

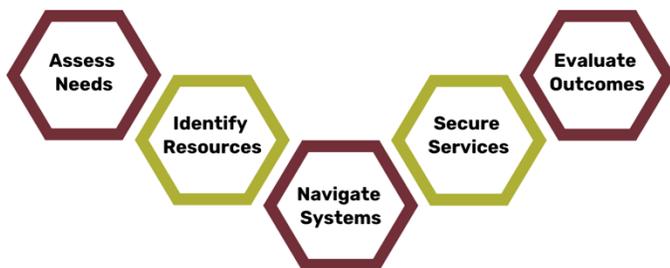
**Reflecting on the Pandemic – Why Service Coordinators Matter – APRIL 2021 UPDATE**

The Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) represents the 21 community-based regional centers that coordinate services and advocate for over 350,000 Californians with developmental disabilities. Regional centers are the essential link between individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, and the services they need to support them in good times and bad. But the skilled professionals they rely on are struggling to do so.

*We request a blueprint to achieve and maintain full funding of regional center caseload ratio needs, inclusive of appropriate supervision, required to meet statutory caseload requirements.*

**How People Are Served**

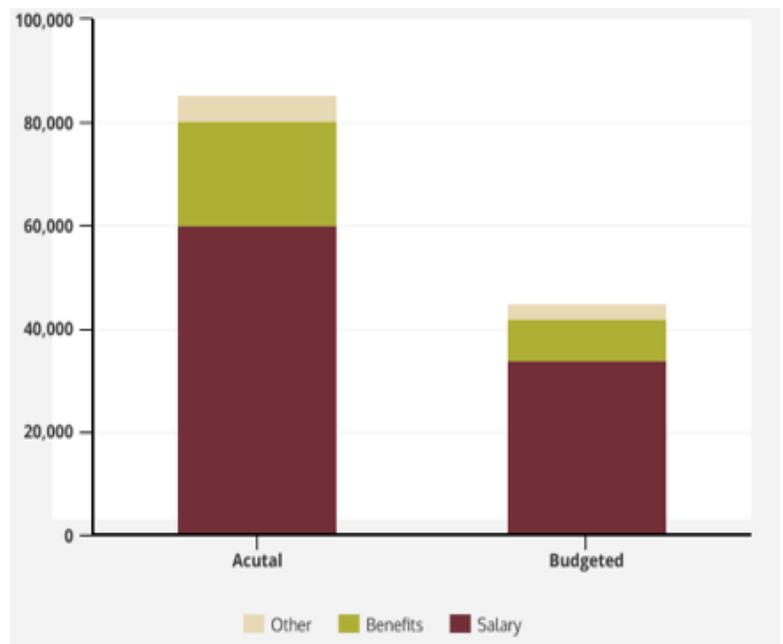
Each person served by a regional center is paired with a service coordinator to plan to meet their needs, which come from their diagnosis, age, support needs, preferences, and cultural values. Successful service coordination requires trusting relationships, individualized plans, and securing the resources to achieve individual goals.



The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of service coordinators, with individual needs changing rapidly due to simultaneous public health and economic crises. Service coordinators worked to carry out individual planning in the face of a high volume of urgent and unprecedented needs. People who interact with the most systems needed the most help piecing it all together.

**The Problem**

The state relies on over \$3 billion a year in federal funding to support the developmental services system. In exchange, the state promises regional centers will keep caseloads small enough to safely serve people and carry out other duties, such as intake and assessment. In 1998, California lost nearly a billion dollars in federal funds because these assurances weren't met. Caseload ratios were reduced, so each service coordinator could support fewer people. The budgeted salary level was raised to \$34,032 (285% of minimum wage), and it hasn't moved since. It is now 117% of statewide minimum wage, which is only about 52% the actual cost of a service coordinator. The state budgets for enough service coordinator positions, but not at actual labor costs. Regional centers spend more on service coordination than they receive for that function, but there was still a shortfall of 921 service coordinators statewide in March 2021.



### **A Plan to Succeed**

Meeting our commitment to the federal government and over 350,000 people served by regional centers is the right thing to do. ARCA and SEIU partnered in pursuing this funding in Fiscal Year 2020-21, before the onset of the pandemic. The full needed solution (\$60M GF annually) is the permanent fix that would let our system:

- Better serve diverse communities and meet their unique needs;
- Protect billions of dollars in federal matching funds;
- Allow service coordinators to focus on developing successful relationships with their clients; and
- Support people with developmental disabilities who seek the most productive, community-integrated, and independent lives possible, during the pandemic and beyond.

The chart below illustrates the progress that could be anticipated in achieving this goal at various levels of fiscal investment.

	<b>Mar-21</b>	<b>\$20M</b>	<b>\$30M</b>	<b>\$40M</b>	<b>\$50M</b>	<b>\$55M</b>	<b>\$60M</b>
<b>People Served (March 2021)</b>	360,335	360,335	360,335	360,335	360,335	360,335	360,335
<b>Service Coordinators (March 2021)</b>	4777	4777	4777	4777	4777	4777	4777
<b>New SC Positions</b>	0	309	464	618	773	850	921
<b>Total SC Positions</b>	4777	5086	5241	5395	5550	5627	5698
<b>Caseload Ratio</b>	75.43	70.85	68.75	66.79	64.93	64.04	63.24
<b>SC Shortfall</b>	921	612	457	303	148	71	0

As California plans for the future, it must take meaningful steps to adequately fund the essential service coordination so many rely upon and commit to sustainable funding for this critical service going forward.