

CALIFORNIA'S REGIONAL CENTER SERVICE SYSTEM

What Are Regional Centers?

Regional centers are independent, non-profit agencies that are the official point of entry to the state's service system for people with developmental disabilities and their families. For over 300,000 Californians with developmental disabilities, their regional center is where service starts. Businesses called "service providers" contract with centers to provide the many services and supports needed through an individual's life. This enables them to lead full, integrated lives in communities of their choosing. Each person's needs, goals, and services are described in an individual program plan (IPP) or individualized family service plan (IFSP). Regional centers' most visible role is to identify, coordinate, and monitor those services, but they also provide:

- Assessment, diagnosis, and referrals
- Lifelong individualized planning and case management
- Assistance in finding and accessing community and other resources
- Payment for services included in the IPP/IFSP for which other funds are not available
- Advocacy for the protection of legal, civil, and service rights
- Early intervention services (Early Start) for at-risk infants and their families
- Vocational services
- Supports to help ensure individuals can remain within their family
- Planning, placement, and monitoring for 24-hour out-of-home care
- Training and educational opportunities for individuals and families
- Community education about developmental disabilities
- Development of new services to better meet individual needs

But What Is A Developmental Disability?

The term **developmental disability** refers to a disability caused by a mental or physical impairment, begins before the 18th birthday, is expected to continue indefinitely, and presents a substantial disability in three life areas. It must be due to one of the following conditions:

- Intellectual Disability
- Autism
- Cerebral Palsy
- Epilepsy
- Disabling condition closely related to intellectual disability or requiring similar treatment.

Infants and toddlers (age 0 to 36 months) who are at risk of becoming developmentally disabled or who have a developmental delay may also qualify for intensive intervention services through the state's Early Start Program.