



Regional Center

How can the Regional Center help my Child?

- Regional Centers provide services and support to children with developmental delays or disabilities. For children under the age of 3, they can provide early intervention therapies like speech therapy (ST), occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), and child development services. After the age of 3, children who qualify for Regional Center services can receive family support services (for example, respite care) and individual training (for example, social skills classes or job training) that can be coordinated through the client's "Consumer Services Coordinator".

Who qualifies for Regional Center Services?

- Qualifying for Regional Center Services depends on a child's age and if they have a disability.
 - **Early Start Program (Before the age of 3)** - Any child who is at risk of having developmental disabilities or any child who has a 25% delay in one or more developmental areas can qualify for Regional Center services.
 - **Provisional Eligibility (Ages 3 and 4)** - Children who have significant challenges in at least two of the following areas of life: Self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction. Children do not have to have been diagnosed with a disability to qualify for services.
 - **Lanterman Eligibility (3 years of age and up)** – Children with a disability who meet "Lanterman Criteria" qualify for services throughout the course of their lifetime. "Lanterman Criteria" means that a child has a substantial disability that started in childhood and is expected to last for their whole life. Types of disabilities include: cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, intellectual disability, and other conditions closely related to intellectual disability. "Substantial" means that children with the listed disabilities must also have challenges in at least three of the following areas of living: communication skills (receptive and expressive language), learning abilities, self-care, mobility, self-direction, independent living skills, and economic self-sufficiency.

How do I apply to the Regional Center?

1. **Find your local Regional Center** - [Regional Center Lookup : CA Department of Developmental Services](#)
2. Go to your local Regional Center website and find the Apply for Services page. You can submit the application online or print a PDF and either return it to the Regional Center office in-person, email, or fax it.
3. TIPS:
4. You can ask your child's doctor for a letter explaining the reason why they think your child might qualify for services or needs testing. You can include this letter in your child's application.
5. Stay organized. We recommend starting a folder with contact information, dates that documents were submitted, and copies of documentation. Any time you speak with someone from the Regional Center, write down their name and contact info, the date, a summary of the conversation, and any follow-up steps. Here is an example: [***example]



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What happens if my child's Regional Center application is denied?

- If your child's Regional Center application is denied, you have 30 days to submit an appeal to this decision. Since 30 days is not a lot of time, we recommend you immediately reach back out to the Regional Center to ask about next steps to appeal. You may also want to provide additional documentation from your child's doctor, therapist, teachers, or special education department to be included in your appeal application.

What services and programs do Regional Centers offer for kids 3 years and up?

- At age three, the school system becomes responsible for providing children with the majority of the developmental therapies such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy (See our webpage about school support!). For kids 3 and up, the Regional Center can provide family support (like respite care) and individual trainings/programs (for example, social skills classes or vocational training programs for teens and young adults completing high school). The Regional Center can also assess the individual needs of the family to determine if there are additional services not funded by the school district or health insurance and can help provide these.
- Different Regional Centers offer different services/programs. If your child is a Regional Center client ("consumer"), it can sometimes be helpful to ask specifically about the following programs:
 - Parenting classes or support groups
 - Peer support groups for specific disability
 - Social Skills classes
 - Recreational programs (Camps, summer programs, sports/exercise, social groups, etc.)
 - Adaptive Skills Training (Cooking, managing money, etc.)
 - Interpreter/translation services
- Note: Regional Centers are the "Payer of Last Resort" and are required by law to provide services in the most cost-effective way, this means they will work with you to find ways to pay for services through supports like your school district, health insurance, or other available public benefit program, before the Regional Center can fund services.
- **How should I prepare for a meeting with the Regional Center?**
 - Make sure you bring your regional center folder to the meeting or have it available if the meeting takes place over the phone.
 - Take a couple minutes ahead of time to jot down questions for your child's Regional Center coordinator. These can be very specific questions (For example, do we have a date for when my child's autism testing will happen?) or can be meant to learn more about what services are available for your child (For example, Are there any afterschool programs that my son would be eligible for and that could support his disability?)
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- Update your child's Regional Center coordinator about how they are doing in general and what they are struggling with. This helps the coordinator get to know your child and allows them to better help your child and your family. For example, if a coordinator knows that your child is struggling with making friends, they may let you know if a new social skills group opens up and is taking participants.

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