

Fact Sheet

Regional Center of Orange County

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Regional Center System

What are regional centers?

The Regional Center of Orange County is one of 21 regional centers in the State of California created as a result of the 1969 Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Act (Welfare and Institutions Code, Sections 4500 and following). The Lanterman Act established a statewide network of regional centers to provide information and help coordinate services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The Act also established rights for individuals with developmental disabilities to receive treatment and services from these regional centers. Regional centers are private, nonprofit community-based agencies that contract with local businesses to offer a wide range of services to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Regional centers contract with the State Department of Developmental Services on an annual basis to deliver services. Contract agreements require each regional center to submit Performance Contract Objectives, which are specific goals regional centers must meet during the year. These goals are developed through community meetings where consumers, family members and service providers have the opportunity to provide input into the goals they feel their respective regional center should attain.

Regional centers are required to adhere to regulations contained in Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations, Sections 54000 and following. Each regional center is governed by a separate volunteer board of directors, which is made up of individuals with developmental disabilities (referred to as “consumers”), family members of consumers, a representative of the businesses that serve consumers, and other interested individuals. Each regional center’s board of directors hires a regional center executive director and sets policies for the administrative, operational and purchase-of-service functions of that regional center. Funding for regional centers comes from the California General Fund and the federal Medicaid program.

The Lanterman Act also created Area Boards and the State Council on Developmental Disabilities. There are 13 Area Boards, located in different regions throughout the state. The Lanterman Act established the Area Boards to monitor and review the delivery system for people with disabilities in each region. \

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities is a statewide organization whose members are appointed by the governor. The purpose of the State Council is to ensure protection of the legal, civil, and service rights of people with developmental disabilities and to conduct state-wide service planning activities.

California’s developmental centers, such as Fairview Developmental Center in Costa Mesa, are operated under the authority of the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Under the Lanterman Act and through contracts with the DDS, regional centers provide case management services for individuals residing in developmental centers, and are responsible for referrals into and out of the developmental centers.

Who do we serve?

Regional centers serve people who have developmental disabilities and live within their geographic areas. Eligible disabilities include mental retardation, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, autism and other disabling conditions that are closely related to or require treatment similar to mental retardation. Handicapping conditions that are solely physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities in nature are excluded. Any California resident who has a developmental disability that originated before age 18 and is substantially handicapping in three areas as defined in the Lanterman Act is entitled to receive ongoing services throughout his or her life.

Regional centers also provide early intervention services to infants 36 months and younger who are at risk of having a developmental disability. The services provided to eligible infants and their families are designed to meet the developmental, health and social needs necessary to promote the growth and development of children during their critical early years. Early intervention services for eligible children and their families are federally mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and in California, by the California Early Intervention Services Act (Senate Bill 1085). In California, the program is known as the Early Start Program, and is coordinated by regional centers. Also, in 2009, California established a Prevention Program to help babies and toddlers who may be at-risk for having a developmental delay or disability, but who do not meet the eligibility requirements for the Early Start program. The Prevention Program, like Early Start, is administered by the state's 21 regional centers.

In addition to at-risk infants and individuals with developmental disabilities, regional centers offer prenatal counseling for parents at high risk of having a child with a developmental disability. This may include funding of diagnostic genetic tests if parents do not have any other resource that covers the test costs.

What services do we provide?

Regional centers are responsible for providing intake, assessment and life-long case management. This includes a wide range of activities, some of which are funded by regional centers, such as adult day programs, respite, behavior management programs, infant development programs, residential care and independent living. Other services may include advocacy, transportation, day care, therapy services, vocational training and placement, independent living support, information about and referrals to community resources, mobility training; prenatal diagnosis; psychological and counseling services; residential care; social recreational programs, consumer, family, and provider training; and placement out of and admission into state developmental centers.