Better, Fairer Service Access – Why Service Coordinators Matter

The Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) represents the 21 non-profit regional centers that coordinate services for, and advocate on behalf of, over 350,000 Californians with developmental disabilities. Regional centers are the essential link between families and individuals with developmental disabilities and the services they need to build lives of their choosing. But the ability to build those lives, and billions in federal funds, are under threat.

*We request the full funding of regional center caseload ratio needs, inclusive of the staffing needs to support service coordinators required to meet statutory caseload requirements.*

**How People Are Served**
Each person served by a regional center is paired with a service coordinator to plan to meet their needs, which come from their diagnosis, age, support needs, preferences, and cultural values. The hallmarks of successful service coordination include developing trusting relationships, individualized plans, and securing the resources to make goals into realities. In recent years, though, this work has been impacted by growing bureaucratic mandates. Now staff spend almost *40% more time on paperwork* for each person than they did in 2013.

**The Problem**
Funding for these and other regional center positions hasn’t changed in years. In 1998, the state-budgeted salary for a service coordinator was $28,649. A federal audit found there were not enough staff to serve their communities, and California lost nearly a billion dollars in federal funds. Funding was restored after the state promised more staff would be hired to lower caseload ratios, so each service coordinator could better focus on fewer clients. The salary level was raised to $34,032 (FY2000-01). In 2020, that level *is still stuck at $34,032*, unchanged to reflect actual current salary costs.

**A Proven Solution**
When the Legislature commits to stabilizing the service system, *they succeed*. Extra funding in the 2015-16 session let regional centers immediately hire more service coordinators and narrow the staffing gap by nearly 20%. But those funds weren’t tied to a wage index, inflation, comparable state salaries, or some other frame of reference, so the benefit to individuals and their families has been eroded.

With a permanent fix, our system will be able to:
- Better serve diverse communities and meet their unique needs;
- Ensure billions of dollars in federal matching funds; and
- Support people with developmental disabilities who seek the most productive, community-integrated, and independent lives possible.