

San Diego Regional Center (SDRC)

NOTE: Our case management system is moving from Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) to Child Welfare Services-California Automated Response and Engagement System (CWS-CARES). This policy includes language, forms/templates, and resources that will be reviewed and updated as we transition into CWS-CARES.

(Revised 08/21/26)

[Related Policies](#)

[Forms](#)

[Resources](#)

[Description](#)

[Eligibility](#)

[Early Start Program](#)

[Early Start Program Eligibility](#)

[Referral Process](#)

[Elevating Concerns](#)

[Educational and Developmental Rights](#)

[HHSA/SDRC Joint Clients](#)

[CWS/CMS](#)

[Respite](#)

[Resources](#)

[Alignment with SET](#)

Related Policies

Additional information can be found in the following policies:

- San Diego Regional Center - Placements
- SDRC - Dual Agency
- Respite Care Support Services
- Educational Rights of Foster Youth
- Special Education - Surrogate Parents
- Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program (DSEP)

Forms

The following form is referenced in this policy:

- 04-24A-P Authorization to Use or Disclose Protected Health Information – All Providers

Resources

The following resources are referenced in this policy:

- [SDRC Website](#)
 - [SDRC Eligibility Brochure](#)
 - [SDRC Services Brochure](#)
 - [SDRC Intake Services Brochure](#)
 - CFWB Roster listing SDRC Liaisons
-

Resources (cont.)

Additional Advocacy and Regional Center information/resources include:

Title (& link to website)	Description
Disability Rights California	See especially the “Resources & Publications” section of the website.
A Guide to California’s Regional Center Services Systems	Brochure from California Department of Developmental Services.
Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA)	Made up of Regional Center Executive Directors; Formulates annual Goals and Objectives. Website includes California Regional Center Directory .
Department of Developmental Services Appeals & Complaints	Specific complaints & appeals information for California Regional Center.

Description

The [Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Act](#) (“Lanterman Act”) is the law that gives people with developmental disabilities in California the right to services and supports that will allow them to live a more independent and normal life. The Lanterman Act begins with section 4500 and runs through section 4846 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC). The services and supports must meet both the needs and the choices of each person individually per [WIC § 4501](#), § [4512\(b\)](#).

The San Diego Regional Center (SDRC) serves persons with developmental disabilities. It is a state-funded, private non-profit organization which contracts annually with the State Department of Developmental Services to provide services to consumers. SDRC is one of 21 Regional Centers in the State of California whose services are mandated under the Lanterman Act.

Eligibility

To be eligible for SDRC services, the person must be a resident of San Diego or Imperial County who is diagnosed with a developmental disability that originates before age 18, and constitutes a substantial disability which is expected to continue throughout life (as defined in [WIC 4512](#)). Clients residing in other counties will utilize the services of their local Regional Center. If a client qualifies for services at one Regional Center, they qualify at all locations. There is no need for a re-determination if a client moves.

Eligibility (cont.)

The following table outlines the eligibility requirements and services for SDRC:

Eligibility	Services
• Age 3 years and older • Residence in San Diego or Imperial County • No financial qualifications • Developmental Disability: ○ Intellectual Disability ○ Cerebral Palsy ○ Epilepsy ○ Autism ○ Other conditions similar to intellectual disability AND • Originated prior to age 18 years AND • Is likely to continue indefinitely AND • Constitutes a substantial disability in 3 or more of the following areas: ○ Communication ○ Learning ○ Self-Direction ○ Capacity for independent living ○ Economic Self-Sufficiency ○ Self-Care ○ Mobility	• Evaluation to determine eligibility • Assessment to assist with program planning • Development of the Individual Program Plan (IPP) • Case Management/Service Coordination • Coordination of developmental disability services which may include: ○ Residential Services ○ Work Program ○ Transportation ○ Psychological Services ○ Nursing Services ○ Respite ○ Behavior Intervention ○ Physical Therapy ○ Medical Services

To receive Regional Center services, a client does not have to be a legal US citizen. The client must be a California resident as the Regional Center system is a California system. If a client moves out of state, they must contact the developmental disabilities system in that state. Regional Center does not close cases. They may become inactive during seasons where services are not being provided, but once eligible the client is eligible for life.

NOTE: In order to process intakes, SDRC must be contacted by the parent or legal guardian of a minor, the conservator, or the unconserved adult. The SW may also initiate an SDRC referral on behalf of a child (with parental consent) but the SW cannot sign the consent, intake, or release of information forms required to begin services.

Eligibility (cont.)

An Individual Program Plan (IPP) identifies a consumer's service needs based upon developmental disability, consumer preference, and program and cost effectiveness. Specific, time-limited, measurable objectives are developed for the service/support need and included in the IPP. SWs should request a copy of the IPP from the child's service coordinator to understand the services the child receives.

Early Start program

California Early Start program is a federally funded program through Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ([IDEA](#)). The program is designed to ensure that eligible infants and toddlers (ages 0 to 3) and their families receive evaluation and assessment of their current functioning and coordinated services early enough to make a difference in development (per [California Government Code 95014](#)).

The Early Start Program brings together resources and services to help infants and toddlers grow and learn and provides support to families to enhance their child's development. Early intervention services are planned and delivered to help prevent or lessen the need for special services later in the child's life. The goal is to help answer questions and concerns about each child's development and to assure that infants and toddlers are off to the best possible start.

If a child has an open case with CFWB, the child will be identified by through the [Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program \(DSEP\)](#) for a screening. DSEP will reach out to the assigned SW to request some additional information. DSEP can refer children to SDRC Early Start program, when applicable.

If a child does not have an open case with CFWB, please see the Early Start intake process information in the referral section of this document.

Early Start Program Eligibility

Eligibility	Services
• Birth to age 3 years • Residence in San Diego or Imperial County • 25% developmental delay in one or more of the following five areas: ○ Cognitive ○ Physical and motor, including vision and hearing ○ Communication ○ Social/Emotional ○ Adaptive	• Evaluation in the five areas of development to determine eligibility. • Development of an individual • Family Services Plan (IFSP), including age 3 transition planning. • Coordination of required Early Intervention services based on the needs of the child.

**Early Start Program
Eligibility (cont.)**

Eligibility	Services
OR • Established Risk for developmental disability: conditions known to cause delays in development (ex. Down Syndrome). OR • At risk for a developmental disability (two or more factors below): ○ Less than 32 weeks gestation and/or birth weight less than 1500 grams ○ Assisted ventilator for 48 hours or longer during first 28 days of life ○ Small for gestational age ○ Asphyxia neonatorum ○ Severe and persistent metabolic seizures ○ Multiple congenital abnormalities ○ Neonatal seizures or nonfebrile seizures during first three years ○ CNS lesion or CNS infection ○ Biomedical insult ○ Prenatal substance exposure, positive tox screen or withdrawal ○ Fetal Alcohol Syndrome ○ Clinically failure to thrive ○ Persistent hypertonia or hypotonia OR • Parent of the infant/toddler is a person with a developmental disability	Services may include: ○ Audiology (Hearing) ○ Speech & Language Pathology ○ Vision Services ○ Occupational Therapy ○ Health Services ○ Service Coordination ○ Psychological Services ○ Nutrition Services ○ Family Training, counseling, home visits ○ Physical Therapy ○ Nursing Services ○ Transportation and related costs ○ Medical Services (evaluation for early intervention services) ○ Sign Language/Cued Language Services

Referral Process

Make a referral to SDRC Early Start (ages 0-3).

Make a referral to SDRC (over age 3).

Referral Process (cont.)

SDRC will require a copy of the 04-24A-P Authorization to Use or Disclose Protected Health Information or 04-24C Order Authorizing Examination and Treatment – Court form and a copy of the Juvenile Court Minute Order declaring the child a dependent if we are referring the child to services.

CFWB staff have a direct point of contact with an Intake Supervisor:

Phone: (858) 496-4341 ; fax #: 858-496-4302

NOTE: This is for CFWB staff use only.

SDRC has their own intake, consent, and release of information forms that must be signed by the parent, guardian, or Court before services can be provided to a dependent child. **SWs cannot sign the intake agreement, consent forms, or the consent for release of information.**

Regional Center's intake process is as follows:

Step	Action
1	Once a referral is made, the initial intake shall be performed within 15 business days following the request for assistance, should the applicant appear to be appropriate for an assessment/evaluation.
2	At the time of the initial contact with a Service Coordinator: • Regional Center Services are explained, • applicant information is gathered, • and determination is made if a diagnostic evaluation is needed.
3	If an assessment is needed, the assessment shall be completed within 120 days following the initial intake (or 60 days if the child is at risk*). Assessments may include reviewing available historical diagnostic records and/or the provision of necessary tests/evaluations. * Assessments must be performed within 60 days if: • a delay in assessing would expose the client to any unnecessary risk to their health and safety, or to cause significant further delay in mental or physical development; or • there would be an imminent risk of placement in a more restrictive environment.
4	• If the applicant is eligible for Regional Center services, a meeting is held to formulate a plan for service. The Individual Program Plan (IPP), which identifies goals, services, and supports needed will be completed within 60 days of the eligibility determination. • If the applicant is found NOT to be eligible for Regional Center services, the intake service coordinator will refer the applicant to community resources and the case is closed. The family is informed of the appeal process if they disagree with the decision via the notice of action (NOA). An appeal must be filed within 30 days of the action.

**Referral Process
(cont.)**

Step	Action
5	For the provision of ongoing services, the case is transferred to a case management unit serving the geographic area in which the client/consumer resides. They will be assigned a Service Coordinator for case management.

Elevating Concerns

If the client or authorized representative is dissatisfied with any decision or action of the Regional Center or State Developmental Center, there are venues to have those concerns addressed. This may mean that eligibility was denied or services are considered inadequate or service decisions seem contrary to the client's best interest.

Options include:

- Filing for a [Fair Hearing Request](#): - The Fair Hearing Process is the procedure to use if you disagree with the nature, scope, or amount of services you receive or are requesting the Regional Center to provide. Under this process, you are appealing a Regional Center decision.
- Filing a general Complaint: <https://www.dds.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/DS255.pdf> - The Consumer Complaint Process is the procedure to use if you believe that the Regional Center or a provider has violated or improperly withheld a right to which you are entitled. Under this process, you are asking the Regional Center or provider to change its procedures for dealing with you and others in the future (as per WIC 4731).
- Utilizing the advocacy [resources](#).

If a client/consumer has an issue with their Regional Center service coordinator, The Lanterman Act (WIC 4500-4900) provides for a change of service coordinator. The client cannot choose the new coordinator, but may request a change.

**Educational and
Developmental
Rights**

Whenever parents or legal guardians are unable to do educational planning for their children, and the child is in out-of-home care, the Juvenile Court must identify a responsible adult to assume education rights or request the school appoint a surrogate parent if the child has special education needs.

See [Special Education - Surrogate Parents](#) and [Educational Rights for Foster Youth policies](#) for more details.

The law allows for a developmental services decision maker to be appointed by the court if the parent is unwilling or unable to sign for and authorize services such as SDRC's.

The [California Rules of Court, rules 5.649 - 5.652](#), provide mandatory guidelines on educational or developmental rights for children in foster care or wards of the court.

Educational and Developmental Rights (cont.)

A developmental rights holder will be requested when a child is or will need developmental services, such as 0 to 3 year olds needing services through Regional Center or other developmental services, as recommended by Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program (DSEP). The law:

- authorizes the court to limit the right of a parent/guardian to make decisions about their child's developmental services
- authorizes the court to make those decisions, or to appoint a responsible adult to make them
- gives the child's caregiver the right to make developmental services decisions when the child's permanent plan is long-term foster care, unless the court specifies another decision-maker
- gives the developmental services decision-maker the right to access the child's information, participate in the individual program plan (IPP) process, and participate in the fair hearing process.

If a developmental rights holder is required, follow the procedures outlined in the [Educational Rights for Foster Youth](#) policy.

HHSA/SDRC Joint Clients

For children and youth who are clients of CFWB and active to SDRC, there are several tools to assist CFWB staff in understanding SDRC roles, functions, and services. They are as follows:

- An SDRC/CFWB Interagency Agreement. Contact the person listed at the bottom of this file to obtain a copy of the Interagency Agreement.
 - A list of SDRC Liaison in the [CFWB roster](#).
 - [San Diego Regional Center - Placements](#) policy for placement assistance.
 - The SDRC Individual Program Plan (IPP). SWs should participate in the development of the IPP and/or request a copy.
 - [SDRC-Dual Agency](#) policy for more information on dependent children who are clients of SDRC.
-

CWS/CMS

For children and youth who are clients of CFWB and active to SDRC for services over age 3, the SW must identify the SDRC consumers in CWS/CMS:

- Go to the Client Management Section Button (Blue) and select the child's notebook.
 - Click on the Existing Health icon.
 - Select the child's health notebook.
 - In the Dual-Agency services received box, click on the plus (+) sign and select Regional Center in the drop-down menu.
 - Enter the start date of SDRC services.
-

Respite

CFWB can pay for respite services for the biological parents when the need meets the current CFWB criteria in [Respite Care Support Services](#). Biological parents require pre-approval for respite hours needed to fulfill their case plan services. This includes Family Reunification, Family Maintenance, and Voluntary Services cases.

Respite (cont.)

Respite services may be purchased for resource parents and Foster Family Agency (FFA) homes when funds are available and meet the eligibility requirements.

SDRC will purchase respite services when any one of the following apply:

- The need cannot be safely provided by someone other than a medical professional
- The child for whom the respite is needed is a SDRC consumer
- The protective issues are the result of stress related to dealing with the child who has a developmental disability
- The family does not meet the HHSA CFWB respite criteria and/or HHSA CFWB respite funds are depleted for the year.

NOTE: SDRC can purchase services only after the child has been determined eligible for the Early Start or SDRC services and the IFSP team or IPP planning team determines the need for service(s).

Alignment with SET

This policy aligns with [SET Value #4](#) “A Shared Responsibility with Community Partners” by identifying and strengthening informal and formal resources in every community.
