy and administrative entity of the district, SELPA, or county office, regarding the development, amendment, and review of the Local Plan. The Local Plan describes the local policies,

procedures and programs that are consistent with state laws, regulations, and policies for Special Education. The CAC acts in an advisory capacity and may recommend priorities or changes to be addressed by the plan. Other responsibilities include, but need not be limited to:

- Encouraging community and parental involvement in the development, review, and implementation of the Local Plan
- Supporting activities on behalf of individuals with exceptional needs
- Assisting in parent awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
- Providing families an opportunity to share resources and support

How are Parents and Professionals Empowered by the Legislative Mandate for a CAC?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) describes the legislative intent to strengthen the role and responsibility of parents by ensuring families have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home. The California Education Code describes in detail the Community Advisory Committee's appointments, composition and responsibilities. The Education Code also identifies the service delivery system for providing Special Education in California and strategies to actively involve parents and other community members in the development, amendment, and review of the individual Local Plan for Special Education.

Who may attend a CAC meeting?

CAC meetings are open meetings, meaning that anyone who is interested may attend the meetings. CAC meetings provide parents with up-to-date information on issues that impact their children, the opportunity to communicate with school administrators, and the chance to connect with other parents.

How are CAC representatives appointed?

The selection process for CAC representatives is described in each SELPA's Local Plan and will vary between SELPAs. It is ideal for CAC members to be recommended by their peers. CAC representatives must then be formally appointed by the local governing board of education (i.e., the School Board). Information about the CAC application process is available at each local SELPA office.

Why should I become an appointed member of my CAC?

CAC representatives are important advisors to the SELPA and help to shape SELPA policies, identify training needs, and provide input on local issues. Parents, teachers, administrators, and community member involvement is a vital component of an effective Special Education program.

Are CACs required for every district?

No, every district is not required to have a CAC. California Education Code requires that each Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) have a CAC. CACs may look different depending on if they are a single district SELPA, a multi-district SELPA, or a Charter School SELPA. In addition, Charter School SELPAs may differ from other SELPAs in that they may not be localized to any one geographic area but may be comprised of several individual Charter Schools in different areas of the state.

What are the California Education Code References related to the CAC and its involvement in the Local Plan?

The references to the California Education Code within this resource are updated as of 2022. The most updated references and section in its entirety can be found at the following California Legislative Information web page https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov under California Education Code, Part 30, Chapter 1, Article 1 and California Education Code, Part 30, Chapter 2, Article 7 or referenced in the sections below.

Section 56001(f) (Local Plan Development)
"Education programs are provided under an approved Local Plan for special education that sets forth the elements of the programs in accordance with this part. This plan for Special Education shall be developed cooperatively with input from the community advisory committee and appropriate representation from special and regular teachers and administrators selected by the groups they represent to ensure effective participation and communications." *(Amended by Stats. 2005, Ch. 653, Sec. 2. Effective October 7, 2005.)*

Section 56190 (Advisory Capacity)
"Each plan submitted under 56195.1 shall establish a community advisory committee. Such committee shall serve only in an advisory capacity." *(Amended by Stats. 1997, Ch. 854, Sec. 11. Effective January 1, 1998.)*

Section 56191 (CAC Appointments)
"The members of the community advisory committee shall be appointed by, and responsible to, the governing board of each participating district or county office, or any combination thereof participating in the Local Plan. Appointment shall be in accordance with a locally determined selection procedure that is described in the Local Plan. Where appropriate, this procedure shall provide for selection of representatives of groups specified in Section 56192 (see below) by their peers. Such procedure shall provide that terms of appointment are for at least two years and are annually staggered to ensure that no more than one half of the membership serves the first year of the term in any one year." *(Amended by Stats. 1981, Ch. 972, Sec. 2.)*

Section 56192 (CAC Composition)
"The community advisory committee shall be composed of parents of individuals with exceptional needs enrolled in public or private schools, parents of other pupils enrolled

in school, pupils and adults with disabilities, regular education teachers, special education teachers and other school personnel, representatives of other public and private agencies, and persons concerned with the needs of individuals with exceptional needs." *(Amended by Stats. 1992, Ch. 759, Sec. 29. Effective September 21, 1992.)*

Section 56193 (Parent Majority)
"At least the majority of such committee shall be composed of parents of pupils enrolled in schools participating in the Local Plan, and at least a majority of such parents shall be parents of individuals with exceptional needs." *(Added by Stats. 1980, Ch. 797, Sec. 9. Effective July 28, 1980.)*

Section 56194 (CAC Responsibilities)
"The community advisory committee shall have the authority and fulfill the responsibilities that are defined for it in the local plan. The responsibilities shall include, but need not be limited to, all the following:

a) Advising the policy and administrative entity of the special education local plan area regarding the development, amendment, and review of the local plan. The entity shall review and consider comments from the community advisory committee.

b) Recommending annual priorities to be addressed by the plan.

c) Assisting in parent education and in recruiting parents and other volunteers who may contribute to the implementation of the plan.

d) Encouraging community involvement in the development and review of the local plan.

e) Supporting activities on behalf of individuals with exceptional needs.

f) Assisting in parent awareness of the importance of regular school attendance.

g) Supporting community involvement in the parent advisory committee established pursuant to Section 52063 to encourage the inclusion of parents of individuals with exceptional needs to the extent these pupils also fall within one or more of the definitions in Section 42238.01. *(Amended by Stats. 2018, Ch. 32, Sec. 90. (AB 1808) Effective June 27, 2018.)*

Section 56205(b)(7) (CAC Review of Local Plan)
"Verification that the Local Plan has been reviewed by the community advisory committee and that the committee had at least 30 days to conduct this review before submission of the Local Plan to the Superintendent." *(Amended by Stats. 2018, Ch. 32, Sec. 93. (AB 1808) Effective June 27, 2018.)*

Section 56195.7(c)(2) (Regionalized Services)
"These agreements shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
(c) Regionalized services to local programs, including, but not limited to all the following:

(2) Personnel development, including training for staff, parents, and members of the community advisory committee pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with Section 56240)." *(Amended by Stats. 2005, Ch. 677, Sec. 45. Effective October 7, 2005.)*

Section 56195.9 **(Local Plan Developed/Updated by Committee)**
(a) " The plan for special education shall be developed and updated cooperatively by a committee of representatives of special and regular teachers and administrators selected by the groups they represent and with participation by parent members of the community advisory committee, or parents selected by the community advisory committee, to ensure adequate and effective participation and communication".
(b) "Commencing July 1, 2020, a special education local plan area shall review its local plan at least once every three years and update as needed to ensure information contained within the plan remains relevant and accurate. This requirement shall not be construed to change the annual budget plan, annual service plan, and annual assurances support plan requirements that are contained in Section 56205." *(Amended by Stats. 2018, Ch. 32, Sec. 92. (AB 1808) Effective June 27, 2018.)*

Section 56240 **(Participation in SELPA trainings)**
"Staff development programs shall be provided for regular and special education teachers, administrators, certificated and classified employees, volunteers, community advisory committee members and, as appropriate, members of the district and county governing boards. The programs shall be coordinated with other staff development programs in the special education Local Plan area, including school level staff development programs authorized by state and federal law." *(Amended by Stats. 2007, Ch. 56, Sec. 33. Effective January 1, 2008.)*

What is the process if a CAC or CAC Member feels they are not being given the opportunity to review the Local Plan or provide input to the SELPA on the Local Plan?

If the members of a CAC do not believe they are being given the opportunity to review the SELPA Local Plan and/or provide input into the Local Plan, the members of the CAC may file a Uniform Complaint (UCP) with the administrative unit (AU) of the SELPA or with the county office of education (COE) in which the SELPA resides. If the AU or the COE refuse to investigate the situation, then the CAC members may move to step 2. The CAC members may file a complaint to the California Department of Education, Special Education Division, Complaint Resolution Unit. The complaint may be filed via email at speceducation@cde.ca.gov or by phone by calling the help line at 800-926-0648

What is a SELPA?

In 1977, all school districts and county school offices were mandated to form consortia in geographical regions of sufficient size and scope to provide for all Special Education service needs of children residing within the region's boundaries. Each regional Special

Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) developed a Local Plan describing how it would provide Special Education services.

SELPAs are dedicated to the belief that all students can learn and that students with disabilities must be guaranteed equal opportunity to become contributing members of society. SELPAs facilitate high quality educational programs and services for students with disabilities and training for parents and educators. The SELPA collaborates with county agencies and school districts to develop and maintain healthy and enriching environments in which students with disabilities and their families can thrive and succeed.

SELPAs are responsible for assuring that the following twenty-three areas shall be the policy of the member Local Educational Agencies:

1. **Free appropriate public education:** that free appropriate public education is available to all children with disabilities residing in the LEAs between the ages of 3 and 21, inclusive, including children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school. (20 United States Code [U.S.C.] § 1412 [a][1])

2. **Full educational opportunity:** that all children with disabilities have access to educational programs, non-academic programs, and services available to non-disabled children. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][2]*)

3. **Child Find:** that all children with disabilities residing in the State, including children with disabilities who are homeless or are wards of the State and children with disabilities attending private schools, regardless of the severity of their disabilities, and who are in need of special education and related services, are identified, located, and evaluated. A practical method has been developed and implemented to determine which children with disabilities are currently receiving needed special education and related services. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][3]*)

4. **Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP):** that an IEP, or an IFSP that meets the requirements of 20 *U.S.C.* § 1436 (d), is developed, implemented, reviewed, and revised for each child with a disability who requires special education and related services in accordance with 20 *U.S.C.* § 1414 (d). It shall be the policy of our LEAs that a review of an IEP will be conducted on at least an annual basis to review a student's progress and make appropriate revisions. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][4]*)

5. **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the general educational environment, occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][5]*)

6. **Procedural Safeguards**: that children with disabilities and their parents shall be afforded all Procedural Safeguards according to state and federal laws and regulations. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][6]*)

7. **Evaluation:** that a reassessment of a child with a disability shall be conducted at least once every three years or more frequently, if appropriate. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][7]*)

8. **Confidentiality:** the confidentiality of personally identifiable data, information, and records maintained by the LEAs relating to children with disabilities and their parents and families shall be protected pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][8]*)

9. **Part C to Part B Transition**: that children participating in early intervention programs (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], Part C), and who will participate in preschool programs, experience a smooth and effective transition to those preschool programs in a manner consistent with 20 *U.S.C.* § 1437 (a)(9). The transition process shall begin prior to the child's third birthday. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][9]*)

10. **Private schools:** that children with disabilities voluntarily enrolled by their parents in private schools shall receive appropriate special education and related services pursuant to LEA-coordinated procedures. The proportionate amount of federal funds will be allocated for the purpose of providing special education services to children with disabilities voluntarily enrolled in private school by their parents. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][10]*)

11. **Local compliance assurances:** that the Local Plan shall be adopted by the appropriate local board(s) (district/county) and is the basis for the operation and administration of special education programs, and that the agencies herein represented will meet all applicable requirements of state and federal laws and regulations, including compliance with the IDEA; the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 of Public Law; and the provisions of the California *Education Code*, Part 30. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][11]*)

12. **Interagency:** that interagency agreements or other mechanisms for interagency coordination are in effect to ensure services required for free appropriate public education are provided, including the continuation of services during an interagency dispute resolution process. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][12]*)

13. **Governance:** to support and comply with the provisions of the governance bodies and any necessary administrative support to implement the Local Plan. A final determination that an LEA is not eligible for assistance under this part will not be made without first affording that LEA with reasonable notice and an opportunity for a hearing through the State Educational Agency. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][13]*)

14. **Personnel qualifications:** to ensure that personnel providing special education related services meet the highly qualified requirements as defined under federal law,

and that those personnel have the content knowledge and skills to serve children with disabilities. This policy shall not be construed to create a right of action on behalf of an individual student for the failure of a particular LEA staff person to be highly qualified or to prevent a parent from filing a State complaint with the California Department of Education (CDE) about staff qualifications. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][14]*)

15. **Performance goals and indicators:** to comply with the requirements of the performance goals and indicators developed by the CDE and provide data as required by the CDE. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][15]*)

16. **Participation in assessments:** that all students with disabilities shall participate in state and district-wide assessment programs. The IEP team determines how a student will access assessments with or without accommodations, or access alternate assessments, consistent with state standards governing such determinations. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][16]*)

17. **Supplementation of state, local, and federal funds:** to provide assurances that funds received from Part B of the IDEA will be expended in accordance with the applicable provisions of the IDEA and will be used to supplement and not to supplant state, local, and other federal funds. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][17]*)

18. **Maintenance of effort:** that federal funds will not be used to reduce the level of local funds and/or combined level of local and state funds expended for the education of children with disabilities except as provided in federal laws and regulations. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][18]*)

19. **Public participation:** that public hearings, adequate notice of the hearings, and an opportunity for comments are available to the general public, including individuals with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities, and are held prior to the adoption of any policies and/or regulations needed to comply with Part B of the IDEA. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][19]*)

20. **Suspension and expulsion**: that data on suspension and expulsion rates will be provided in a manner prescribed by the CDE. When indicated by data analysis, the LEAs further assure that policies, procedures, and practices related to the development and implementation of the IEPs will be revised. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][22]*)

21. **Access to instructional materials:** to provide instructional materials to blind students or other students with print disabilities in a timely manner according to the state-adopted National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][23]*)

22. **Overidentification and disproportionality:** to prevent the inappropriate overidentification or disproportionate representation by race and ethnicity of children as children with disabilities. (*20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][24]*)

23. **Prohibition on mandatory medicine:** to prohibit school personnel from requiring a student to obtain a prescription for a substance covered by the Controlled Substances Act as a condition of attending school or receiving a special education assessment and/or services. *(20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][25])*

SELPA General Reporting Responsibilities

SELPAs submit special education data and service information to CDE annually. SELPAs submit an Annual Service Plan to CDE by June 30th of each year as part of the annual submission components of the SELPA Local Plan. SELPAs also submit special education data to CDE via the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS). These CALPADS submissions include information pertaining to the enrollment, special education, and student services records of students with disabilities.

SELPAs also submit a budget plan and fiscal reports to CDE annually. SELPAs submit an Annual Budget Plan to CDE by June 30th of each year as part of the annual submission components of the SELPA Local Plan. Throughout the year, SELPAs submit a variety of fiscal reports, such as Federal IDEA Expenditure Reports, Excess Cost Calculation, and Special Education Maintenance of Effort Reports, to name a few. For additional information about these reports, refer to your SELPAs website which can be found at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp or contact your SELPA Administrator.

SECTION 2:
CAC RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

How do SELPAs and CACs work together?

The CAC is a required committee of the SELPA governance structure. The tasks of the CAC are many and varied. The CAC and SELPA work together to develop a yearly CAC plan of activities. Members of the CAC, SELPA, districts, community, and parents may be involved in the development or review of the CAC plan. The planning process may include brainstorming sessions, contacts with other CACs, and soliciting suggestions from the local administrators, staff, and parents.

The SELPA provides logistical and fiscal supports to CACs. It is a local decision on how the SELPA provides these supports. It is highly encouraged that CACs work with the SELPA Administrator and SELPA member Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to identify logistical and fiscal supports that will assist the CAC in implementing its activities. It is worth noting that there is no education code requiring SELPAs to provide a budget for CAC activities and it may be necessary for CACs to prioritize activities given available resources. Some examples of how SELPAs provide logistical and fiscal supports include, but not limited to the following: creating informational and training flyers for CAC, providing translators during events and trainings, translating CAC documents into other languages needed in the community, and providing in-house presenters on special education topics requested by CAC.

The following are a few examples of ways SELPAs have collaborated to provide CAC support:

- Training the CAC and parents (including location and operational needs)

- Access to administrative staff

- Access to connect with parents to assess parent education needs.

- Resources to support the provisions of trainings.

- Access to SELPA/District calendars of activities

- Ability to post information on the CAC webpage.

- Access to SELPA /District communication methods.

- Access to information about community, district, and statewide disability activities

- Access to information about community and statewide disability related award opportunities (CCE, ACSE, ACSA etc.)

What are the CAC's Responsibilities?

The CAC's responsibilities are specified in the SELPA's Local Plan and in Education Code. There are seven general areas of responsibility for the CAC outlined under EC 56194, items (a) through (g).

ARTICLE 7. Community Advisory Committee [56190 - 56194]
56194. *The community advisory committee shall have the authority and fulfill the responsibilities that are defined for it in the local plan. The responsibilities shall include, but need not be limited to, all the following:*

(a) *Advising the policy and administrative entity of the special education local plan area regarding the development, amendment, and review of the local plan. The entity shall review and consider comments from the community advisory committee.*

(b) *Recommending annual priorities to be addressed by the plan.*

(c) *Assisting in parent education and in recruiting parents and other volunteers who may contribute to the implementation of the plan.*

(d) *Encouraging community involvement in the development and review of the local plan.*

(e) *Supporting activities on behalf of individuals with exceptional needs.*

(f) *Assisting in parent awareness of the importance of regular school attendance.*

(g) *Supporting community involvement in the parent advisory committee established pursuant to Section 52063 to encourage the inclusion of parents of individuals with exceptional needs to the extent these pupils also fall within one or more of the definitions in Section 42238.01.*

(Amended by Stats. 2018, Ch. 32, Sec. 90. (AB 1808) Effective June 27, 2018.)

CACs may choose to become involved in additional activities. A list of the general areas of responsibility along with examples of possible activities and possible supports for each area of responsibility are included in this section. Information and access to participate in the CAC and related activities should be made available in English and additional languages as needed.

The list of activities and support contained in this section is a non-exhaustive list. We encourage CACs to further conduct research and work with their SELPA Administrator when exploring such activities and supports.

1. **Advise the Local Plan development, amendment, and review process** (EC 56194,(a))
   The California Education Code states that CACs should "advise the policy and administrative entity of the SELPA on the development, amendment and review of the Local Plan". The Local Plan process may vary between SELPAs. The CACs role in this process will vary and depend upon the status of the Local Plan if it is being reviewed, amended, or developed. The Local Plan is the blueprint of Special Education programs and services offered in a SELPA. It is the central document submitted to CDE by a SELPA, by which the CAC and Special Education programs exist and function, meeting the requirements of Education Code.

   Examples of Possible Activities:

   - Discuss a Local Plan review and make recommendations to ensure currency and that the plan adheres to the guidelines and includes the required components

   - Facilitate organization and recruitment of committee members (parents, community members, and district staff) assigned to review the plan

   - Invite key district staff to CAC meetings to discuss all parts of the Local Plan to provide a more complete understanding of the entire Special Education system

   - Establish annual goals relative to implementation of the Local Plan

   Examples of Possible Supports:

   - Logistical support (i.e., involving organization and planning)

   - Assistance with supplies

   - Resource support, such as photocopying and mailing costs

   If the CAC is to recommend annual priorities to be addressed by the Local Plan, then it must commit the time and energy necessary to evaluate the current Local Plan and perform responsibly. To do this, the CAC must have information about Special Education programs and services within the SELPA, district(s) or county. This could be accomplished through different activities, such as discussions and presentations at CAC meetings, parent/teacher surveys, interviews of administrative staff, site visits, and or CAC-sponsored activities.

   While every existing SELPA has a Local Plan in place already, the state requires that districts re-evaluate and update their Local Plans when there are significant changes needed. This does not, however, limit the CAC's opportunity to review and recommend changes to the Local Plan each year. There are portions of the Local Plan that are annual events that the CAC can provide input on, such as the Annual Budget Plan and Annual Services Plan.

The signature of the CAC chairperson on the Local Plan indicates to the CDE that the CAC was given at least 30 days to review the Local Plan before submitting it to the California Department of Education.

The effectiveness of a CAC lies in the member's understanding of its mandate, collaborative communication skills, and a commitment to promote appropriate Special Education programs and services. This commitment and responsible implementation of duties will cultivate respect and empower the CAC as a valuable resource and vehicle for information dissemination in the SELPA.

To achieve optimal results, the SELPA and CAC will collaborate in such a way that:

- CAC members are familiar with the contents of the Local Plan
- There is parent and community involvement in reviewing, adding, and rewriting the Local Plan
- CACs are knowledgeable about Special Education programs and services within the SELPA, district(s) or county
- The Local Plan review process is scheduled to allow sufficient time for thoughtful CAC review
- Resources are provided to support the Local Plan review process

2. **Recommend a list of program priorities to be addressed by the SELPA.** (EC 56194,(b))
A CAC has the authority to accomplish specific responsibilities. The primary responsibility of the CAC is to advise the Governing Board of the SELPA. In addition, they can report back to the Local Educational Agency Governing Board(s). In order to be effective representatives, CAC members will need information about special education programs, services, and resources to provide constructive advice. Training for CAC members should include information about state monitoring activities and other special education performance reports.

Examples of Possible Activities:

- Establish committees to explore issues relevant to annual goals
- Arrange for speakers on topics of interest
- Provide training about state monitoring activities and other special education performance reports
- Assign a CAC member or subcommittee to provide updates on legislation affecting Special Education programs.
- Present the program priorities annually or on an ongoing basis

Examples of Possible Supports:

- Logistical support (i.e., involving organization and planning)
- Access to information on legislation

- Connection to local parent support organizations

- Collaborative relationship with local Special Education administrator(s)

3. **Parent education and recruitment** (EC 56194,(c))
The SELPA and local districts are responsible for training the CAC and providing training opportunities for parents. CACs identify their own education and training needs and request specific trainings from the SELPA. SELPAs and CACs work together to identify and provide parent education offerings (e.g., co-sponsor workshops, task force participation on specific issues and other training activities). In any needs assessment process, CAC representatives have a responsibility to include representation from all parents in their district; this requires an ability to reach parents in the district with SELPA support and assistance. CACs and SELPAs must be mindful of policies around disclosing directory information and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), more information can be found at the CDE FERPA Summary web page www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ed/dataprivacyferpa.asp

Examples of Possible Activities:

- Facilitate parent training on Special Education programs, issues, rights, and responsibilities, leadership development, supporting parent involvement, collaborative decision-making skills, and other topics as identified by the CAC.

- Invite parents to school/district/county trainings as available.

- Participate in electronic communication (e.g., cable television systems, teleconferences, satellite training, Webinars, online platforms such as Skype, GoTo Meeting, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.).

- Develop or access a parent library (e.g., Special Education related books, resources, etc.).

- Attend, staff a booth or table, or sponsor conferences, back to school nights, film festivals, fairs, special awards, and other outreach events.

- Actively support local Parent Teacher Associations, community agencies, teacher associations and parent groups to broaden the information base regarding CACs and Special Education.

- Participate in site and/or district committees that discuss issues for all students and provide them with a perspective on the needs of students with disabilities, as appropriate.

- Share information about conferences, workshops and trainings presented by other organizations.

- Develop and distribute a local SELPA CAC Handbook.

- Recognize staff, parents, and community members with special awards.

Examples of Possible Supports:

- Logistical support (i.e., involving organization and planning)

- Assistance in disseminating information to assess the parent education needs in the district(s).
- Resources to fund/support the provisions of trainings.

4. **Encourage community involvement** (EC 56194,(d))
CAC representatives provide an important link between the SELPA and other parents within the district(s). They can be instrumental in encouraging and supporting other parents to become involved in the CAC. When CAC representatives are able to effectively assess parent needs, they can assist the SELPA in the selection and implementation of training, meetings, and other forms of communication for the benefit of all.

   Examples of Possible Activities:
   - Contact local media and community agencies about the CAC, current Special Education issues, speakers, and meeting schedules.
   - Distribute information about activities and plans to the local board of education at a public meeting.
   - Support ability awareness activities such as Disability Pride Month and Special Olympics.
   - Assist in recruiting volunteers for classrooms and CAC activities.
   - Hold fund-raisers to support activities.

   Examples of Possible Supports:
   - Logistical support (i.e., involving organization and planning)
   - Parent education needs in the district(s).
   - SELPA/district calendar of activities
   - Ability to have information posted on SELPA/district website/CAC webpage
   - SELPA/district communication channels (e.g., auto dialer, email blasts, SELPA/district/ school newsletters and social media*)

   *School Districts and SELPAs have specific guidelines regarding social media. Please check with your School District and/or SELPA before posting any information regarding your CAC on social media.

5. **Support activities on behalf of individuals with disabilities** (EC 56194,(e))
Coming together as a collaborative team with the common interest in providing support to and/or activities on behalf of individuals with disabilities can be very powerful. The contributions and different perspectives of a parent of a child with a disability, a teacher, a support provider, and/or a school administrator can enhance opportunities for persons with a disability to be an active and integrated member of the community.

Examples of Possible Activities:

- Establish a Special Education information network linking all groups in Special Education and publicize all events through the school system and other community agencies or organizations.

- Create a process to gather and share information on Special Education areas of concern and success.

- Sponsor parent/staff recognition events to recognize people who have contributed to making a difference for people with disabilities.

- Participate in disability and advocacy events (ADA Celebration, Disability History Week, Ability Awareness activities).

Examples of Possible Support:

- Logistical support (i.e., involving organization and planning)

- Access to information about community, district and statewide disability activities

- Access to information about community, district and statewide disability related award opportunities (For example, Council on Exceptional Children, Interagency Coordinating Council on Early Intervention, Advisory Commission on Special Education (ACSE), GOAL Award, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) state and regional awards, local SELPA and district recognition events)

6. **Increase public awareness of the importance of regular school attendance** (EC 56194,(f))
Students are more likely to succeed in academics and reach their goals when they attend school consistently. It is difficult for students to build skills and progress when they are frequently absent. In many states, school budgets are based on the average daily attendance at a school. If many students enrolled at a school fail to consistently attend, the school has less money to pay for essential classroom needs. The School Attendance Review Boards (SARB) are composed of school and community members who meet regularly to diagnose and resolve persistent student attendance or behavior problems. California compulsory education law requires everyone between the ages of six and eighteen years of age to attend school, except sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds who have graduated from high school or passed the California High School Proficiency Exam (CHSPE) and obtained parental permission to leave. Absenteeism is an ongoing challenge many schools face, the CAC can make an impact by providing and sharing insight, suggestions, and resources.

Examples of Possible Activities:

- Distribute policy statements related to school attendance.

- Assist parents and educators in the development of strategies to improve school attendance.

- Support local family engagement activities for parents and students to enhance attendance and participation in school activities.

- Attend to trends/districtwide concerns about Special Education programs to ensure every child receives educational benefit.

- Inform parents about the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) process.

- Provide training to SARB panel members about the impact of disability on school attendance.

Examples of Possible Support:

- Logistical support (i.e., involving organization and planning)

- Training and sharing resources

7. **Supporting community involvement in the parent advisory committee** (EC 56194,(g))
Support community involvement to encourage the inclusion of parents of students with disabilities in Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) parent advisory committees and LCAP English Learners parent advisory committees as used in (*EC*) sections 52063 and 52069

Examples of Possible Activities:

- Inform parents of activities occurring related to the LCAP

- Increase awareness of additional opportunities for parents to participate.

- Encourage participants to present and share their experience

- Invite representatives of parent advisory committees to present at CAC meetings

Examples of Possible Support:

- Logistical support (i.e., involving organization and planning)

- Sharing meeting agendas

- Coordinating communication with other related parent advisory committees

SECTION 3:
EFFECTIVE CACs

A CAC unites parents and professionals, general and special educators, agency personnel, and other community members in a common effort to ensure that children with disabilities receive an appropriate education in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Effective CACs require the same collaborative spirit that is necessary between school personnel and families as they partner in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. CACs can help model and encourage successful partnerships that will benefit students, parents, and the SELPA. CACs are continually evolving as legislation changes, Local Plans may be revised, and communities continue to grow and change. Effective parent-professional collaboration will strengthen the CAC.

Benefits of a CAC

- Serves as a resource for information and ideas to facilitate areas such as personnel development, program planning, parent/professional training, and Local Plan development /revisions.

- Promotes cooperation and participation with community agencies, parent organizations, and advocacy groups. Parents/professionals provide community support to administration, local school boards, and the legislature.

- Provides parents/professionals with ongoing opportunities to build trust, raise questions, express concerns, share common interests, and enhance collaboration.

- Encourages parents/professionals to work together more effectively develop relationships and establish connections.

- Provides parents/professionals with an opportunity for personal growth, training, skill building, and leadership development opportunities.

- Provides parents/professionals with access to students, staff, and administration regarding needs, concerns, and opinions for personnel development, and parent/professional training.

- Disseminates information regarding programs, services, and resources.

- Facilitates parent/professional access to education decision makers and input into the decision-making process.

- Assists parents/professionals in better understanding the SELPA, LEA, and Special Education system process and requirements.

- Provides opportunities for parent/professionals to develop and share creative ideas for the benefit of all children, making a difference in the system.

Suggestions for CAC Parent/Professional Trainings and Projects

Some of the parent/professional trainings and projects that have been successfully completed by CACs are included on the following list. You may wish to contact your SELPA, Regional Center, Family Empowerment Center, Parent Training and Information Center, California Community Parent Resource Center, Family Resource Center, or Center for Parent Information & Resources to find out if you might be able to partner with their agency in parent/professional training activities or request assistance in identifying a presenter or other resource. The needs assessment described in Section 5, may be helpful in assisting to determine what topics areas are of the most interest.

The list of agencies and resources contained in this section is a non-exhaustive list. It is recognized that there may be other resources that will be helpful to CACs. We encourage CACs to further conduct research and work with their SELPA Administrator when exploring such resources.

Example Topics for Possible Parent/Professional Trainings

- 504 Plans and IEPs; What's the difference?
- Ability awareness
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
- Agencies and organizations
- Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)
- Assistive Technology
- Behavior management strategies for assisting parents
- Community resources
- Conservatorship
- Disability specific trainings (parent, student, and teacher perspectives)
- Educational Benefit
- Educational services versus medical model (i.e., Occupational/Physical Therapy, Speech, etc.)
- Effective collaboration and communication
- Equity and Social Justice
- Evidenced Based
- Family Engagement in education
- How to use information from evaluations/assessments
- How to write meaningful and effective IEP goals
- Inclusion/Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

- Informed/empowered parents (empowering parents in the IEP process)
- Leadership Training
- Legislative process
- The impact of nutrition on educational outcomes
- Local Plan
- Medications in school
- Mental Health
- Middle School to High School transition
- Models of Learning
- Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS): Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI2), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Office of Administrative Hearing – due process
- Parent Panel
- Parent Portfolio Notebook
- Resilience (manage stress, well-being, grieving process)
- Responsible children (self-help skills)
- Secondary Transition Planning (including community partners such as Department of Rehabilitation, Regional Center, Social Security Administration, Workability)
- Self-determination and self-advocacy
- Sensory processing disorders
- Sibling Support
- Social Skills
- Special Education Laws (general information, parent roles and responsibilities)
- Teen Sexuality
- Transitioning from Elementary School to Middle School/Middle School to High School
- Transitioning to Adulthood
- Transportation
- Trauma Informed Practices
- Universal Design for Learning
- What is a SELPA?

Examples of Possible CAC Projects

- Ability awareness (Disability History Week) (schoolwide/districtwide)
- Auto dial/robocall announcement scripts (to share information on conferences, meetings, trainings)
- CAC brochure
- CAC meetings/trainings broadcast to outlying locations (e.g., cable TV systems, teleconferences, satellite training, Skype, webinar, go to meeting, Zoom)
- CAC newsletter (electronic or hard copy)
- CAC resource directory
- Educational/Medical/Records Student Binder
- Family Fun Day
- Fundraising Events
- Inclusive Sports Day
- Input on CAC related content on the SELPA website
- Needs Assessment survey (for training, issues, resources)
- Outreach at fairs and other public events
- Parent Directory to identify areas of expertise and facilitate contacts
- Parent Handbook (parent's rights & responsibilities, IEP forms, contact info)
- Parent information videos or materials on various topics (i.e., IEP process, transition, etc.)
- Provide info for electronic newsletters
- Recognition Awards for Educators, Students, Parents, Community Members, etc.
- Resource Directory
- Resource Fair
- Trained parent mentor programs

SECTION 4:
COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL CACs

This section lists components that contribute to an effective and successful CAC.

- **Action Plans:** An action plan becomes a road map for a CAC to follow, as it moves from where it is, to where it wants to go. Completing a Needs Assessment can be an important part in the development of an Action Plan.

- **Adherence to the Ralph M. Brown Act**: All organizations that receive public funds must conduct open meetings which mean they may be attended by all interested parties. The [Ralph M. Brown Act](Government Code sections 54950-54963) referred to as the "Brown Act") is intended to provide public access to meetings of California Local government agencies. In order to achieve this objective, governmental bodies subject to the requirements of the Brown Act must provide public notice of their meetings, post agendas of the subjects to be discussed at those meetings and provide public access to those meetings. Public notice of every meeting subject to the Brown Act is required, and access is mandatory unless the meeting is held in closed session under a specific exception contained in the Act.

- **Agendas:** An agenda is a guide for a meeting of the content that will be addressed. It provides for events and activities to happen in a scheduled and timely manner, with a beginning and an end. It provides all CAC participants with an understanding of the length of the meeting. Build time in agendas to address public concerns. SELPA Director and CAC Chair may develop meeting agendas together and identify resources needed to address each agenda item. If too many items are listed on the agenda, reschedule those that are low priority and can be addressed at a future meeting. A lengthy meeting does not necessarily equate to a productive meeting.

- **Annual Activities:** An annual calendar for a CAC available to all members is helpful in planning the activities throughout the year and creating timelines. There are often activities that occur at the beginning and end of each year as well as annually and monthly. Section 5 includes addition examples of Annual Activities.

- **Bylaws:** Bylaws are rules an organization or group agrees to follow. They promote the efficient functioning of the CAC and can be as simple or as complex as the group chooses.

- **Collaboration/Team Building:** The most important thing that CACs do is communicate. They communicate with parents, professionals, administrators, politicians, and anyone else having anything to do with helping them to meet their goals. Effective CACs build skills together as a team in order to effectively meet the needs of their members and better serve students with disabilities. Some resources are included in Section 5.

- **Committees and Subcommittees:** Committees help CACs share the work and allow participants to work on their areas of interest and expertise. Committees might address Local Plan review, membership, and parent education. A list of examples of possible committees and subcommittees is included in Section 5.

- **Conflict Resolution:** Disagreements or conflicts can occur within CACs between two people or groups of people because of differences in personality, values, opinion, intolerance, misunderstandings, history of past conflict, lack of trust, etc.. It can be extremely difficult for the affected groups to find common ground and build alliances to change the system and reduce or eliminate the divisions. Resolving conflicts takes time, patience, a commitment to the shared outcome, a willingness to work together, and perhaps a shift in mindset. Many of the strategies that are a part of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process could be useful in reducing and resolving conflicts that may arise within your CAC.

- **Decision-Making:** While CACs are *advisory* bodies to their governance, it is important to be familiar with various decision-making processes to establish advice that will be helpful to the development of items specific to the responsibilities of the SELPA. Successful CACs attend to the needs of the group and utilize effective group process methods such as consensus building, brainstorming, active listening, recording, reviewing, etc. to guide the Committee. Some ideas and examples are included in Section 5.

- **Duties of Members:** A general list of member duties should be included in the CAC bylaws. It is important for members to have a broad knowledge base and the ability to represent *all* children with disabilities. A list of suggested duties may be found in Section 5.

- **Duties of Officers:** A delineation of duties helps a CAC to run smoothly, avoiding overlapping roles and responsibilities and ensuring that all tasks are completed. Duties of the officers should be listed and included in the CAC bylaws. A list of suggested duties may be found in Section 5.

- **Handbook:** A locally developed CAC Handbook will provide members with information about the operation of the local SELPA, CAC, and resources. A list of possible items for inclusion in a local CAC Handbook is included in Section 5.

- **Individual Issues:** The public comment/input portion of a CAC meeting may often include parents bringing individual issues forward to the committee. Although the purpose of the CAC meeting is not to resolve individual issues and it is not the role of the CAC meeting facilitator to solve individual issues, listening to these types of individual issues may be informative for future agenda and training topics. CAC meeting facilitators should be prepared to assist parents with individual concerns to locate the appropriate forum to have their concerns addressed. This may include a referral to the district or SELPA, a Parent Training Information Center, Community Parent Resource Center, Family Empowerment Center, or Early Start Family Resource Center.

- **Leadership Training:** Encouraging CAC member participation in training and leadership skills development can lead to highly effective CACs.

- **Maintaining Confidentiality:** CAC meetings are open to the public, maintaining respect for the privacy of individual families and children should be emphasized.

- **Membership Recruitment and Retention:** Recruiting new members is an important and ongoing task. Many CACs gather information regarding CAC members through an application type of membership form. One of the benefits of these forms is that they help to identify CAC members' talents and connections throughout the community. Providing an orientation for new members is also a helpful practice. CAC appointments are described in *Education Code Section* 56191.

- **Minutes of Meetings:** Meeting minutes are notes that are recorded during a meeting to capture a record of what occurred during the meeting. They highlight key issues discussed, motions proposed or voted on, and activities to be undertaken. The minutes of a meeting are usually taken by a designated member of the group.

- **Mission Statement:** A mission statement is a summary of the purpose of a group including what the group expects to accomplish. A mission statement supports the overall purpose of the organization, provides for common direction, criteria for evaluating long- and short-term decisions, and provides direction for setting strategic, operational, and improvement goals.

- **Needs Assessment:** An annual needs assessment is helpful in identifying what the most important needs are of a particular group. It can provide a snapshot into the current interests and needs of those the CAC represents and serves. This can be a great way to include input from parents and educators into the CAC planning of the action plans and activities.

- **Open Forum Policy:** This is a policy that may be adopted by your CAC to provide anyone with an interest in Special Education the opportunity to ask questions, express concerns, or opinions, share information, and bring matters to the attention of the members of the CAC. If the CAC adopts this policy, it usually establishes a "limited timeframe agenda item" with the requirement that this time is to discuss issues of general interest and not to be used to address and solve individual issues.

- **Social Media and Outreach:** Sharing information about the CAC and upcoming meetings and events is important throughout the year and can be accomplished in a variety of ways using websites, applications, newsletters, etc.. CACs develop expectations, practices and agreements that are consistent with their local SELPA and district policies related to outreach and an online presence. School Districts and SELPAs have specific guidelines regarding social media. Please check with your School District and/or SELPA before posting any information regarding your CAC on social media.

- **Self-Review:** Regular evaluation of the CAC is helpful to ensure a vital, active organization that effectively meets the needs of its constituency and achieves its goals. A self-review that will ensure the fulfillment of duties and offer insight from the members on where improvements or adjustments need to be made. Often, the self-review involves each member of the CAC being given an opportunity to answer questions relative to their involvement in the Committee.

- **Transparent Meeting Format:** It is critical that meeting participants are informed about and understand how the CAC meetings are run and any expectations, roles and responsibilities of those in attendance. There should be a formal agenda item to discuss issues of public concerns, this is often noted and outlined within an open forum policy.

Using these best practices as guidance as you outline the components and structure of your CAC will help members fulfill the duties given to them as outlined in the California Education Code.

SECTION 5: IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICES

There are several components to a successful CAC, finding the best ways to implement those components takes teamwork, time, and evaluation of your efforts. In Section 4 a list of effective successful components was shared. In this section, we take a more in depth look at the following areas and highlight examples that may be helpful for your team to consider.

- Agenda and Meeting Minutes

- Annual Activities

- Bylaws

- Collaboration/Team Building

- Committees and Subcommittees

- Conflict Resolution

- Decision-Making

- Duties of Members

- Duties of Officers

- Handbook

- Membership Recruitment and Retention

- Needs Assessment

- Public Access/Public Input/Open Forum Policy

- Self-Review

- Social Media

Agenda and Meeting Minutes

An agenda communicates to attendees that the meeting will be conducted in an orderly fashion and that productivity is the goal. An agenda can ensure that the meeting stays on track and that special projects and routine operations proceed as intended. An agenda can help a group function as an effective team. Agendas are set by the CAC Chair and the SELPA Director with input from the committee. All CAC Board meetings are required to follow Ralph M. Brown Act regulations.

Examples of Possible Agenda Items:

- Approval items (meeting minutes, agenda, yearly calendar)

- SELPA Administrator Update

- CAC Chair Update

- Updates from each District's Special Education Administrator

- Special Committee reports

- Local Plan elements (Annual Budget Report, Annual Service Plan)

- Legislative Update

- Parent Education Calendar

- Annual New Member Voting Activities

Sample CAC Agendas can be found on many of the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) websites. A list of the websites may be found at the following web page: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp. A few examples of SELPA websites with posted agendas include:

- SELPA North Santa Cruz County CAC Agendas Sample

- Solano County SELPA Sample

- Los Angeles Unified School District

Meeting minutes are notes that are recorded during a meeting to capture a record of what occurred during the meeting. They highlight key issues discussed, motions proposed or voted on, and activities to be undertaken. The minutes of a meeting are usually taken by a designated member of the group.

Annual Activities

An Annual calendar for a CAC might include some or all, of the following activities:

Sample Timeline of Activities/Events/Projects for the CAC
As the start and end dates for individual school districts vary throughout the state, the following activities are stated in general terms such as beginning of the school year, monthly, etc. so that each CAC can adapt the plan to match their local program calendar.

Annually: (Completed early in the year or toward the end)

- Determine goals for the current and/or upcoming year

- Plan trainings for next year

- Revise and reprint CAC brochure

- Draw up budget for coming year, if applicable

- Accept new members; forward names of all CAC members to district school board(s) for approval as specified in the bylaws

- Prepare CAC notebooks/binders/handbook for CAC members

- Plan for orientation of new CAC members

- Plan and hold excellence awards ceremony (notify winners, principals, specialists)

- Appoint Nominating Committee for CAC officers

- Meet with other CAC chairs in the region

- Develop and vote on slate of officers

- Install new officers

- Develop draft final report and present to CAC for comment

- Present final report of CAC activities to applicable governing council/board

Beginning of School Year:

- Conduct annual orientation for new CAC members

- Distribute CAC brochure as widely as possible (to parents and teachers) Send brochure with cover letter to board, principals, media community organizations, agencies.

- Post widely to applicable websites/social media platforms (school, district, SELPA, FEC, PTI, Regional Centers) *School Districts and SELPAs have specific guidelines regarding social media. Please check with your School District and/or SELPA before posting any information regarding your CAC on social media.

- Utilize electronic options (ConnectEd, listservs, etc.) to distribute CAC meeting information as widely as possible.

- Participate in Back-to-School activities, PTA meetings, School Site Council meetings, etc.

- Plan parent education events (School Board Candidates" Forum for example)

- Plan agenda for first CAC meeting (consider Local Plan, recruitment, and policy review) This should be completed before the first meeting.

Monthly:

- Plan agenda for next month's CAC meeting

- Plan parent education event

- Solicit new members for the CAC

- Accept new members, forward names of all CAC members to board for approval

- Provide an opportunity for Public Input

End of School Year:

- Solicit suggestions for next year's CAC goals and activities.

- Present certificates/gifts to outgoing CAC members

Bylaws

Bylaws are the rules an organization such as a CAC agrees to follow. Bylaws promote smooth and efficient functioning of the committee. These components are standard with most organizations and are often adapted for individual CACs. The Bylaws example may be used to create, review, revise and amend existing bylaws. Sample CAC Bylaws can be found on many of the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) websites. A list of the websites may be found at the following web page: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp..

Suggested items to include in CAC Bylaws:

I. **IDENTIFICATION**

    A. **Name of the Organization:** *(include name)*

    B. **Districts Served:** *(include districts and area served)*

    C. **Statement of Purpose:** (*keep the CAC legislative mandate in mind*)

II. **RESPONSIBILITIES** *(example content)*

    A. **Community Advisory Committee California Education Code 56194 states:** The community advisory committee shall have the authority and fulfill the responsibilities that are defined for it in the local plan. The responsibilities shall include, but need not be limited to, all the following:

        a) Advising the policy and administrative entity of the special education local plan area regarding the development, amendment, and review of the local plan. The entity shall review and consider comments from the community advisory committee.

        b) Recommending annual priorities to be addressed by the plan.

        c) Assisting in parent education and in recruiting parents and other volunteers who may contribute to the implementation of the plan.

        d) Encouraging community involvement in the development and review of the local plan.

        e) Supporting activities on behalf of individuals with exceptional needs.

        f) Assisting in parent awareness of the importance of regular school attendance.

        g) Supporting community involvement in the parent advisory committee established pursuant to Section 52063 to encourage the inclusion of parents of individuals with exceptional needs to the extent these pupils also fall within one or more of the definitions in Section 42238.01

III. RULES OF ORDER

A. **Ralph M. Brown Act** Government Code sections 54950-54963, often referred to as the "Brown Act."

B. **Open forum policy** *(include details of the policy)*

C. **Voting** *(state the number of CAC Board Members for a quorum).*

IV. MEETING SCHEDULE

A. **Regular meetings** *(indicate the number of meetings per year, this is a local decision based on need, describe the manner of notification)*

B. **Special meeting** *(specify when special meetings may be called, by whom, and for what purpose, describe the manner of notification).*

V. CAC OFFICERS

A. **Structure**: *(example content)*
CA Education Code 56192 states: The community advisory committee shall be composed of parents of individuals with exceptional needs enrolled in public or private schools, parents of other pupils enrolled in school, pupils and adults with disabilities, regular education teachers, special education teachers and other school personnel, representatives of other public and private agencies, and persons concerned with the needs of individuals with exceptional needs.

B. **Nomination and Appointment:** *(example content)*
The members of the community advisory committee shall be appointed by, and responsible to, the governing board of each participating district or county office, or any combination thereof participating in the local plan. Appointment shall be in accordance with a locally determined selection procedure that is described in the local plan. Where appropriate, this procedure shall provide for selection of representatives of groups specified in Section 56192 by their peers. *(In this section consider including the following)*

   1. *How are officers nominated?*
   2. *When are elections held?*
   3. *What are the conditions of removal from office?*

C. **Terms of Appointment:** *(example content)*
CA Education Code 56191 states: Such procedure shall provide that terms of appointment are for at least two years and are annually staggered to ensure that no more than one half of the membership serves the first year of the term in any one year. *(In this section consider including the following)*

   1. How long will the officers serve?

D. **Vacancies:** *(example content)*
(In this section consider including the following)

   1. How are vacancies filled?

E. **Duties of Officers:** *(list officers by title and duties, as applicable)*
Examples of suggested officers include:

1. **Chairperson:** *(add duties)*
2. **Vice- Chairperson:** *(add duties)*
3. **Secretary:** *(add duties)*
4. **Treasurer** *(add duties)*
5. **Member at Large:** *(add duties)*

VI. **MEMBERSHIP**

A. **Membership Composition:** *(example content)*
The community advisory committee shall be composed of parents of individuals with exceptional needs enrolled in public or private schools, parents of other pupils enrolled in school, pupils and adults with disabilities, regular education teachers, special education teachers and other school personnel, representatives of other public and private agencies, and persons concerned with the needs of individuals with exceptional needs. (CA Education Code 56192)

B. **Types of Membership:** *(example content)*

1. Eligibility *(who may be a member)*
2. Types of membership *(such as voting, nonvoting, active, honorary, student)*

C. **Member Resignation and Reinstatement Procedures** *(include description of process)*

D. **Duties of Members**: *(include general duties of the CAC membership)*

VII. **CAC COMMITTEES**

A. *(describe the types of committees)*

VIII. **DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION**

A. *(describe how information will be disseminated)*

IX. **AMENDMENTS**

A. *(describe process of how bylaws are amended; number of members needed to pass bylaw changes; amount and type of notice of proposed changes; if voting must be conducted at a meeting or can be conducted by mail)*

Collaboration, Partnerships, and Team Building

The CAC is comprised of parents, educators, and other interested community members. Collaboration among these members is critical, in order to work together to meet the required responsibilities and accomplish the identified goals related to increasing student access, inclusion, equity, learning, and achievement. Collaboration is an ever-changing, ongoing process. It requires agreements about expectations, a willingness to be open to perspectives different from one's own, shared ideas, and a commitment to work together toward the goals of the committee.

Part of enhancing collaboration is engaging in team building activities and partnerships. Team building is the process of strengthening the bonds between members of a group for the purpose of more efficiently achieving the groups goals. As a formal advisory committee, the most relatable team building activities include a focus on getting to know each other and participating together at a school or district event where members are able to interact outside of a formal meeting structure. CACs have the opportunity to extend this collaboration and team building to their community agency partners such as Early Start Family Resource Centers (ESFRC), Family Empowerment Centers (FEC), Parent Training & Information Centers (PTI), Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRC), Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), and many other programs that have a focus on serving students and families.

Examples of websites that offer team building ideas, resources, information, and activities:

- *Team Building Portal* www.teambuildingportal.com
  A free resource rich site for organizations and teams which highlights articles, books, team games.

- Teampedia - Tools for Teams www.teampedia.net
  A collaborative encyclopedia of free team building activities, ice breakers, teamwork resources and tools for teams to facilitate teamwork, teambuilding, and community

Committees and Subcommittees

Committees and Subcommittees help CACs share the work and allow participants to work on their areas of interest and expertise. They might be long or short term and address a variety of areas such as the Local Plan review, membership, and parent education. Below is a list of examples of possible committees and subcommittees that CACs might find helpful in the completion of their duties.

Examples of Standing Committees

Local Plan Review Committee
- Will stay informed about SELPA programs, review the Local Plan, and keep the community informed regarding pertinent legislation.

- Will elicit comments from the community regarding the programs and the Local Plan and will be involved in developing and amending the Local Plan.

Membership and Publicity/Outreach Committee
- Will be responsible for recruiting membership that reflects the community that the SELPA serves.

- Will provide CAC orientation packets and application forms to interested persons.

- Will stay in contact with the CAC secretary and directors regarding vacancies, members' terms of office, and so forth.

- Will ensure that membership stays in accordance with the CAC bylaws and the California Education Code.

- Will provide the media with information regarding the CAC and its activities.

- Will utilize social networking and web-based applications to reach families and interested community members

Parent and Community Education Committee
- Will assist with in-service activities, parent education, and encourage parent awareness.

- Will assist in educating the community about individuals with disabilities through newspapers, newsletters, and other media.

- Will assist with organizing and developing newsletters, CAC parent handbook, CAC needs assessments, and so forth.

Personnel Development/Program Needs Committee

- Will assist the district(s) in gathering information on programs in the community and the needs of students, parents, teachers, and school personnel.

- Will provide input to the local district and SELPA on program and personnel, including perspectives on cultural competence, equity, diversity, inclusion, etc.

- Will recommend annual SELPA priorities.

Examples of Subcommittees

Least Restrictive Environment Subcommittee
- General Education and Special Education interfacing to recommend LRE and inclusion policies and procedures.

- Provide administrators, teachers, and parents with in-service on the value of integration practices for all students, accountability, and best educational practices.

Accessibility and Safety Subcommittee
- Monitor and support accessibility in schools at all levels.

- Work with school partners to ensure a safe school environment

Finance Subcommittee
- Monitor, review, and report on the Annual Budget Plan

Nonpublic School Subcommittee
- Work with the SELPA to ensure that individuals in nonpublic schools receive information provided by the CAC regarding in-services, parent trainings, handbooks, and so forth.

Parent Support Subcommittee
- Coordinate referrals and information exchange between various parent support groups and parent organizations.

Awards Subcommittee
- Show appreciation, honor, and acknowledge students, parents, CAC members, volunteers, school staff, community members, collaborative partners, et al.

Legislative Subcommittee
- Work with the SELPA to understand proposed bills and their impact on students with disabilities and their parents, as well as local education agencies.

- Advise the SELPA to support bills that will improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Conflict Resolution

Conflicts are a natural part of our lives, acknowledging the conflict can be the first step to resolving it. At times, CAC members and related partners may disagree with one another. Disagreements or conflicts can occur between two people because of differences in personality, values, and opinions. They can also occur between groups of people due to intolerance, misunderstandings, history of past conflict, lack of trust, etc.. It can be extremely difficult for the affected groups to find common ground and build alliances to change the system and reduce or eliminate the divisions. Resolving conflicts, especially those that are seemingly deep-rooted, takes time, patience, a commitment to the shared outcome, a willingness to work together, and perhaps a shift in mindset.

A wealth of resources to support the prevention and resolution of disputes through partnership and collaboration can be found through the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE) website at www.cadreworks.org. This technical assistance project funded through the Office of Special Education Programs at the US Department of Education, serves as the National Center on Dispute Resolution in Special Education. CADRE's website covers a wide array of topics, including communication and collaboration, conflict resolution and problem-solving skills, preparing for and learning about dispute resolution processes, student involvement, parent engagement, and collaborative advocacy.

SELPAs and districts have increasingly expanded their practices and implementation of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process for resolving conflicts. The ADR process uses communication, collaboration, negotiation, and mediation to resolve a disagreement or conflict in a way that meets the interest of the parties involved in an effort to maintain positive relationships. Many of the strategies that are a part of the Dispute Resolution process could be useful in reducing and resolving conflicts that may arise within your CAC.

Special Education Complaint Process
As stated on the CDE website, the CDE encourages parents or other individuals to work collaboratively with the LEAs and SELPAs to resolve differences at the earliest possible point of the disagreement. Federal regulations require each state educational agency to adopt written procedures for the investigation and resolution of any state complaint alleging that a school district or other public agency has violated certain requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). California law also requires the same obligations of the state and includes violations of state special education law. Anyone, including parents, students, teachers, and agency representatives may file complaints. The person filing a complaint is the complainant. The complaint must meet requirements as explained in law and summarized further on the CDE website complaint process webpage.

Decision Making Processes

There are many different ways that groups make decisions. Several methods are described below. CACs use a variety of methods as they make decisions depending on the item being discussed. Outlining your CACs decision making processes within the bylaws can be a great way for all to have an understanding of the expectations and how decision making will be conducted.

Building Consensus and Voting
When decisions are to be made, voting is one method to make them and reaching consensus is another. The principles behind voting and consensus are very different. Both methods of making a decision can be useful, but the differences should be understood.

Voting
In voting, the majority wins while the remainder loses. Thus, voting is a win/lose system. Voting has the potential for creating divisiveness and conflict. It works well when the voters know that they'll get another chance after a time, as they do when there is a set of rules that protect the rights of the minority. However, the group that loses can feel threatened under certain circumstances.

On the other hand, voting is clear in its results and can be done within a limited period. When a decision is required, it can be the most efficient way of arriving at that decision. Furthermore, when a large number of people are involved and want a voice in decision making, voting is perhaps the only workable system.

Consensus
The word consensus implies the voluntary giving of consent. Building consensus requires that all the decision makers discuss the issue until everyone can agree on a solution. The word "agree" does not mean that everyone shares an equal degree of enthusiasm. It simply means that everyone is at least willing in good conscience to go along with the decision and help carry it out. That is, nobody has serious enough reservations to want to stop the decision.

Building consensus is a win/win method. It guarantees that nobody will lose because it requires that the decision not be made until everyone can live with it. It is an extremely useful technique for making sure that everyone feels ownership of the action that is finally taken. This is why it is so valuable as a team-building tool.

Building consensus helps a group to achieve high-quality performance by developing common goals and directions. It enhances both the quality of a decision and its acceptance by all involved. Brainstorming is one way of reaching consensus.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a way of using a group of people to quickly generate, clarify, and evaluate a sizable list of ideas, problems, issues, and so on. The emphasis is on quantity of ideas, not quality. Brainstorming can be an excellent technique for tapping the creative thinking of a team. Brainstorming is a data-gathering technique that is used to identify improvement opportunities and problem areas, suggest possible solutions and identify barriers or aids

Brainstorming Steps:

1. Identify a leader/facilitator and a recorder *(they may be the same person)*.

2. Define the problem or idea to be addressed and make sure everyone is clear on the topic being explored.

3. Set a time *(25 minutes, for example)* or idea limit *(50 ideas, for example)*

4. Review the rules for the session.

   - All responses are welcome and valuable

   - Responses are not discussed or criticized until all ideas are gathered

   - No answer is wrong

5. Start the brainstorming. The recorder/leader/facilitator writes down all responses so everyone can see them. Participants are reminded of the brainstorming rules as needed (i.e., ideas are not discussed, criticized, or evaluated). Responses may be taken in turn, expressed spontaneously, or the leader may select people to respond.

6. Clarify the responses as needed. Make sure everyone understands the ideas. Group together like ideas and concepts.

7. Evaluate and select the top ideas. This may be done using a show of hands, having people vote on the list of ideas using sticky dots or through group discussion.

Duties of Members

General duties of the CAC membership should be included in the CAC bylaws.

One of the important functions of the CAC is to participate in the development, review, amendment, and implementation of the Local Plan for Special Education, including the governance and administration plan, the annual budget plan, and the annual services plan. This requires a broad knowledge of the programs for the range of students served in the district/county SELPA. The California Department of Education requires that the governance and administration plan to be submitted at least every three years and the annual budget plan and annual services plan to be submitted each year.

Although CAC members may be appointed to represent a specific population, program, or district either as a parent or a professional, members of the Committee may wear several hats. For example, a teacher representing speech and language services may also be a parent of children in General or Special Education; several parents on the committee have children in more than one program. CAC members advise the SELPA in creating and maintaining high-quality programs for all children in all settings in Special Education. In order to ensure ongoing, consistent representation, regular meeting attendance is important.

The CAC may have subcommittees and may also send representative(s) to department, district/county, and regional committees. Reports from these representatives are provided at the monthly meeting.

Duties of Officers

The duties of the executive committee members would be responsive to the needs of each individual CAC. All CACs may not necessarily have all of these positions. Below are some examples of Officer positions and examples of suggested duties as applicable to your local region.

Chair

- Work to ensure a collaborative relationship among all CAC members and the SELPA
- Preside at all CAC meetings
- Appoint subcommittee chairs
- Serve as ex-officio member of all subcommittees
- Participate with SELPA staff to plan CAC activities
- Collaborate with SELPA staff on publications produced by the CAC

Vice-Chair

- Assist the chair and in his or her absence serve as chair

- Serve as an ex-officio member of all subcommittees
- Assume position of chair in the event the chairperson leaves committee

Secretary

- Record minutes of all committee meetings
- Receive and transmit committee correspondence
- Oversee printing of CAC publications
- Maintain and update committee roster
- Assists with providing logistical support at direction of committee
- Maintain all minutes, agendas, correspondence, and other information pertinent to CAC and pass on to next secretary at completion of term
- Participate in maintaining a web presence/social networking activities

Treasurer

- Keep regular and accurate accounts of all funds
- Serve in absence of secretary
- Oversee collection of funds for special gifts
- Receive and submit all requests for funds.

Member at Large

- Obtain, maintain, and display collection of parent information materials at all CAC meetings
- Participate in agenda setting and goal planning meeting

Handbook

A locally developed CAC Handbook will provide members with information about the operation of the local SELPA, CAC, and resources. A list of possible sections and content for inclusion in a local CAC Handbook are listed below. Handbooks are developed in a variety of formats such as small booklets, three-ring binders, or sharable online folders or documents. Organizing section topic areas in alphabetical order can make accessing the content more efficient. Each CAC should customize the handbook to meet their local needs.

Section Heading Examples	Section Content Examples
Addressing Legislators	• Overview of the Legislative Process • Ideas of legislative advocacy • How to's when communicating with your legislators • How to find our who your legislator is
Budget	• Annual Budget Plan
CAC	• CAC membership names, contact information (with permission) • CAC Application • CAC Bylaws • Open Forum Policy Statement • Annual reports
Facilities	• Maps of district(s) showing school boundaries
General Contact Information	• SELPA contact information • Board of education members • School administrative organizational chart • Board of supervisors • City council members
Local/Regional Parent Support Agencies	• Early Start Family Resource Centers (ESFRC), Family Empowerment Centers (FEC), Parent Training & Information Centers (PTI), Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRC)
Local Plan	• Copy of the current SELPA Local Plan
Minutes	• Minutes from CAC meetings
Miscellaneous	• Other local or regional important information
Programs	• Information on various programs and their philosophies (SELPA, District, County) • Transition Program Information • Community Programs
Transportation	• Public transportation and ADA requirements

Membership Recruitment and Retention

This section will provide some suggestions for recruiting new CAC members, new member orientation, member applications and member information sheet sample content. There is a description in Education Code related to both the appointment of members as well as the composition of members as referenced below.

CAC Appointments EC Section 56191 *Education code states, "The members of the CAC shall be appointed by, and responsible to, the governing board of each participating district or county office, or any combination thereof participating in the Local Plan. The Local Plan needs to describe local appointment procedures and where appropriate, selection of representatives by their peers."*

CAC Composition of the Committee*(EC 56192) Education Code states "The community advisory committee shall be composed of parents of individuals with exceptional needs enrolled in public or private schools, parents of other pupils enrolled in school, pupils and adults with disabilities, regular education teachers, special education teachers and other school personnel, representatives of other public and private agencies, and persons concerned with the needs of individuals with exceptional needs"*

Suggestions for Recruiting New CAC Members

- Materials (in-services, trainings, newsletters, parent handbooks/notebooks etc.) , should be written and, when appropriate presented in the languages of the community. Provide interpreters at your CAC meetings if necessary to encourage participation of non-English-speaking individuals.

- Provide information to service agencies and organizations (e.g., regional center, State Council on Developmental Disabilities, California Children Services, disability specific organizations) in your area about your CAC. If they have their own newsletter and/or social media*, ask them to include CAC information. *School Districts and SELPAs have specific guidelines regarding social media. Please check with your School District and/or SELPA before posting any information regarding your CAC on social media.

- Provide information about your CAC to the teachers (both General and Special Education) in your community. Send copies of all your flyers, newsletters, needs surveys, etc. to teachers, program specialists, related service providers, and administrators.

- Enlist your community to become involved in a selected project (e.g., Public Schools Week, Ability Awareness Programs). Use the media to spread the word.

- Ask for input and assistance from your community with your newsletters, parent handbooks, in service trainings, etc.

- At least once or twice a year, send out your CAC brochure through district communication channels.

- Have at least two meetings a year at a different time from your regular meetings. If you normally hold your meetings in the morning, provide at least two evening meetings or vice versa. Consider holding meetings in different locations within the SELPA if possible.

- Provide CAC membership information to local school board and legislative meetings and inform them of CAC projects, provide copies of CAC flyers, meeting minutes, and other items of interest. Request that they share the CAC information as part of their meetings.

- Sponsor parent in-services/trainings on specific topic areas that are of interest to the parents in the community.

- Provide information regarding CAC meetings to schools within the SELPA for posting on their website, social media, and newsletters.

- Inform PTAs and site councils of CAC vacancies.

CAC Member Orientation
New member orientation provides the information needed to assume the tasks and responsibilities of membership and an opportunity to meet and establish working relationships with other members. The orientation session provides an opportunity for new and returning CAC members to ask questions, get to know each other and develop the collaborative spirit necessary to ensure an effective CAC. Consider including activities that may be useful in helping members get to know each other. It can be helpful to assign a mentor to new members. Many CACs find it helpful to hold the orientation in the summer prior to the first CAC meeting of the year. It is also important to provide orientation on an as-needed basis to newly appointed members. After the initial orientation, involve new members in committee work as soon as possible.

CAC Application for Board/Voting Membership
Many CACs use an application process when adding new members. Often, they will create member information sheets or keep track of member information in a simple database of appointed members for reference and contact access. Sample applications can be found on many of the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) websites, a list of the SELPA web sites is available at the following web page:
www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp

Examples of information collected on CAC application forms is listed below:

- Name

- Address

- Phone Numbers/Email Address

- Type of Representative: (e.g., parent, special education classroom teacher, other special education personnel, general education personnel, public or private agency)

- Specific Special Education program you represent, if any

- Are you the parent of a student in this SELPA? Yes/No
  - Currently Enrolled Students: (grade/age/ school)
  - Graduated Student: (age/school)
- Occupation
- Related Community Activities/Affiliations
- Anything Else You'd Like Us to Know About You?
- Additional Comments
- Membership Term (start and anticipated end dates)

Needs Assessment

The CAC has a duty and is accountable to the community that it serves. It is responsible for seven areas as outlined in Section 2 outlined under EC 56194, items (a) through (g).

1. Advise on the development, amendment, and review of the Local Plan
2. Recommend a list of program priorities to be addressed by the SELPA
3. Support parent education and recruitment
4. Encourage community involvement
5. Support activities on behalf of individuals with disabilities
6. Increase awareness of the importance of regular attendance
7. Supporting community involvement in the parent advisory committee

An annual needs assessment is helpful in identifying what the most important needs are of a particular group. It can provide a snapshot into the current interests and needs of those the CAC represents and serves. This can be a great way to include input from parents, educators, and students into the CAC planning of the action plans and activities. The results can inform the direction and plan of the CAC in working toward accomplishing its goals for the year. Needs Assessments are typically conducted by interview, phone, or written response through a survey mailed or online. They should be objective and have a pre-set number of questions and an identified target group of respondents.

The following are some steps that may be useful in conducting an annual needs assessment.

1. **Define your goals, objectives, and purpose of the needs assessment:** Why are you conducting a needs assessment? What do you hope to learn as a result of conducting this assessment? Is this a comprehensive assessment looking at all areas or a segmented assessment looking at one or two aspects?

2. **Identify the target populations for the needs assessment:** Parents, school staff, community, others.

3. **How will data be collected:** Through an interview, focus groups, phone/in person, or written response through a survey mailed/online. What collaboration with others (i.e., SELPA, other parent groups, CAC members) is needed to reach your targeted population for participation in the needs assessment?

4. **Determine the timeline for the process:** How much time and resources are needed to complete this needs assessment.

5. **How will the response data be used:** determine how response data will be prioritized, determine how the most important needs be incorporated into an action plan

Public Access/ Public Input/ Open Forum Policy

Public Access

The [Ralph M. Brown Act](#) (Government Code sections 54950-54963, referred to as the "Brown Act") is intended to provide public access to meetings of California Local government agencies. In order to achieve this objective, governmental bodies subject to the requirements of the Brown Act must provide public notice of their meetings, post agendas of the subjects to be discussed at those meetings and provide public access to those meetings. Public notice of every meeting subject to the Brown Act is required, and access is mandatory unless the meeting is held in closed session under a specific exception contained in the Act. Some CACs have provided training, information, or additional resources to their CAC officers to assist in becoming more familiar with this requirement.

Public Input

Public Input is an opportunity to provide information and to advise SELPA about general varied special education issues and potential solutions. Some CACs have forms available at the meeting to help manage an orderly opportunity for input by public members. It is helpful to discuss and outline how you will handle public input items, so that public is aware of your CAC's process. Some CACs have used a rubric when reviewing public comment and as a team with the SELPA Director determine priorities or next steps. See Open Forum Policy Statement sample

Potential items that could be on a public input comment form:

- Accessibility
- Transportation
- Safety Concerns
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Kudos for jobs well done

Open Forum Policy

CACs often include an Open Forum Policy in their Bylaws and in consideration of the Brown Act; it outlines the process of including public and open comment and what will

occur with that information. An example of content of that policy is included below. It is important the CAC members and interested public are aware of this policy.

The open forum section of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting offers anyone with an interest in Special Education in this district an opportunity to ask questions, voice concerns, share information, express opinions, or otherwise bring matters to the attention of the members of the CAC. Matters discussed in this part of the meeting may need further inquiry or verification in order for the committee members to have a more complete understanding of the issues involved. The CAC may direct the speaker to various avenues of recourse, or it may ask a member of the Special Education administration to follow up, or a member(s) of the committee may be assigned to make inquiries. In most cases, an update on the issue will take place at the next CAC meeting.

The public comment/input portion of a CAC meeting may often include parents bringing individual issues forward to the committee. Although the purpose of the CAC meeting is not to resolve individual issues and it is not the role of the CAC meeting facilitator to solve individual issues, listening to these types of individual issues may be informative for future agenda and training topics. CAC meeting facilitators should be prepared to assist parents with individual concerns to locate the appropriate forum to have their concerns addressed. This may include a referral to the district or SELPA, a Parent Training Information Center, Community Parent Resource Center, Family Empowerment Center or Early Start Family Resource Center.

Self-Review

Regular review of the CACs standard procedures and effectiveness is helpful to ensure a vital, active organization that continuously meets the needs of its constituency and achieves its goals. The CAC is encouraged to no less than annually complete a self-review that will ensure the fulfillment of duties and offer insight from the members on where improvements or adjustments need to be made.

There are several tools that can be used for a self-review, both free and fee based found online and in publications. Many CACs throughout the state conduct this type of self-review through an officer or membership survey and may be willing to share their process and material if contacted. Often, the self-review involves each member of the CAC being given an opportunity to answer the questions relative to their involvement in the Committee. This self-review could occur at various times, for example, one time a year as members reflect back on a year of work, or related to a specific CAC activity, or after each committee meeting.

Self-review results might identify a need for specific interventions, changes, further inquiry, training topics, technology issues etc. that can assist with setting up the goals and agenda items for the following year.

Examples of topic areas that might be included in a self-review may focus on how well members feel they are supported in carrying out their duties as a CAC Officer/member

in addressing the seven responsibility areas, the make-up and process of supporting and encouraging membership, how standard procedures are followed, effectiveness of communication and collaboration. In crafting questions consider committee members knowledge, how well prepared they are at the meetings and how members interact with other committee members. Gathering this information from officers/members and addressing areas of need at the committee level can be helpful in assisting all committee members to do the best job that they can during their term of service.

There are many questions that could be included and will vary by CAC, a few examples could include:

- I felt supported and valued as a member of the committee

- I received meeting materials in sufficient time to prepare for the meeting

- The agenda was clear, realistic, and relevant to the needs of our local SELPA

- The agenda items reflected the responsibilities of the committee

- The CAC Chair was prepared for the meeting as demonstrated by their management of the agenda.

- SELPA members were prepared for the meeting as demonstrated by their participation.

- Process and procedures were followed during meeting and subcommittee meetings

- If disagreements occurred, they were handled openly, honestly, and directly

- What was the most valuable contribution the committee made on behalf of our students today?

- As a member, I'd like more guidance or mentorship on the following CAC components

Social Media

Using websites and applications that enable users to create and share content is the definition of social media. Using social media is an excellent way to increase awareness, share announcements, information and upcoming monthly or annual events for your CAC. Many CACs have used social networking websites and applications such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest and several others. A few considerations when using social media websites and applications to promote the work of the CAC:

- School Districts and SELPAs have specific guidelines regarding social media. Please check with your School District and/or SELPA before posting any information regarding your CAC on social media.

- Connect with your SELPA Administrator before opening any social media accounts on behalf of the SELPA. The SELPA may already have an account or be able to help you to create and maintain the accounts.

- Choose applications where you can cross-post to efficiently share the same message across platforms. Be mindful that not all platforms use the same caption length and formatting, therefore creating a post for each application may be best depending on what you are sharing.

- The frequency you post will depend on how you use the various platforms. Generally, organizations aim for 1-5 posts per month at a minimum.

- Many social media applications offer users the opportunity to "follow" other users. Choosing to "follow", share and "like" posts, as well as "tag" members of your local community and other related organizations can build rapport and boost your reach in getting the word out.

- Respond to comments as quickly as possible, even if just replying, "thank you for your input."

- Be mindful and sensitive to various cultures and to current events when posting.

- Post your meeting dates and reminders for upcoming events (i.e., a Resource Fair or a fundraiser).

- Let your CAC members know, so that they can "like" and share your posts.

- Create a social media policy to protect the integrity of the page and your communications. One example might involve the use of the profanity filter.

- Having more than two trusted individuals who can access the account, in the event of unseen circumstances the back-up individual can gain access and continue posting.

- Keep passwords safe, and regularly change them.

- Share your social media information on your website/webpage and all related materials.

- Test all new hashtags online, prior to using them in your posts to ensure they are appropriate for your intended audience

- Photos –avoid posting images of students' faces in an effort to protect their privacy. Try different angles, blur faces, or cover faces with happy face emojis.

Community Advisory Committee Web Presence

Community Advisory Committees should follow the same policies and procedures that their Administrative Unit follows when creating a web presence. Check with the SELPA Administrator regarding the policy on web access for the Community Advisory Committee. Many Board of Education meetings utilize the internet to post meeting notices, agendas and supporting documentation for public access on their web sites. The Ralph M. Brown Act requires that all public meetings be publicly posted. Items to consider posting may include; CAC Bylaws, meeting schedule/detail, CAC Parent Handbook, list of Voting Members with term limits, and resources.

SECTION 6: ACTION PLANS

Action Plans provide step-by-step directions and activities for CACs to use in planning their activities for each year. Effective planning makes it possible to accomplish the CAC mandate in a way that allows members to feel productive and successful. An action plan becomes a road map for a CAC to follow as it moves from where it is to where it wants to go. When the entire committee has a clear sense of direction and understands the CAC responsibilities and activities, it will be ready to embark on developing an action plan. This section is intended to provide a framework for developing the Action Plan.

Steps for Developing Action Plans

Assess Needs

The first step in planning for action is to focus the committee's energy. Before developing an action plan, a CAC must explore the following areas:

- **Internal:** How the individual CAC members work as a unit (i.e., prioritizing needs assessment, availability of members, filling vacancies on the CAC, annual review to governing board of education, Local Plan).

- **SELPA:** Through annual or biannual needs assessment (i.e., training CAC sponsors, information/resource, and community awareness/education).

As the CAC members begin to understand the problems they want to address, the barriers they may face, and the general direction they want to pursue, they develop a needs assessment. Most groups can list more concerns than they have resources to work with, so it is important to limit the group's scope.

Establish Targets and Goals

A goal is an end result. Objectives are the steps taken to achieve that end result. Based on the priority list of needs, the committee may next set specific goals that will define an action plan. The goals should be stated clearly and broken into sub steps (objectives). The committee may not be able to accomplish everything it would like to in the span of one year. A target is a milestone toward the accomplishment of that desired goal.

Develop a Strategy

A good action plan grows from the needs assessment process described above. It summarizes concerns, identifies particular interests, and provides a starting point for moving the CAC through the year ahead. To get started, prioritize the needs assessment, assign a CAC member to each task, and set a deadline for each task.

Implement the Strategy

After the action plan has been created, the CAC implements the strategy. Members will need to follow through on their assigned responsibilities with SELPA support and

delegate the work as appropriate. The committee members will need to meet periodically to update each other on their progress.

Evaluate

The process of translating experience into something learned is called evaluation. Moreover, the goal of evaluation is to learn what went right, what went wrong, and how to proceed. Through the process of evaluation, CAC members increase their knowledge. Evaluation provides tremendous advantages and insight for future committee priorities, plans, and successes. Figure 6 illustrates the steps to develop an effective action plan.

The following considerations may be helpful when preparing an action plan:

- Remember that planning takes time.
- Keep the CAC Responsibilities and legislative mandate in mind.
- Keep plans flexible so that if things don't happen as expected, they can be changed.
- Make simple plans that are attainable.
- Evaluate and revise plans as needed.
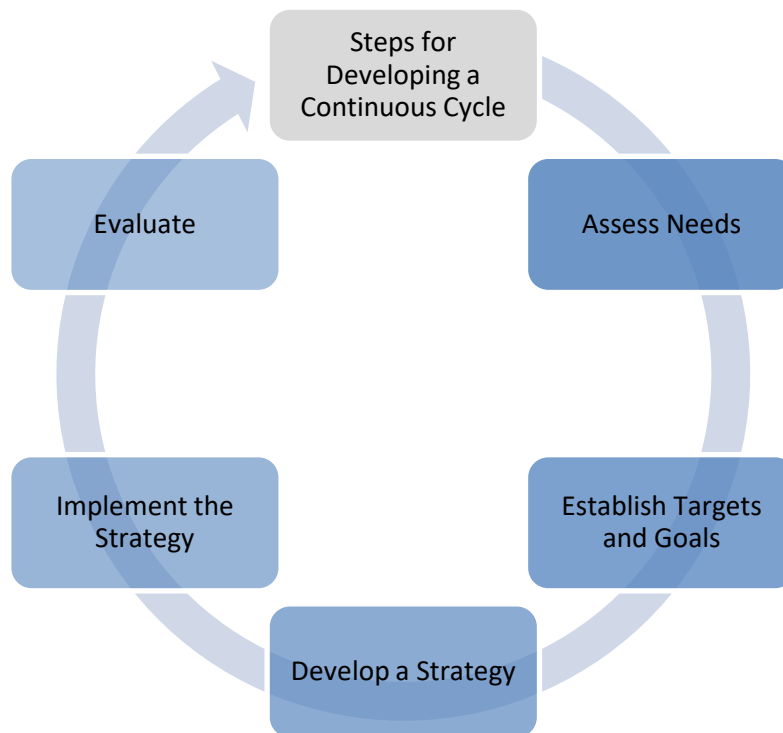
SECTION 7:
LOCAL PLAN

Purpose of the Local Plan

California's Master Plan for Special Education created Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) to administer Special Education programs in the State. Local Special Education programs and services are defined in prescribed Local Plans and approved by the local Boards of Education. "This plan for Special Education shall be developed cooperatively with input from the community advisory committee and appropriate representation from special and regular teachers and administrators selected by the groups they represent to ensure effective participation and communications." [California Education Code, Part 30, Section 56001(f)]

The Local Plan is the central document by which SELPAs exist and function, including describing the local Governance and the role of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). Therefore, CAC members must familiarize themselves on an ongoing basis with the contents of the Local Plan. Ensure that, as a CAC member, you have access to a copy of the Local Plan.

Key Elements of the Local Plan

The Local Plan is made of federal, state, and local requirements per the federal and state law. Federal requirements are referred to as the Local Plan compliance assurances. The compliance assurance statements are approved by the State Board of Education and cannot be re-written at the local level. Each district board of trustees and the SELPA governing board is to adopt the federal compliance assurances. Each SELPA has the opportunity to write local specific procedures for each of the federal compliance assurance statements. The federal requirements may be revised when the IDEA is reauthorized.

The federal compliance assurances (20 USC 1412(a) (1-27) currently include:

- Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- Full Education Opportunity
- Child Find
- IEP
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Procedural Safeguards
- Evaluation
- Confidentiality
- Part C Transition

- Private School

- Local Compliance Assurances

- Interagency, Governance*

- Personnel Qualifications

- Performance Goals and Indicators

- Participation in Assessments

- Supplementation of Funds

- Maintenance of Effort (MOE)*

- Public Participation*

- Suspension/Expulsion

- Access to Instructional Materials

- Over-identification and Disproportionally

- Prohibition on Mandatory Medication

- Distribution of Funds

- Data

(*) Denotes those assurance statements required in California Education Code. The State Board of Education also adopted assurance statements for Charter Schools and Literacy.

Other components of the Local Plan include:

- **Regionalized Services:** regionalized services to local programs, such as program specialist services, personnel development training, evaluation, data collection and development of management information systems, and curriculum development. [Section 56220(c)]

- **Dispute Resolution:** is a description of mediation and binding arbitration to resolve disputes within the SELPA and with other agencies.

- **Distribution of Funds:** for multi-District SELPAs only, describes the allocation of AB 602 dollars to member LEAs in the SELPA.

- **Description of Services:** the Annual Budget and Service Plans include a description of services provided by each district and/or county office that demonstrates that all individuals with exceptional needs have access to services and instruction appropriate to meet their needs as specified in their individualized education programs (IEPs), with the corresponding budget to support those services. [Section 56200(b)]

- **Early Childhood Special Education Services (0-5 years of age):** is a description of programs and services for children from birth to age 5.

- **Nonpublic Schools (NPS):** a description of the process utilized to oversee and evaluate NPS placements.

- **CAC Review of Plan:** verification that the plan has been reviewed by the CAC and that the committee had at least 30 days to make the review prior to submitting the plan to the superintendent. [Section 56200(0]

- **Specialized Equipment and Services:** is a description of how the SELPA will distribute equipment and services in order to service students with Low Incidence Disabilities.

Local requirements Ed. Code 56195.7 related to the Local Plan include the following:

- **Joint Powers/Contractual Agreements:** copies of applicable joint powers or contractual agreements with other agencies.

- **Coordinated Identification, Referral, and Placement System:** a coordinated system for identification, referral, and placement of students with special needs, to be included in the written agreements. [Section 56220(a)]

- **Procedural Safeguards:** a process to guarantee parent/student rights. [Section 56220(b)] (see federal assurance statements)

- **Regionalized Services:** regionalized services to local programs, such as program specialist services, personnel development training, evaluation, data collection and development of management information systems, and curriculum development. [Section 56220(c)]

- **Coordination with Local Public Agencies:** the process for coordinating services to individuals with exceptional needs; this could include regional centers and local mental health agencies. [Section 56200(d)]

- **Public/Proprietary Hospitals:** description of the process for coordinating and providing services to individuals with exceptional needs placed in a hospital or residential medical facility. [Section 56220(e)]

- **Adoption of Policies:** each entity providing Special Education under this part shall adopt policies for the programs and services it operates. [Section 56221]

- **Nonpublic Services:** the policies shall include, but not be limited to, nonpublic, nonsectarian services pursuant to Sections 56365 (Nonpublic, Nonsectarian Schools/Agencies) and 56366 (Role of Nonpublic School/Agency). [Section 56221(b)(1)]

- **Review of Class Assignment at Teacher's Request:** provision for a review, at a general education or special education teacher's request, of the assignment of an individual with exceptional needs to his or her class and a mandatory meeting of the IEP team if the review indicates a change in the pupil's placement, instruction, or related services. [Section 56221(b)(2)]

- **Resource Specialists:** description of the duties of resource specialists. [Section 56221(b)(4)]

- **Transportation:** description of how Special Education transportation is coordinated with regular home-to-school transportation. [Section 56221(b) (5)].

- **Local Plan Developed/Updated by Committee:** the plan for Special Education shall be developed and updated cooperatively by a committee of representatives of special and regular teachers and administrators selected by the groups they represent and with input from the CAC to ensure adequate and effective participation and communication. [Section 56222]

- **Licensed Children's Institutions/Foster Family Homes:** a description of the process for providing services to children with exceptional needs placed in these homes. [Section 56220(0]

- **Juvenile Court Schools/County Community Schools:** a description of the process for providing services to children with exceptional needs placed in these schools. [Section 56220(g)]

- **Student Data:** information on the number of individuals with exceptional needs who are provided Special Education services,

- **Caseloads:** local policies may be developed and must align with Education Code regulations.

Local Plans *may* also include policies in the following areas:

- Surrogate Parents

- Infant/Preschool

- Low Incidence

- Cross-Cultural

- Transition

- Behavior Plans & Emergency Procedures

- Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973) Procedures

- Transition Programs

- Nonpublic School & Nonpublic Agency District Master Contracts & Individual Service Plans

- Other Areas as Locally Determined

Reviewing the Local Plan

Reviewing the Local Plan on an ongoing basis not only fulfills a CAC's mandate but involves CAC members in an important activity. To accomplish a Local Plan review, consider the following:

- Review the CAC legislative mandate in Education Code 56194. Have a discussion as to the Education Code responsibility of advising the governing board on Local Plan policy and procedures. The governing board is to review and consider comment from the CAC. If the SELPA has a Local Plan Committee, have CAC representative(s) on the committee.

- Devote meeting time to the review of Local Plan sections. Begin with one section. Ask members to read it before the meeting and then to relate their thoughts and questions to the CAC.

- Plan time to visit programs described in the Local Plan, as appropriate, in order to provide data to the SELPA and/or governing board.

- Be aware of new legislation that would, if made law, require changes in the Local Plan. Are you informed and updated on amendments?

- Be aware of program delivery, especially when changes are on the horizon and the CAC needs to provide input on future implementation.

- Present any suggestions for change in the Local Plan to the Special Education administration and school board(s) in an annual report. Work with your SELPA Director.

- Hold public meetings inviting parents and other members of the community to talk about current programs and services

Sample CAC Checklist for Local Plan Review Process

- Verify that all CAC members are made aware of all the required components of a Local Plan.

- Review the entire document by briefly looking at the pages. Review the Table of Contents page. (Key: What period of time does this Local Plan cover? What officials sign it? Where do the CAC representatives sign it? On what date was it sent to the Department of Education?)

- Record questions the group has regarding the contents. List all questions. (Key: What do we want to learn from this activity? What don't we know? Where do we find it? What information gained will improve the CAC's understanding of programs and services? What information gained will improve the quality of our advice?)

- Assign question-answer research. Who? What pages? By when? (Key: When reading the Local Plan, be open and encourage more questions. Write them down.)

- Discuss what each person has read; record more questions, record answers to the first set of questions, and share the status of the work.

- Move to the next stage of review. If the CAC wants to verify what the Local Plan says, ask the Special Education director to arrange the opportunity or suggest how CAC members may visit a specific program and talk with service providers, teachers, aides, bus drivers, therapists, or parents. If more information, direction, or clarification is needed, ask the Special Education director for assistance. This may easily answer any questions.

- Meet to check progress.

- Wrapping it up: Compile the findings, even if some seem unanswered or unverifiable at this point. List what has been learned and what may be uncertain. (Key: Does something need to be changed? Addressed? Considered?)

- Write up the Local Plan review and present it to the Special Education administration and school board of trustees.

- Congratulate the group for the completion of a valuable activity that serves the community

SECTION 8:
General Related Agencies and Resources

California Special Education Local Plan Areas

In California, every Local Education Agency (LEA) is required to belong to a Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). The SELPA is a consortium of LEAs responsible for the development of special education policies and procedures, distribution of federal and state special education funds, and providing a range of professional development pertaining to special education. Contact information can be found at the California Department of Education website in the California Special Education Local Plan Areas section at www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp

Charter Special Education Local Plan Area

The El Dorado Charter SELPA was the first statewide charter-only SELPA. The Charter SELPA is a cooperative model designed to ensure special education programs are available for all students with disabilities. Contact information and resources can be found at the Charter SELPA website at www.charterselpa.org

California Parent Support Organizations

California has several parent support organizations that serve families of children and young adults with disabilities. Most of them are non-profit organizations and have varied funding streams that are federal, state and/or local to support their work. Several of these organizations collaborate with SELPAs in an effort to enhance school and family partnerships and promote successful outcomes for students with disabilities.

Early Start Family Resource Centers (ESFRC) *Ages 0-3*
www.frcnca.org
Focus on families of infants and toddlers at risk of or with developmental delays and disabilities.
The California's Early Start Family Resource Centers provide information, resources, and parent-to-parent support to families of infants and toddlers. They work in partnership with local regional centers and education agencies and help many parents navigate the Early Start system. These centers are staffed by parents who have children with disabilities. Each ESFRC is unique reflecting the needs of their community. They may operate as independent sites or are based in regional centers, local education agencies, public health facilities, hospitals or homes. Family support services are available in many languages.

Family Empowerment Centers (FEC) *Ages 3-22*
www.seedsofpartnership.org/familyEmpowerment.html
Focus on families of children with disabilities who require Special Education services.
The Family Empowerment Centers provide training and information to families of children and young adults with disabilities. They offer specialized training, peer-to-

peer support, information and referral services. They assist parents to better understand educational and developmental needs, to effectively communicate with service providers, they serve as a resource for the IEP process, participate in school reform and improvement activities, promote alternative dispute resolution, and support positive relationships between parents and professionals.

Parent Training & Information Centers (PTI) *Ages 0-26*
www.parentcenterhub.org/the-parent-center-network
Focus on families of children with education needs.
There are six Parent Training and Information Centers, these are funded by the US Department of Education. PTIs serve families of infants through young adults, with all disabilities: physical, cognitive, emotional, and learning. They help families to; obtain appropriate education and services for their children with disabilities, work to improve education results for all children, train and inform parents and professionals on a variety of topics. resolve problems between families and schools or other agencies and connect children with disabilities to community resources that address their needs.

Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRC) *Ages 0-26*
www.parentcenterhub.org/the-parent-center-network
Focus on families of children with education needs.
There are four Community Parent Resource Centers which are funded to support community Parent Training and Information centers in targeted communities and focus on historically underserved populations such as low income, English learners, and parents with disabilities. These centers offer training and information to assist parents to participate effectively in helping their children with disabilities to meet established developmental goals and challenging standards that have been established for all children and prepare to lead productive adult lives, as independently as possible.

Regional Centers

Department of Developmental Disabilities oversees the coordination and delivery of services for Californians with developmental disabilities through a statewide network of 21 community-based, non-profit agencies known as Regional Centers. Their contact information can be found at the following website: www.dds.ca.gov/RC. Regional centers provide assessments, determine eligibility for services, and offer case management services. Regional centers also develop, purchase, and coordinate the services in each person's Individual Program Plan.

Education or Disability Related Websites

- California Department of Education (www.cde.ca.gov)
- California Department of Education ~ Special Education via Specialized Programs (www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se)
- California Early Start (www.dds.ca.gov/services/early-start/)

- Clearinghouse for Specialized Media & Technology (www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/sm/)
- Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education & Support (CADRE) (www.cadreworks.org/)
- Council for Exceptional Children (www.exceptionalchildren.org)
- Disability Rights, California (www.disabilityrightsca.org)
- National Center for Learning Disabilities (www.ncld.org)
- Office of Special Education Programs (www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/)
- OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (www.pbis.org)
- Center for Parent Information & Resources (www.parentcenterhub.org/)
- Resources in Special Education (RiSE) (www.rise.org)
- RTI Tools (Response to Intervention) (www.rtitools.com)
- State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) https://scdd.ca.gov
- U.S. Department of Education (www.ed.gov)
- Institute of Educational Science (www.ies.ed.gov)

Common Special Education Acronyms and Terms

- **CDE Acronyms and Initialisms:** Common acronyms and initialisms used by the California Department of Education (CDE).(www.cde.ca.gov/re/di/aa/ap/index.asp)
- **Department of General Services (DGS) Abbreviations and Acronyms:** Common abbreviations and acronyms in Special Education (www.dgs.ca.gov/OAH/Case-Types/Special-Education/Self-Help/Abbreviations-and-Acronyms)
- **CDE English-Spanish Glossary for Educational Settings:** Glossary of English educational terminology translated into Spanish (www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/engspanglossary.asp)