



For Immediate Release

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**Mary Sakuma Honored By Association of Educational Service Agencies
For Crisis Communication Guide**

Superintendent Mary Sakuma and the Butte County Office of Education received the 2023 Outstanding Achievement in ESA Writing and Research Award from the Association of Educational Service Agencies. The award recognizes individuals or agencies that advance understanding of regional educational agencies through research or writing or publications at the regional, state or national level.

The award was presented October 16.

Sakuma and her team were nominated for the award for creating “The Emergency Communications Guidebook” that helps schools use internal and external communications to effectively respond to emergency situations.

“In California, we don’t have an off-season from emergency response. In fact, with all that has happened in our state over the last few years just from natural disasters alone - wildfires, mudslides, earthquakes, and now flooding - our school leaders need to be trained and ready to execute at any time,” said Karen Stapf Walters, Executive Director of the California County Superintendents, who nominated Sakuma and her team for the award.

Walters noted that the guidebook included critical messaging templates for social media, emails and phone messages, check lists, advice on addressing the media and protocol templates. All of these items are organized by the stages of an emergency—response, recovery and post-crisis.

“In our 24-hour media world, we are all exposed to the media nonstop. While schools leaders are dealing with the logistics of an emergency, they also need help handling the communication aspect, too. This is an exemplary example of how ESAs demonstrate leadership in all areas of operations,” said Joan Wade, Executive Director, AESA.

Joe Anderson, Emergency Services Team Manager for the California Department of Education, also nominated Sakuma for the award.



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“Emergencies, by their nature, tend to be high-stress, high-stakes, and unpredictable events. Having a clear, well-thought-out plan to handle these situations is crucial,” said Anderson, adding that the guide provides a blueprint for managing many, different types of crises from natural disasters to major crimes and police investigations.

Trinette Marquis and Jessica Hull of the California School Public Relations Association, also nominated Sakuma and her team, especially Jacqueline Dillard who developed the guidebook.

“The Emergency Communications Guidebook is a remarkable publication that has already become a valuable resource to local educational agencies (LEAs) throughout California,” they said.

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