

Unifying The Regional Centers: Improving Regional Center Website Navigation and Transparency of Resources.

Executive Summary

Regional Centers are an important part of access to services to support people living with disabilities. We propose to the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) that oversees Regional Centers to implement a policy to standardize the information on each Regional Center website. Currently, the websites where services are listed vary across Regional Centers, they can list outdated information, and have information that is unclear. We propose a standardized form that Regional Centers must submit to outline services and requirements that must be updated for the site/service to continue providing services. In addition, we would recommend Regional Centers provide a form for users to submit to report outdated information that sites would then need to update in a given time allotment to retain the ability to continue as service providers. This policy would address the problems of outdated information, variability across Regional Center organization of services and reduce vague information.

Description of Problem

The DDS identifies a vision of “People with intellectual and developmental disabilities experience respect for their culture and language preferences, their choices, beliefs, values, needs, and goals, from a person-centered service system made up of a network of community agencies that provide high quality, outcome-based and equitable services.” DDS oversees the coordination and delivery of services for Californians with developmental disabilities through a statewide network of 21 community-based, non-profit agencies known as Regional Centers. Regional Centers provide assessments, determine eligibility for services, and offer case management services. Regional Centers also develop, purchase, and coordinate the services in each person’s Individual Program Plan. Currently, the specificity of service listings on DDS websites varies across Regional Centers. Additionally, the service listings can be outdated and vague. This issue creates a barrier for users to access high quality, outcome-based equitable services, as noted in the DDS vision. Users may find it difficult to understand the services provided and make informed decisions about goodness of fit for individuals living with developmental disabilities.

Policy Solution

A standardized form with required information for all services would allow for transparency and greater equitable access. Regional Centers could make it a requirement for service providers to complete the form to have their services showcased on their websites. In addition, policies to uphold

regular updates of this form would benefit users. A sample form (Appendix A) has been created as a guide to illustrate what kind of information could be collected from service providers. Opposition to this policy change may note that asking every service provider to provide required information could be laborious and create barriers to service providers continuing partnership with Regional Centers. However, all service providers should share the mission of equitable, accessible description of services provided and be committed to updated and clear information for informed decision-making. In addition, not all Regional Centers provide the same services. Greater transparency is needed as to what services are provided at each specific center. Not all Regional Centers have vendored service providers, in this case the Regional Center could use sample form (Appendix A) to delineate which services are available to clients on their individual websites.

Conclusion

To conclude, DDS identifies with a vision of person-centered provision of services. Regional Centers are a direct access point for many individuals living with disabilities to receive equitable and accessible care. By developing a policy that create accountability and transparency across Regional Center websites and service providers, we can create a warm access point that allows for individuals to assess services and choose what works best for their lifestyle and wellness needs.

Appendix A

Standardized Regional Center Resource Form

Vendor number:

Category of services (social recreation, respite, etc.):

Type of Service:

Requirements to attend (e.g. symptom presentation/severity):

Age range for program:

Gender affirming care?

Are trial classes available or required:

Duration of service (e.g. on-going, twice during lifetime):

Insurance coverage:

Location:

Hours of Operations:

Current Waitlist:

Language(s) Spoken: