



An In-depth Look: State of California's Role in Serving Adults with Autism

In California, the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act and related laws define the obligations of the state and the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to provide services and supports to persons with developmental disabilities. Individuals with autism are eligible to receive services over a person's lifetime.

Regional Center Services

Regional centers are the primary source of care coordination and services for adult with autism. Other state and local entities provide health, vocational, and social services. Each consumer served by the Regional Centers has an individual program plan (IPP) that guides the purchase of services. Services may include care coordination, residential services, vocational services, day programs, respite, transportation, advocacy, and other services that support activities of daily living over a person's lifetime. With some limited exceptions where there is a family share of cost for certain services, services are provided at no charge using federal and state funds. Regional Centers are required to pursue generic resources provided by other public agencies and health insurance coverage when they are available and to provide services in the most cost efficient manner.

Residential Services

Adults with autism are less likely than children with autism to live in their family's homes. Adults with autism may access independent and supported living services to help them live in homes they own or lease in the community. They may also live in 24-hour nonmedical community care facilities licensed by the state Department of Social Services (DSS), DDS-operated developmental centers, and 24-hour intermediate care facilities that are health facilities licensed by the state Department of Health Services (DHS). Increased needs for housing and service providers to operate facilities are anticipated.

Employment Services

Regional centers fund habilitation services for adults with developmental disabilities that are no longer in school, have chosen paid work, are not capable of competitive employment, and would not benefit from vocational rehabilitation services offered to persons with disabilities through the state Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) because the person's disability is too severe.

Habilitation Services

Habilitation services funded through regional centers include Work Activity Programs (WAP) and Supported Employment Programs (SEP). WAP services are provided at work activity centers and persons are paid according to productive capacity. WAP services are intended to promote development of physical capacities, psychomotor skills, work habits, health and safety practices, and other work-related skills. SEP services are specialized services provided in an integrated work setting, such as direct supervision and training (or job coaching) and ongoing post-employment services, in order to help the person attain and retain community integrated employment.

Department of Rehabilitation Services

Adults with autism may receive services through the state Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). DOR is responsible for assisting Californians with disabilities to obtain and retain employment and maximize their ability to live independently in their communities. DOR provides vocational rehabilitation services to Californians with all types of disabilities through over 100 offices statewide. Services include employment counseling training and education, mobility and transportation aids, and job search and placement assistance. Consumers of the regional centers may receive DOR services rather than habilitation services through the regional center if DOR services are determined to be appropriate for the individual.

DOR also administers an independent living program that provides technical assistance and financial support for 29 independent living centers (ILCs) and the State Independent Living Council (SILC). SILC prepares a state plan for independent living which sets the policy and funding levels for the ILCs and services. ILCs are community-based, nonprofit agencies designed and operated by individuals with disabilities. All ILCs provide peer counseling, independent living skills training, housing assistance, information and referral, advocacy, and assistive technology. Other services may be provided by individual centers.

Other Services

Californians with autism may also receive services provided by other state and local entities and programs. Some of the major services are identified below.

- Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program provides health care coverage for eligible low-income individuals, including persons with developmental disabilities. Pursuant to a federal Medicaid waiver for home and community-based services, Medi-Cal services may be provided to Californians with developmental disabilities who would otherwise require care in an institution regardless of the parents' or the spouse's income level.
- The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program, a component of Medi-Cal, provides personal assistance services for eligible individuals, including persons with developmental disabilities so they can remain living in their homes.
- The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program is a federal program that provides cash assistance to citizens who are age 65 and older, blind, or disabled. The State Supplementary Payment program (SSP) is a state program that provides additional cash assistance to SSI recipients.
- Community colleges, trade schools, and other colleges and universities in California may provide education and vocational training to persons with developmental disabilities.
- Intensive, one-on-one job services are available to persons with disabilities and others requiring special assistance through local job centers overseen by the Employment Development Department (EDD). Some persons with disabilities may receive additional specialized job search, assessment, education and training, placement, and retention services through the Jobs for All (JFA) program which is a collaborative effort between EDD and DOR.

Source: California Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism
<http://senweb03.senate.ca.gov/autism/index.html>