



# Special Education Local Plan Area

## **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANCE (SCIA)**

### **POLICY**

Every Local Educational Agency (LEA) within the San Mateo County SELPA is required to provide a full continuum of placement options for students with identified disabilities who are receiving special education services. The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act (IDEA 2004) and California laws and regulations describe a continuum of placements such as instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions (CFR 300.551 (b) (1)).

IDEA 2004 also defines Related Services as the utilization of aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. This applies to any general education program or special education program in which the student may participate (34 CFR Part 300.550-300.556). The goal for any student with special needs is to develop maximum independence. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team is responsible for developing and implementing a program that promotes that independence. Natural supports and existing staff supports should be used whenever possible.

There may be special circumstances when a student may need additional support in order to be successful in his/her educational placement. If the IEP team is considering adding Special Circumstance Instructional Assistance (SCIA) as a related service for a student, the team must first determine:

- 1) Natural supports and/or existing staff supports are not adequate for the student to participate and progress in their educational placement;
- 2) Additional support is necessary to assist classroom staff in facilitating the student in:
  - a) Advancing appropriately toward their annual goals and/or;
  - b) Involvement in and progress in the general curriculum and/or;
  - c) Participation in their educational settings and/or;
  - d) Participation in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities and/or;
  - e) Participation with other disabled and non-disabled students.
- 3) How quickly it anticipates the support can be faded and develop a method for systematic evaluation toward independence and more natural supports.

If the IEP Team recommends SCIA support, the team is also responsible for developing goals and monitoring the student's progress so that this additional support may be faded as soon as possible. If not carefully monitored and evaluated on a regular basis, additional SCIA support can unintentionally foster dependence, and be no more effective than the previously used "1:1" model of support.

The San Mateo County SELPA has developed Guidelines to inform the implementation of this Policy. These Guidelines speak to the issues of assessment for the need for SCIA, IEP documentation, monitoring and fading of SCIA, as well as roles and responsibilities of IEP Team members.



San Mateo  
County  
SELPA

# **Special Circumstances Instructional Assistance (SCIA)**

## **GUIDELINES**

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**SAN MATEO COUNTY SELPA  
SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANCE (SCIA)  
GUIDELINES**

**INTRODUCTION**

By law, special education and related services to students with disabilities must be provided in the “least restrictive environment.” When an Individualized Educational Program Team is considering SCIA (special circumstance instructional assistance) support for a student, all aspects of the student’s program must be considered, with the intent of maximizing student independence. The IEP Team is responsible for the design of the student’s program and designating personnel to implement the program. The classified staff person(s) providing the additional instructional assistance will work under the direction of certificated staff. IEP Teams need to do a careful analysis to ensure that the IEP offers a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) when addressing the need for SCIA.

First and foremost, the goal for any student with a disability is to encourage, promote, and maximize independence; therefore, other options should be considered before adding SCIA to a student’s services. If not carefully monitored, SCIA can easily and unintentionally foster dependence, which was the case with the previous “1:1” model. A student’s total educational program must be carefully evaluated to determine where support is indicated. Natural support and existing staff support should be used whenever possible to promote the least restrictive environment.

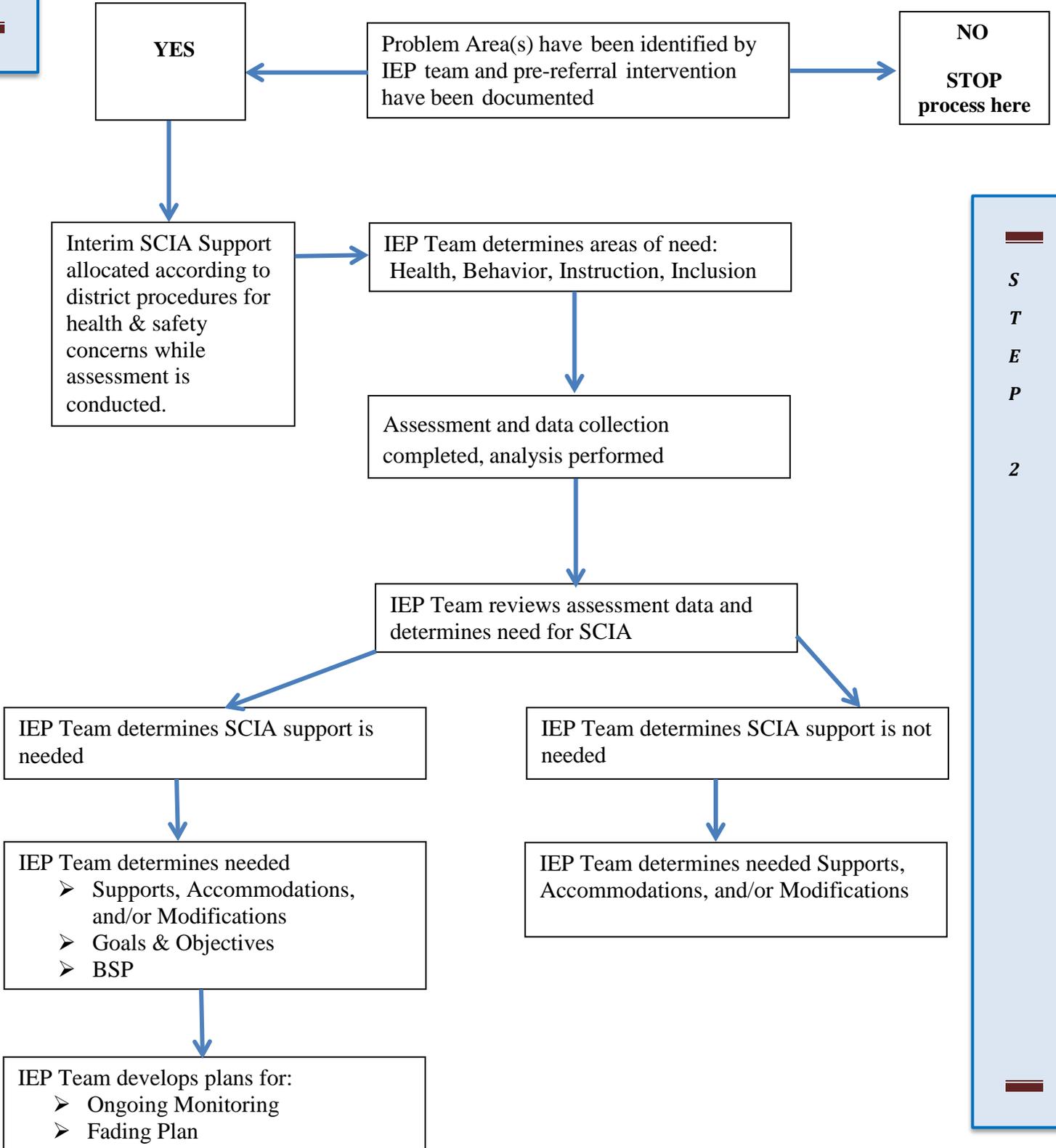
**Preliminary Consideration of the Need for SCIA**

When the members of the IEP team are considering the need for SCIA, there are a variety of tools which can be used to help make the decision. Using these tools, the team should be able to identify the specific activities and times for which additional assistance is required. (See Flowchart for Determining Need for SCIA, next page.) For example, these forms would direct the team, prior to considering SCIA support, to gather evidence of visual schedules or planners if the student is having difficulty with transitions from structured to unstructured activities. This particular group of forms is included in the packet under Pre-Referral Activities Review, STEP 1. As this is a data gathering step, an Assessment Plan is not required. There are some instances in which the need for SCIA support can be determined using existing data in the context of an IEP meeting. Most often, it is anticipated that an Assessment Plan will need to be developed in order to collect necessary data to bring to the IEP team.

# Decision Tree for Need for SCIA Initial Determination

STEP

1



STEP

2

## Areas of Need

It is important that the team consider which type of assistance listed below is needed in order to determine if the student needs SCIA with a particular activity and to estimate the amount of time that will be needed.

### 1. Health/Personal Care

- a. Self-help and bathroom needs: If a student needs assistance with toileting or other self-help skills, the team should note the times and duration for this activity. This should only be for brief periods during the day.
- b. Assistance during snack or lunch: If the student requires assistance with feeding, etc., note the type of assistance needed and the times and duration required. Encourage reliance on peer helpers (with supervision) or other natural supports as much as possible for getting out food, opening containers, etc.
- c. Specialized physical health care: Some intensive health supports may necessitate SCIA for an additional length of time.
- d. Assistance with medical needs: Some students need additional assistance for medical reasons. If so, the team should consider the doctor's orders and the time of day and duration. Some medically related supports might be necessary only for brief periods per day/week.

### 2. Behavior

- a. Due to behavioral challenges, some students may need intensive SCIA support in order to assist classroom staff in implementing a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP).
- b. SCIA may be needed for a brief period to collect data while regular classroom staff implements a BIP. (See samples in Appendix)

### 3. Instruction

- a. Curricular adaptations: Discussion about the need for adaptations/modifications of curriculum should be done under direction of the teacher. Most students will require no more than 1-1½ hours daily for curriculum adaptation. Materials preparation does not need to be done in the classroom or in the physical presence of the teacher. Adult volunteers and parent(s)/guardian(s) may perform some of these activities. Classroom interventions and strategies should be used before SCIA services are considered.
- b. Instructional support: Sometimes classroom staff need assistance in supporting a student in staying on-task or providing follow-up instruction. This should be faded as soon as schedules and/or behavior supports are put into place.

### 4. Inclusion

- a. Recess or other activities: Assistance may be necessary if there are safety concerns with the student. It may also be needed when staff is attempting to facilitate social interactions with peers. Care should be taken that the development of natural peer supports and/or use of existing resources are the goals of extra assistance, otherwise the adult may become the student's sole recess companion.
- b. Assistance with transitions: If a student has difficulty transitioning from classroom to playground, playground to classroom, or between activities, extra support may need to be available to help.

When needed, the team should indicate type(s) of transition(s) as well as time of day and duration. (Refer to data collection sheet in Appendix)

- c. Assistance with classroom centers or other activities: If there is a particular activity or time of day which is difficult for the student to access, classroom interventions services and supports must be implemented, documented and data analysis completed prior to requesting extra help. When needed, the team should specify activity, time of day and duration.

## **IEP DOCUMENTATION**

If the decision is made to provide SCIA support, it is written into the IEP with specific goals, monitoring strategies, fading strategies and review dates (3 months suggested). SCIA must be coded on the Services Grid of the IEP as 340-Intensive Individualized Services. Areas of need should be described in the comments section of the service or on the “Notes Page.”

Extra paraprofessional support provided to a teacher to assist in managing a whole class not specific to any one child’s needs may be also noted on the Services Page in the Supplementary Aids and Services Grid. This can be documented using language such as: “Additional classroom support designated at the discretion of the teacher, not to exceed minutes/hours in this setting”.

For each area in which SCIA support is being provided due to lack of skill or independence, the IEP team should write a goal. Some areas, such as health/personal care needs may not be appropriate for goals. These supports should be noted on the Services Page, in the Supplemental Services section.

If SCIA support is required as a result of a child’s behavioral difficulties, the child’s IEP should include a BIP.

For areas in which increased independence is possible, note the means for evaluating where the SCIA support continues to be needed on the “Notes page.” In these cases, write a systematic plan to address how the support will be monitored and faded as independence increases.

When SCIA is provided to assist a child on a short-term basis (i.e., transition to a new program), the written plan should specify the level of independence to be achieved before SCIA is faded/removed, or a date when SCIA will be discontinued.

## **EVALUATION, MONITORING AND FADING**

The student's Case Manager is responsible for the monitoring and fading of SCIA. When it is appropriate to begin fading SCIA support, the Case Manager will meet with the IEP team to develop a fading plan that is included in the student's IEP. It is the responsibility of the Case Manager to develop the written fading plan, supervise the SCIA provider(s) and develop a system for data collection. The Case Manager will review the data and provide the SCIA provider(s) with strategies for fading and promoting increased student independence and goal attainment. The Case Manager should meet at periods specified in the plan with selected members of the IEP team to review the data, make adjustments to the plan, if needed, and determine when criteria for fading have been met. Major changes to the plan would require an IEP Review or Addendum. If there is a goal which reflects the area in which SCIA support is being provided, then data collection on progress toward that goal will be sufficient.

### **Assessment Report**

The assessment report completed by the school psychologist or program specialist will be presented at the IEP meeting (see sample Assessment Report Outline.) Should the District of Service be different from the District of Residence, a school psychologist from the District of Residence may be asked to complete the assessment if no other collaborative arrangement can be devised. If the IEP team agrees that SCIA support is needed for a particular student, it will be noted on the IEP in the meeting notes and on the service page.

Extra paraprofessional support provided to a teacher to assist in managing a whole class, not specific to any one child's needs, may be also noted in the Modification/Accommodations section of the service page as "additional supports for the classroom, designated at the discretion of the teacher."

For each area in which SCIA support is being provided due to lack of skill or independence, the IEP team should write a goal. Some areas, such as health/personal care needs may not be appropriate for goals. These supports should be noted on the Accommodations section of the Services page.

### **IEP**

If additional SCIA support is required as a result of a child's behavioral difficulties, the child's IEP should include a BIP.

For areas in which increased independence is possible, note the means for evaluating whether the SCIA support continues to be needed on the "Additional" page. In these cases, a systematic plan must be written to address how the support will be monitored and faded as independence increases.

When SCIA is provided to assist a child on a short-term basis (i.e., transition to a new program), the written plan should specify the level of independence to be achieved before SCIA is faded/removed, or a date when SCIA will be discontinued.

### **Evaluation**

The student's Case Manager is responsible for monitoring the written plan, supervising those providing SCIA supports and developing a system for data collection. The Case Manager will review the data and advise those providing SCIA with strategies for fading and promoting increased student independence and goal attainment.

The Case Manager should meet at periods specified in the plan with selected members of the IEP team to review the data, make adjustments to the plan, if needed, and determine when criteria for fading have been met. Major changes to the plan would require an IEP Review or Addendum.

If there is a goal which reflects the area in which SCIA support is being provided, then data collection on progress toward that goal will be sufficient.

*(Attached are sample forms for monitoring increased student independence.)*

**Team Meetings** (to facilitate/support the fading process):

The Case Manager, teacher, parent(s)/guardian(s) and others involved with the student should meet periodically and as necessary to evaluate student progress and continued need for SCIA services. The Case Manager should bring updated documentation by completing the Task Analysis Data Sheet, IEP Goal and Objective Charting, and Rubric to Determine Need. Strategies and support for encouraging student independence and fading this service as soon as possible are important. SCIA support is NOT a person, (commonly referred to as a “1:1”), but a related service. If any individuals providing the support are having difficulty “letting go,” it may be necessary to rotate staff.

**Guidelines for documenting the fading of SCIA in the IEP**

- Develop goals and objectives that specify reduced levels of support and prompting to be used as measures of need.
- Include a specific plan for reinforcement of the BIP, when relevant.
- Specify accommodations/modifications to be provided as needed or as requested by the student.
- Indicate specific activities and/or time for SCIA support under Support for Student on the IEP page indicating *least restrictive environment*.
- Specify criteria for fading measures to be used, who will review the data, and how often data will be reviewed through a written plan for fading on the Notes Page of the IEP.

**Reevaluation**

At regular intervals as specified by the IEP team, designated members should use the tools to collect data about whether the level of assistance continues to be needed. As the student’s level of independence or ability to use natural supports increases, behavior improves or the make-up of the class changes, the assistance should be faded.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCIA PROVIDER(S)**

### **Teacher**

The role of a SCIA provider includes many aspects of daily classroom activities. When the IEP team determines that a paraprofessional is needed to assist a student for special circumstances, the SCIA is assigned and becomes a member of the classroom staff working with the student. The support to the student can be provided by any of the adults working in the class provided they receive training necessary to meet the student's needs. The SCIA takes direction from the classroom teacher.

The role of a SCIA provider includes many aspects of daily classroom activities. Support to the student can be provided by any of the adults working in the class provided they receive training necessary to meet the student's needs. When the IEP Team determines that SCIA supports are needed in addition to the existing classroom staff, these providers can be rotated into and out of the classroom on an as-needed basis. All SCIA providers take direction from the classroom teacher.

### **Support to the Student**

Support to the student is defined in the IEP and through the goals and objectives. It is important for the SCIA provider(s) to become familiar with the expected outcomes and to have a variety of strategies at hand to assist students in achieving their goals. In a general education classroom, both the general education teacher and the case manager will work together to develop the guidelines for the SCIA provider(s). It is the responsibility of SCIA providers to implement the lessons provided by the teacher/case manager and to keep the classroom teacher and/or case manager informed about the student's progress toward goals.

### **Role of the Teacher/Case Manager**

At all times, the classroom teacher and/or case manager are responsible for all aspects of the student's educational program. This responsibility includes supervising the work of the SCIA provider(s), providing training, support and guidance. The classroom teacher/case manager remains responsible for having direct, regular contact with the student. Developing instructional plans, materials, strategies, etc. are the responsibility of the classroom teacher. It is not appropriate to leave a student solely under the supervision of a non-credentialed person.

### **Support for Fostering Independence and Fading**

The SCIA provider(s) plays a major role in supporting the independence of students. At appropriate times, the IEP team members will determine that it is necessary to ensure that supports are faded in order to promote student independence. The SCIA provider(s) is responsible for following the plan for fading support as indicated in the student's IEP. See page 26 for techniques to promote independence and fading support

### **Data Collection on Behavior/Goals and Objectives**

The SCIA provider(s) are responsible for maintaining accurate data collection as directed by the classroom teacher/case manager.

## **Communication**

The SCIA provider(s) is responsible for maintaining frequent and regular communication with the classroom teacher about the student. The classroom teacher has the sole responsibility for contact with the family and other members of the IEP team with regard to the implementation of the IEP.

## **Legal Issues and Confidentiality**

A SCIA provider(s) must always be working under the supervision of a credentialed staff member. The SCIA provider(s) is protected by the district's liability insurance, as long as they are carrying out duties as assigned. The classroom teacher is responsible for ensuring that the SCIA provider(s) receives all breaks required by contract.

SCIA provider(s) must be well aware of the important requirements for confidentiality when dealing with students with special needs. They must not to share any personal information about the student with anyone other than "employees of the district with a legitimate educational interest."

The Case Manager and/or classroom teacher should clearly instruct the SCIA provider(s) as to preferences regarding communication. While Case Managers and teachers may prefer that a SCIA provider(s) communicate daily routine information to parents, it is the responsibility of the credentialed staff member to maintain contact with families. All communication about progress, behavior, health and other concerns is kept between teacher and parent(s)/guardian(s) only.

SCIA provider(s) need to be trained in any and all appropriate strategies for working with students. This may include training about appropriate physical contact with students, crisis intervention, instructional and behavioral strategies and medical/self-help procedures. If there is a potential for emergency intervention, the SCIA provider(s) must be trained in the system adopted by the district.

If SCIA provider(s) are providing health or medical supports, they must always be trained and supervised by an appropriately qualified professional. District liability insurance applies as long as the SCIA provider(s) is performing duties as trained.

It is important that the SCIA provider(s), general education teacher, and Case Manager have regular, ongoing communication to ensure that all have the same expectations as to the role of the SCIA provider(s).

## **TECHNIQUES TO PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE AND FADING OF SUPPORT**

1. Watch before assisting. Can the student ask for help from teacher or peer? Can the student problem solve independently?
2. Give the student extra time to process and respond before assisting.
3. Have high expectations as to what the student understands or can do independently.
4. Provide consistent classroom schedule (posted, visual, at desk if needed, reinforcement periods included). Teach student how to use it.
5. Start with the least intrusive prompts to get student to respond:
  - i. Gestural, hand or facial signals
  - ii. Timer
  - iii. Verbal
  - iv. Light physical
  - v. Hand over hand
  - vi. Prompt, then back away to allow independent time.
6. Use strengths and weakness, likes and dislikes to motivate student participation and interest.
7. Model; guide (watch and assist); check (leave and check back).
8. Teach independence skills (raising hand, asking for help, modeling other students).
9. Praise for independent attempts.
10. Direct the student to answer to the teacher.
11. Prompt the student to listen to the teacher's instructions. Repeat only when necessary.
12. Encourage age appropriate work habits. See what other students are doing.
13. Be aware of proximity. Sit with the student only when necessary.
14. Encourage peer assistance and partnering. Teach peers how to help, not enable.
15. Utilize self-monitoring checklists for student.
16. Color code materials to assist with organization.
17. Use transition objects to help student anticipate/complete transition (i.e., head phones for listening center).
18. Break big tasks into steps.
19. Use backward chaining (e.g., leave the last portion of a cutting task for the student, and then gradually lengthen the task).
20. Assist in encouraging a means for independent communication (i.e., visual schedule/picture exchange).
21. Provide positive feedback (be specific to the situation).
22. Ask facilitative questions ("What comes next?" "What are other students doing?", "What does the schedule say?", "What did the teacher say?").
23. Give choices.
24. Maintain a log to track independence and need for assistance. Ask Case Manager for data collection sheets to record increasing independence.
25. Establish teacher/SCIA provider signal for when the SCIA provider should intervene. General rule of thumb: Teacher should prompt up to three times before a SCIA provider steps in.
26. Make sure that class perceives supports are there to help all of them, not just one student.
27. Find alternate tasks as supports are faded.

### **Team Meetings (to Facilitate/Support the Fading Process)**

The Case Manager, teacher, parent(s)/guardian(s) and others involved with the student should communicate on a regular basis to evaluate student progress and the continued need for SCIA. The SCIA provider(s) should be given encouragement, strategies and support for encouraging student independence and stepping back as possible.

If a SCIA provider(s) is having difficulty “letting go,” it may be necessary to rotate them to another student.

### **Guidelines for Planning for Fading in the IEP**

- Develop goals and objectives that contain reduced levels of support and prompting to be used as measures of need for SCIA.
- Include specific plan for the implementation of the student’s BIP.
- Specify accommodations/modifications to be provided as needed or as requested by student.
- Indicate specific activities and/or time for SCIA under Support for Student on LRE page.
- Specify criteria for fading measure to be used, who will review and how often in written plan for fading on the Notes Page of the IEP.