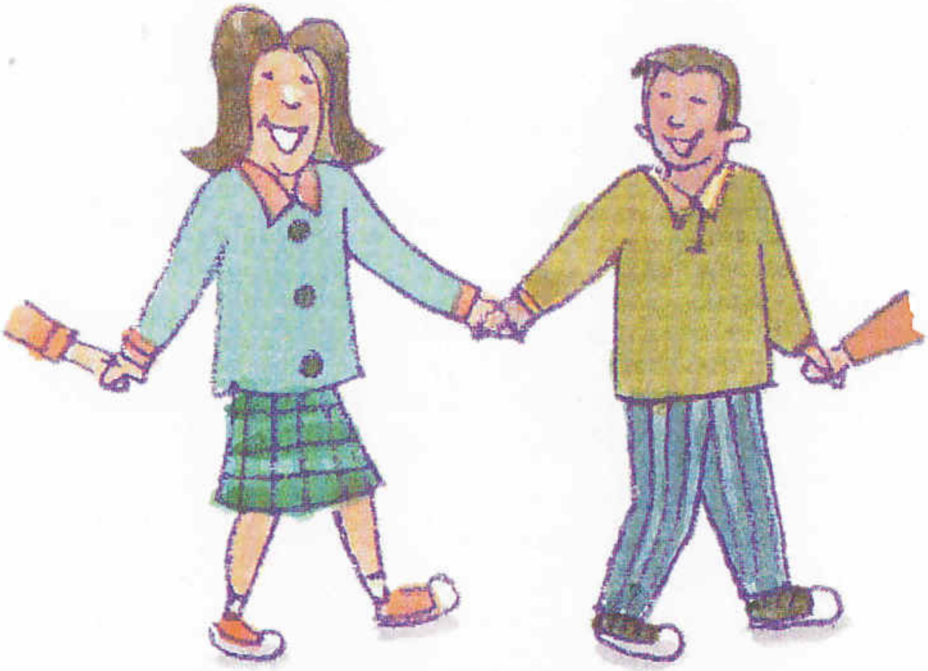
Tri-Counties Regional Center
Consumer Handbook

Working in partnership with you.



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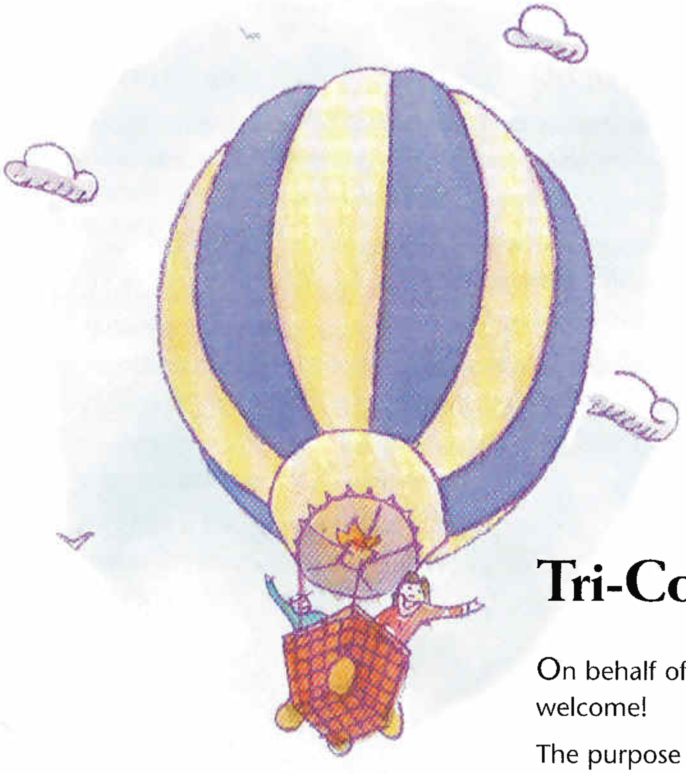

Tri-Counties Regional Center

On behalf of the governing board and staff of Tri-Counties Regional Center, welcome!

The purpose of this handbook is to tell you about the regional center and developmental services system. With good information, persons with developmental disabilities and their families can become even more capable, competent decision-makers. When that happens, they begin to view professionals as equals, rather than leaders, on their team. The relationship with regional center staff then becomes more of a partnership. The information in this handbook is taken directly from the Lanterman Act, including 2000 changes. The Lanterman Act is the California law stating how supports and services should be provided in our State. The intent is to build on the strengths and capabilities of children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families. At Tri-Counties Regional Center, our primary goal is to live up to that spirit.

Bernie Schaeffer

Publications Specialist

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Initial Intake and Assessment Services

Definitions

- Any person believed to have a developmental disability, and any person believed to have a high risk of becoming the parent of a developmentally disabled infant, is eligible for initial intake and assessment services.
- In addition, any infant having a high risk of becoming developmentally disabled is eligible for initial intake and assessment services.
- "High risk infant" means a child who has a developmental delay or is at risk of either becoming developmentally delayed or having a substantial developmental disability.
- Assessment means evaluations and tests including, but not limited to, intelligence tests, adaptive functioning tests, neurological and neuro psychological tests, diagnostic tests performed by a physician, and psychiatric tests.

Purpose

- To find out whether a child or adult has a "developmental disability."
- To tell you about the services provided by the regional center and other agencies in the community that may be useful to persons with developmental disabilities or their families.
- To tell you about the services available through the local Area Board and the Protection and Advocacy agency.

What to expect from the regional center

- An initial intake screening within 15 working days after you ask for help.
- A decision whether assessment is needed.
- An assessment, if needed, done within 60 days (45 days for "high risk infants" or toddlers) after initial intake.

Your rights

- To assessments done by qualified individuals and performed in natural environments (i.e. home, school, community) whenever possible.
- To an assessment process which is sensitive to your personal lifestyle and the cultural background of you and your family.
- To be eligible for services from one regional center to another unless a comprehensive reassessment proves otherwise.

Children and adults who are substantially disabled due to conditions falling within the legal definition of "developmental disability" are eligible for services. These conditions are mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autism. Or, the person may have a condition like mental retardation or which requires similar treatment. The onset of these conditions must have been prior to age 18. Finally, an infant or young child under age three may be accepted as "high risk" because of a significant delay in one or more areas, because of medical problems and complications, or because of having a parent with a developmental disability. Children accepted as "high risk" will be reviewed at age three to see whether they continue to qualify for services.

The Person-Centered Individual Program Plan (IPP)

Definitions

- A person-centered IPP is prepared by the person with developmental disabilities, one or more people from the regional center (including the service coordinator) and, as appropriate, service providers, the person's parents, legal guardian, or conservator , or authorized representative.
- Contains goals or outcomes based upon the needs, preferences, strengths and life choices of the person with developmental disabilities.
- Includes a statement of specific, time-limited objectives for reaching the person's goals and meeting his or her needs.

Purpose

- To help the person make friends and be a part of the community where the person lives, works, goes to school, and has fun; to have more of a say in life; to assume positive community roles; and to learn how to achieve these goals.
- When it is in the best interests of the child and family, to help the family keep the child at home.

What to expect from the regional center

- Assessments done by qualified individuals and carried out in natural environments (i.e. home, school, community) whenever possible.
- A chance for concerns and priorities to be talked over by the person, his or her parents and other family members, friends, advocates, providers of services and supports, and other agencies.
- For children with developmental disabilities, outcomes based on the strengths, preferences, and needs of the child and the family unit as a whole.
- For persons found eligible for regional center services, an IPP written within 60 days after the eligibility has been established.
- A person-centered planning team meeting no less often than once every three years.

Your rights

- To ask for review of the IPP anytime (the meeting must occur within 30 days after you ask for it).
- To ask others to attend person-centered planning team meetings (your family and community are major sources of support).
- If you choose, to ask the regional center to notify by mail the designated representative you want to attend a person-centered planning team meeting.
- To request another meeting within 15 days if agreement cannot be reached regarding supports and services to be provided.
- Signatures of the regional center representative and person with a disability on the IPP prior to implementation.
- Approximate start dates for services and supports and timelines for actions in the IPP.

What you can do:

- Keep a record of your child's history with professionals.
- Document your child's progress and any barriers to progress.
- Identify your natural resources.
- Ask questions.
- Communicate your needs and priorities.
- Keep your service coordinator informed.
- Be active participants in planning.
- Collaborate with professionals.
- Have contact with other parents.
- Follow through on recommendations.
- Participate in TCRC activities.
- Volunteer.
- Think positively and plan for success.

Service Coordination

Definitions

To help you guide the service planning process, service coordination includes these activities:

- Being an important member of your planning team and helping to choose the most important outcomes.
- Giving you service and resource options.
- Securing services by obtaining them first from generic agencies and other resources, or through TCRC purchase according to TCRC Service Policies.
- Getting to know the person and family, helping to check progress.
- Helping to update the plan as necessary.

Purpose

- To listen to your concerns and provide support, information, and choices.

What to expect from the regional center

- Assignment of a service coordinator (your key contact at TCRC) to help with "transitions" and to "coordinate" all of the services that are needed to help you achieve desired outcomes.

Your rights

- To ask for a change of service coordinator by contacting the consumer services manager at your local TCRC office.
- To become your own service coordinator.
- If you become your own service coordinator, to receive ongoing information and support from the regional center.
- To receive written notice within 10 business days of any permanent change in the assigned service coordinator.

Your responsibilities

- If you are the service coordinator, to follow the agreed-upon IPP and give any reasonable information and reports asked for by the regional center.

Collecting & Sharing Information

Definitions

- Information includes facts about consumers and families as well as community supports and services.

Purpose

- To learn what individuals with developmental disabilities and their families need and want.
- To teach persons and families about available supports and services.
- To make good referrals to community agencies for needed supports and services.
- To decide if services and supports have been provided as planned and reasonable progress made.

What to expect from the regional center

- Service coordinators and other specialists available to answer your questions.
- Information — Such as books, pamphlets, videos, audio tapes, internet connection — available through the regional center and family resource centers.
- Regular and frequent training opportunities.
- Information about supports and services available in your community, parent support groups, and consumer self-advocacy organizations.

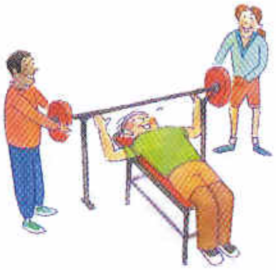
Your rights

- To refuse release of personal information or records unless you have signed a consent form.

Join a support group to find non-critical acceptance, be in an environment of hope that will give you strength, learn new solutions to your problems by helping solve problems for others, keep a sense of humor.

Obtaining Services and Supports

Definitions



Services and supports (which are individualized to promote desired outcomes) include, but are not limited to, diagnosis; evaluation; personal care; day care; domiciliary care; special living arrangements; physical, occupational, and speech therapy; training; education; supported and sheltered employment; mental health services; recreation; counseling of the individual with a disability and his or her family; protective and other social and sociolegal services; information and referral services; follow-along services; adaptive equipment and supplies; advocacy assistance, including self-advocacy training; facilitation and peer advocates; assessment; assistance in locating a home; child care; behavior training and behavior modification programs; camping; community integration services; community support; daily living skills training; emergency and crisis intervention; facilitating circles of support; habilitation; homemaker services; infant stimulation; paid roommates; paid neighbors; respite; short term assistance; travel training; training for parents with developmental disabilities; vouchers and transportation services necessary to ensure delivery of services to persons with developmental disabilities.

Purpose

- To allow children with developmental disabilities to live with their families by meeting with the family to discuss the situation when additional specialized services may be needed to prevent out-of-home placement.
- To allow adults with developmental disabilities to live as independently as possible in the community, and persons of all ages to relate in a meaningful way to people without disabilities.

What to expect from the regional center

- A TCRC Menu of Community Services to help you know what's available.
- Discussion of necessary services and supports which can be provided in community, home, work, and recreational settings— including unpaid "natural supports" (friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.).
- Discussion and help getting services and supports from "generic" service agencies which have a legal responsibility to serve all members of the general public and are receiving public funds. Supplemental Security Income (SSI), California Children's Services (CCS), and local County Mental Health Services are examples of generic services. Some of these services are only available to people below a certain income level. TCRC staff will help you learn about and contact these services.
- Discussion of cost-effective services which may be purchased by TCRC only after "natural supports" and "generic" service agencies have been used or ruled out.
- Reference to regional center board approved Service Policies which are rules to help the planning team make fair and equitable decisions about the types and amounts of services purchased by TCRC.

Your rights

- To talk over with the regional center your choice of service providers.
- To have services and supports which are flexible and individually tailored to meet your needs.
- To appeal if you are dissatisfied with any service decision or action by the regional center. You should receive by mail a fair hearing packet including a fair hearing request form and booklet (if not, contact your service coordinator). Due process now includes the choice of a voluntary informal meeting and/or mediation.
- When transferring from one regional center to another, to receive the same types and levels of supports and services, if available, or to develop a new IPP within 30 days.
- To resolve conflicts with the agency providing you direct services by using their fair hearing procedure.
- To file a complaint with the regional center Clients' Rights Advocate if you believe your rights have been violated by the regional center or service provider.

A primary purpose of obtaining services and supports is to allow children with developmental disabilities to live with their families.

Monitoring Implementation of the IPP

Definitions

Monitoring means a regular review of the individual program plan by you and TCRC staff.

Purpose

- To find out if services were provided.
- To decide whether outcomes were met when people said they were going to be.
- To learn whether you are satisfied with the IPP and the way it is being carried out.
- To ensure, on a quarterly basis, that a person in a licensed living arrangement, independent living, or supported living is safe and healthy.
- To carry out a general health status review, when agreed to by the planning team.

What to expect from the regional center

- A review of the individual program plan whenever you ask but no less than once every three years.
- Identification of services and supports that are ineffective or of poor quality and consultation, training or technical assistance to agencies or individual providers to upgrade the quality of services and supports.

Your rights

- To stop a service or support provided by an agency when you are dissatisfied and you and the regional center agree that planned supports and services have not been provided or reasonable progress has not been made toward achieving outcomes.
- A response from the regional center within two hours of the time an emergency call is placed, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Your responsibilities

- To let the regional center know about any services you are getting that are ineffective or of poor quality.
- To think about volunteering for a quality assurance evaluation team.

You have a right to stop a service or support provided by an agency when you are dissatisfied and you and the regional center agree that planned supports and services have not been provided or reasonable progress has not been made toward achieving outcomes.

Finding a Place to Live

Definitions

Places to live include cost-effective support services for persons in homes they own or lease, foster family placements, health care facilities, and licensed community care facilities.

Purpose

- To help the individual or family decide where and with whom the person will live.
- To keep people with developmental disabilities from having to leave their home communities.
- When it is in the best interests of the child and family, to help the family keep the child at home.

What to expect from the regional center

- Good information to help make choices about living arrangements.
- The chance to visit different places to live.
- Quarterly face-to-face monitoring of people in out-of-home, independent living and supported living settings.
- Not less than two unannounced monitoring visits each year to licensed facilities.
- Annual facility reviews of community care licensed facilities (CCFs).
- Quality assurance evaluation at least every three years (in CCFs).

Your rights

- To be a part of the community including living in regular neighborhoods.
- To ask for emergency help so you can stay living where you are.
- If moving can't be helped, to go back to where you want to live (with the supports you need) as soon as possible.
- For persons living in out-of-home placements, supported living or independent living arrangements, a life quality assessment conducted by the local area board no less than once every three years or more frequently, if requested.
- To have your rights clearly posted in a residential facility in a way you can understand.
- For children in an out-of-home living arrangement to live in close proximity to their family home.
- For an assessment of a consumer's need for supported living services to begin before age 18.

Places to live include cost-effective support services for persons in homes they own or lease, foster family placements, health care facilities, and licensed community care facilities.

Clients' Rights Advocacy

Definitions

Advocacy efforts protect the civil, legal and service rights of persons with developmental disabilities.

Purpose

To make sure that persons with developmental disabilities have the same legal rights and responsibilities given all other individuals by the United States Constitution and laws and the Constitution and laws of the State of California.

What to expect from the regional center

- Advocacy for, and protection of, the civil, legal, and service rights of persons with developmental disabilities.
- Information about advocacy services available through the local Area Board and the Protection and Advocacy agency and the regional center consumer advocate.
- Information about the complaint and appeal processes.

Your rights

- To treatment and habilitation supports and services in the least restrictive environment.
- To dignity, privacy, and humane care.
- To participate in an appropriate program of publicly supported education, regardless of severity of disability.
- To prompt medical care and treatment.
- To religious freedom and practice.
- To social interaction and participation in community activities.
- To physical exercise and recreational activities.
- To be free from harm, including unnecessary physical restraint or isolation, excessive medication, abuse or neglect.
- To be free from hazardous procedures.
- To make choices in your own life.

Regional Center Board Meetings

Definitions

Board meetings include meetings of the full body as well as meetings run by any board committee.

Purpose

Regional center boards — made up of consumers, parents and others — contract with the State of California to provide a single starting place in the community where persons with developmental disabilities and their families can go for help.

What to expect from the regional center

- A governing board made up of people who are interested in and know about developmental disabilities.
  - Membership including persons with legal, management, public relations, and developmental program skills.
  - Representatives of the different types of disability served by the regional center.
  - People from the different geographic areas served by the regional center and having diverse ethnic characteristics.

Your rights

- To go to board meetings which are open and public.
- To receive notices, if you request them, mailed at least seven days in advance of each meeting.
- To video tape or tape record the meetings.

Regional center boards contract with the State of California to provide a single starting place in the community where persons with developmental disabilities and their families can go for help.