

Guide to Lanterman Regional Center for Early Start Families



FRANK D. LANTERMAN
REGIONAL CENTER

Getting a Good Start

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*FAQ – Frequently Asked Question

Our mission is...

To enable people with developmental disabilities to live purposeful lives as active members of their communities.

Our vision is...

A world where every person is respected and embraced.

Our goal for early intervention is...

To prevent or lessen developmental delay in infants and toddlers through support, education and access to resources.



About Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center is one of 21 regional centers in the state of California that together serve over 240,000 individuals with, or at risk for, developmental delays or disabilities and their families. Established in 1966 as one of the first two regional centers, Lanterman is a private non-profit corporation that operates under contract with the state of California through the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). It is governed by a community-based board of directors that is comprised of individuals with developmental disabilities, family members and community leaders.

The Center serves approximately 8,000 children and adults, of whom more than 1,200 are under the age of 3. Our service area includes Hollywood-Wilshire, Central Los Angeles, Glendale, Burbank, La Cañada Flintridge, La Crescenta and Pasadena. Working in partnership with our families, service providers and community organizations, we provide services and supports that address each child's unique strengths and needs with a goal of achieving greater self-reliance and independence.

About the Guide to Lanterman Regional Center for Early Start Families

This Guide is written for parents of young children, ages birth to 3 years, who are receiving Early Start services through Lanterman Regional Center. Between now and your child's 3rd birthday, you will take a journey filled with choices and challenges, as well as successes. This Guide is intended to help you create a more effective partnership with the Regional Center as you navigate this journey. The Guide covers seven important topics:

- ❖ Early Start services
- ❖ Working in partnership with the Regional Center
- ❖ Family centered planning and its implementation
- ❖ Transitioning out of Early Start services at age 3
- ❖ Resolving disagreements about services and supports
- ❖ Families' legal rights and responsibilities
- ❖ Receiving effective and appropriate services and supports

Throughout these pages, you will also find answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) and tips from experienced parents and service coordinators that can make you a more effective partner.



Lanterman's Service Commitment

In all of our interactions with families, we are committed to:

- Treat you with courtesy and respect, and listen attentively to your concerns – with understanding and without judgment.
- Be sensitive to and acknowledge cultural differences.
- Encourage you to make your own informed choices, and respect and support your decisions.
- Respond to requests as quickly as possible and explain any delays.
- Respond promptly and constructively to your concerns. If you feel we have not been responsive or have caused you to be dissatisfied with Lanterman, we will forward your complaint to the appropriate authority to respond quickly and constructively to your concerns.
- Come to meetings and appointments promptly, prepared with the necessary information.
- Explain the regional center service delivery system, as well as what Lanterman's role and relationships are with the many other agencies and service delivery systems, so that it makes sense and you feel able to access these different resources.
- Share all the information we have about the available service options, offering our recommendations in a constructive manner. We will be honest about what we are and are not able to do. If we cannot help you, we will try to find someone who can.
- Respect your right to privacy and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional service.
- Solicit your ideas and suggestions about how we can improve our services.
- Stay current in our field, and maintain professional standards.

Examples of Early Start Services

The services received through Early Start are based on the child's assessed developmental needs and the family's concerns and priorities as determined by each child's Individualized Family Service Plan. Early Start services may include:

- Assistive technology
- Audiology
- Family training, counseling and home visits
- Health services
- Medical services for diagnostic/evaluation purposes only
- Nursing services
- Nutrition services
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Psychological services
- Respite services when necessary for the child's parents to access Early Start trainings or workshops
- Service coordination
- Social work services
- Special instruction
- Speech and language services
- Vision services

About Early Start Services

The Regional Center's Early Start program serves children from birth to 3 who are born with, or at risk for, developmental delay or disability. We know that the earlier an infant or toddler with special needs receives appropriate services, the more successful we can be in minimizing or preventing future disabilities. For this reason, our Early Intervention unit works with families to access services and supports that help identify and treat developmental concerns as early as possible in the life of the child. Services focus on the child's development in five areas:

- ❖ Cognitive – ability to think and learn
- ❖ Physical – motor, including vision and/or hearing
- ❖ Communication – ability to understand, talk
- ❖ Social and emotional – ability to relate to others
- ❖ Adaptive – ability to eat, dress and accomplish other self-help tasks

Having a child with special needs often requires the family to devote extra time, energy or resources to the child's care, and this can be challenging for both parents and siblings. At the same time, the primary responsibility for an infant's or toddler's development and well-being rests with the family. For these reasons, services provided by the Regional Center are family centered, meaning they address the needs of the child within the context of the family with the intent of enhancing the family's capacity to address their child's special needs.



A Brief History of Early Intervention

In 1986, the federal government enacted the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C (IDEA; 20; U.S.C., Section 1431 et seq.). This legislation was intended to assist states in implementing a comprehensive program of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities. The Act set out specific requirements that state early intervention programs were obligated to meet in return for federal dollars that would partially fund these programs. The objectives defined in the act were to:

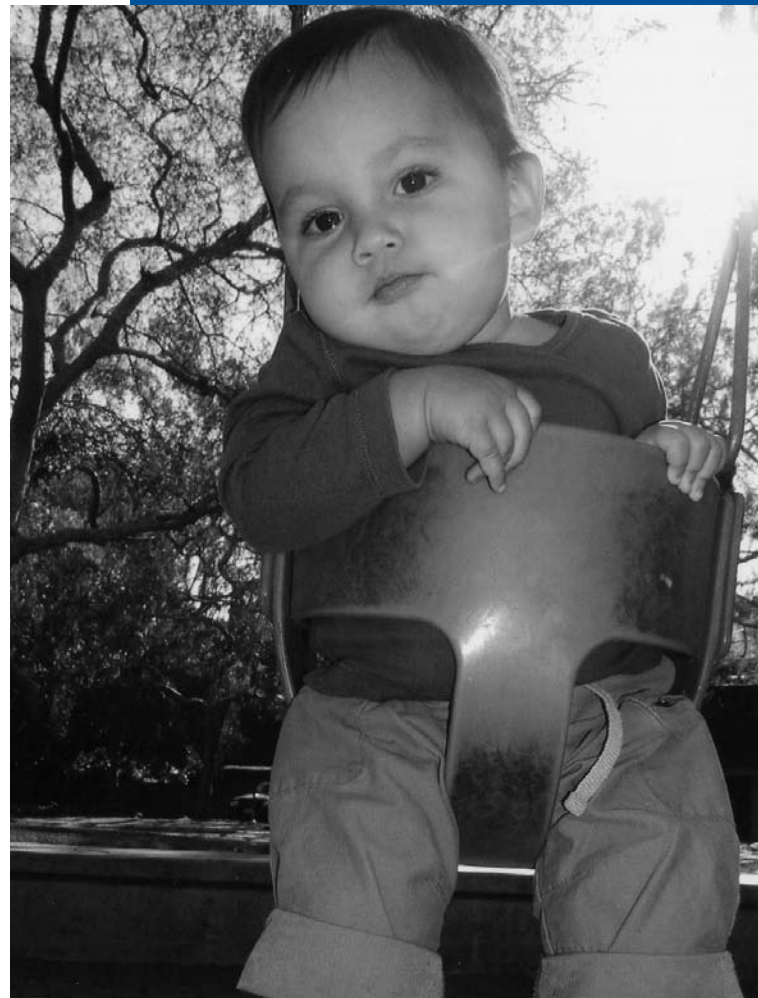
- ❖ Enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities;
- ❖ Reduce educational costs by minimizing the need for special education through early intervention;
- ❖ Minimize the likelihood of institutionalization and maximize independent living; and,
- ❖ Enhance the capacity of families to meet their child's needs.

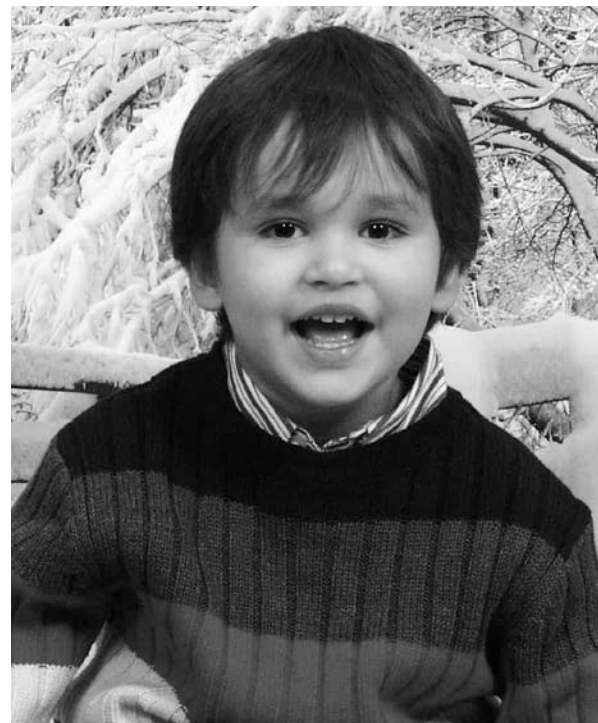
In 1993, in response to the federal legislation, the California Legislature passed the California Early Intervention Services Act (CEISA; 14 G.C. Section 95000 et seq.). The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) was designated as the lead agency to collaborate with other state agencies, including the Department of Education, in the development and implementation of a statewide early intervention services system, referred to as California Early Start.

Excerpt from the California Early Intervention Services Act (CEISA)

Section 95001 of the California Early Intervention Services Act states: "The family is the constant in the child's life, while the service system and personnel within those systems fluctuate. Because the primary responsibility of an infant's or toddler's well-being rests with the family, services should support and enhance the family's capability to meet the special developmental needs of their infant or toddler with disabilities."

The California Early Intervention Services Act is available online at www.dds.ca.gov. Printed copies of the Act are available for borrowing from Lanterman's Koch♦Young Resource Center.





The Role of the Regional Center

CEISA gave regional centers the primary responsibility for implementing the early intervention program. Acting as the central coordinating agency for a large and complex network of community services and supports, regional centers are charged with the following responsibilities:

- ❖ Outreach activities to identify young children who may need early intervention services.
- ❖ Assessment and evaluation to determine eligibility for early intervention services.
- ❖ Development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), through a family centered planning process.
- ❖ Coordination of services and supports to help young children and their families achieve the desired outcomes established for the child.
- ❖ Assistance in finding and using community and other resources.
- ❖ Support for and facilitation of the inclusion of young children with disabilities with their non-disabled peers.
- ❖ Development of innovative and cost-effective services and supports that are flexible, individualized and promote community integration.
- ❖ Assurance of the quality and effectiveness of services and supports provided to young children and their families.
- ❖ Information, referral and family support.

Regional Center Responsibility for Purchasing Services

Because of our responsibility to be careful stewards of public funds, the Regional Center works with families to investigate all available natural and generic options, including the use of private insurance, when these options can meet the child's needs.

If one or more of the desired outcomes in a child's IFSP cannot be achieved using natural supports or generic services, the Regional Center may purchase the service or support from a community service provider. If the funding is approved, we send the provider a written authorization to provide the service. The Center only reimburses providers for services that are included in the IFSP and provided after an authorization is received.

Continuation of funding for a service purchased by the Regional Center may only be authorized if there is evidence that the service is helping achieve or maintain the desired outcomes outlined in the IFSP. In all cases, before funding is initiated or continued, the family must indicate agreement by signing the IFSP or an IFSP amendment.

All purchases made by the Regional Center must be consistent with our service standards, which are approved by our board of directors and the Department of Developmental Services. In extraordinary circumstances, the Center may make a purchase that is an "exception" to a service standard. A request for an exception must be reviewed and approved by the Center's executive director or his or her designee.

Lanterman's service standards can be viewed on our Web site at www.lanterman.org.

Funding Requirements for Early Start Services

In carrying out their responsibilities, regional centers are also required to be responsible stewards of the public funds. More specifically, regional centers are required to:

- ❖ Live within our budget each year.
- ❖ Ensure that the Regional Center does not pay for services and supports that should be provided by other agencies, such as local school districts, Medi-Cal, California Children's Services, Social Security and private health insurance.
- ❖ Help families gain access to typical community resources and develop natural supports.
- ❖ Secure services only from qualified service providers.
- ❖ Locate or develop innovative and cost-effective ways to achieve desired outcomes identified in the IFSP.
- ❖ Continue purchasing services only where there is both reasonable progress in achieving the IFSP outcomes and agreement between the family and the Regional Center that the services should be continued.
- ❖ Develop and purchase specialized services only if natural environments, generic services and supports, or typical community resources do not meet the child's needs as specified in his or her IFSP.
- ❖ If two services or supports are available and would be equally effective in meeting the needs of a child, the Regional Center is required to purchase the less costly alternative.

Defining Generic Services

There are many public agencies that are required by law to provide services to children with, or at risk for, developmental delays or disabilities. These include county mental health agencies, Medi-Cal and California Children's Services. We refer to these agencies as generic agencies and to the services and supports they provide as generic services.



Natural Environments: What are they?

CEISA requires regional centers to ensure that, to the maximum extent possible, early intervention services are provided in the natural environment and include the use of natural supports and generic community resources. Natural environments are settings that are typical for other children of the same age who do not have developmental delays or disabilities. These would include the family home, a babysitter's home, or a community setting such as a local preschool, a neighborhood play group or a public park.

Natural Supports: What are they?

Excerpt from the Department of Developmental Services' publication, "How to Develop Natural Supports"

As defined in the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act, Section 4512 of the Welfare and Institution Code, Part (e): "Natural Supports" means personal associations and relationships typically developed in the community that enhance the quality and security of life for people, including, but not limited to, family relationships; friendships reflecting the diversity of the neighborhood and the community...

What does "Natural Supports" really mean? Think about all the people in your life – friends, family, co-workers – who are important to you and on whom you depend. Relationships with these people are your natural supports.

The entire publication can be accessed on the Department of Developmental Services Web site at www.dds.ca.gov.

Working Together in Partnership

The Lanterman community includes our clients and their families, service providers, staff and the broader community in our geographic area, including other local and state agencies. In order for this partnership to be successful, all community members must actively participate and work collaboratively, while respecting individual roles and contributions. As the primary source of care and support for the child with a disability, the family occupies a leadership role in this partnership.

Partnering with Your Service Coordinator

Your primary partner at the Regional Center is your service coordinator. He or she is a professional with experience in the areas of child development and developmental disabilities, and knowledge about services, supports and other resources.

The Regional Center assigns service coordinators to families at the time of intake. Whenever possible, service coordinators are matched with families based on primary language needs. While every effort is made to ensure continuity for families with their assigned service coordinator, all regional center families experience an occasional change in service coordinator associated with specific transitions or events:

- ❖ If your service coordinator leaves Lanterman or takes a new position within the Center you will be assigned a new service coordinator.
- ❖ Each year, you will be given an opportunity to formally evaluate your service coordinator's performance and will be asked whether you wish to continue working with him or her for the coming year.
- ❖ Finally, if your child continues to be eligible for regional center services after age 3, a transition will occur from Early Intervention to a service coordinator in one of our School-Age units.

If you become dissatisfied with your service coordinator at any time, you may discuss your concerns with the Early Intervention manager. He or she may help you resolve your concerns or may assign a different service coordinator to your child. Your service coordinator also has the right to request a change.

During times of transition, someone will always be available to help ensure that your child's service needs are met until the new service coordinator is assigned. If you need help during this time, call the unit that serves your child and ask to speak to the "officer of the day."



FAQs

Can a child lose his or her eligibility for services?

If a child is found to be eligible for Early Start services, Lanterman will continue to provide him or her with services according to assessed need until the age of 3. At age 3, two decisions are made:

- Whether the child will continue to be eligible for regional center services, and
- Whether the child will become eligible for special education services through the school district.

In either case, Early Start services are terminated and the child graduates from the program.

By age 3, with the help of Early Start services, nearly 70 percent of the children served by Lanterman Regional Center will have "caught up" developmentally to the point that they are no longer eligible for continuing regional center services.

What happens if the child receiving services moves out of Lanterman's area?

If your family moves from Lanterman's service area to another location in California, services and supports will be provided to your child by the regional center that serves your new geographic area. Lanterman will transfer your child's records to the new regional center. According to the Lanterman Act: "Whenever a [client] transfers from one regional center catchment area to another, the level and types of services and supports specified in the [client's IFSP] shall be authorized and secured, if available, pending the development of a new [IFSP] for the [client]. If these services and supports do not exist, the regional center shall convene a meeting to develop a new [IFSP] within 30 days. Prior to approval of the new [IFSP], the regional center shall provide alternative services and supports that best meet the individual program plan objectives in the least restrictive setting." [Section 4643.5 (c)]

If your family moves out of California, your child's service coordinator and the Koch♦Young Resource Center can help you contact the appropriate developmental services agency and locate related resources in the new state. With your written consent, the Regional Center can also transfer your child's records to that state's agency.

Contacting Your Service Coordinator

Your service coordinator can be contacted by telephone, e-mail and regular mail. Since service coordinators spend much of their time out of the office meeting with clients and families, they check their voicemail messages regularly. This means that voicemail is a very effective way to communicate with your service coordinator, so when you call be sure to leave a message. Your message should include:

- ❖ Your full name
- ❖ The full name of your child
- ❖ A phone number where the service coordinator can reach you
- ❖ Good times to call
- ❖ The reason for your call

Service coordinators make every effort to return calls by the end of the next business day. If they are not able to return calls within this time period, for reasons such as illness or vacation, they will leave instructions on their outgoing message about whom you should contact in their absence.

If you wish to have a face-to-face meeting with your service coordinator, it is best to schedule an appointment well in advance.

Finding Help in an Urgent Situation

During Business Hours

If an urgent situation arises during regular business hours, Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and you are unable to directly contact your service coordinator, press “0” when you get the service coordinator’s voicemail and ask to speak to the officer of the day. He or she can help you deal with urgent matters that need same-day attention.

After Business Hours

The Regional Center maintains an emergency response system to deal with situations that arise outside of normal business hours and must be dealt with immediately. The Regional Center has rarely encountered emergency situations with our Early Start families, but, if an emergency should arise and you must have the assistance of the Regional Center immediately, do the following:

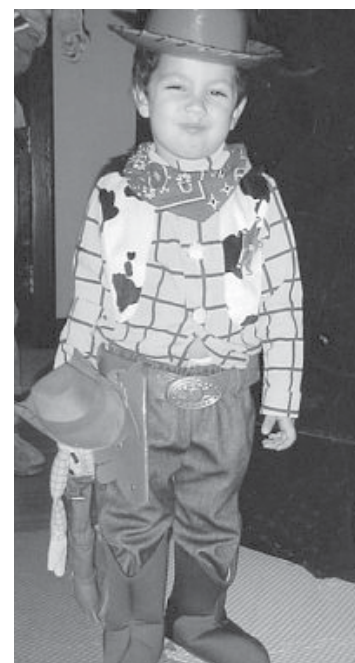
1. Call Lanterman’s main phone number at 213.383.1300 and follow the instructions for the emergency response system.
2. Leave a voicemail message, as instructed, and the individual who is “on-call” will be notified and will call you back within one hour.

The emergency on-call responsibility is rotated among the Regional Center’s leadership staff, so a knowledgeable regional center representative is always available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

FAQ

What should I do if I do not know the name of my child’s service coordinator?

If you do not know the name of your child’s service coordinator, call the Regional Center at 213.383.1300 and ask the operator to transfer you to the secretary for the Early Intervention unit. To protect your privacy as well as the privacy of all of our clients and families, the person who answers the phone may ask you questions to confirm your identity.



Service Coordinators' Responsibilities in the Partnership

Service coordination involves helping families:

- ❖ Access information about services and supports;
- ❖ Make decisions about desired outcomes;
- ❖ Develop plans for achieving these outcomes;
- ❖ Identify and access services and supports necessary to achieve desired outcomes; and
- ❖ Periodically evaluate their child's progress and their satisfaction with the services and supports.



An overarching responsibility of Lanterman's service coordinators is to identify and access services that are cost-effective and are provided in natural environments in the community.

Throughout your relationship with your service coordinator, he or she will provide your family with support by:

- ❖ Listening to your concerns, respecting your opinions, and discussing options and choices openly and frankly.
- ❖ Advocating on your behalf with agencies and programs, such as Medi-Cal and California Children's Services.
- ❖ Consulting on your behalf with specialists at Lanterman and in the community.
- ❖ Assisting in times of crisis.
- ❖ Investigating problems, complaints and situations of potential abuse.

Your service coordinator will also help you become better informed and develop new skills by introducing you to the Koch♦Young Resource Center and keeping you informed about educational and skill development opportunities provided by the Regional Center and other community organizations.

As your child approaches age 3, your service coordinator will also help you prepare for your child's transition from Early Start.

Koch♦Young Resource Center

The Koch♦Young Resource Center provides information, education and support for people with developmental disabilities, families of children with special needs, Lanterman staff, professionals and the community.

The Resource Center offers a variety of resources and services, including:

- Help Desk and HelpLine (213.383.1300, x. 5600 or kyrc@lanterman.org), that link people to community resources, provide information and referral, and do research for unique needs;
- A multimedia multilingual library collection with thousands of disability-related materials that is searchable online at <http://library.lanterman.org>;
- A Network of Care that includes information on generic resources such as prevention and early intervention resources, including Head Start, social and recreational programs, and health-related organizations and programs (www.lanterman.networkofcare.org);
- Support groups, listed by age, disability, geographic location and language;
- A Peer Support Partner Program that offers one-to-one family support from trained and experienced family members (www.lanterman.org/psm);
- Education and training opportunities; and
- An Assistive Technology Project that offers assistive technology evaluations, individual training, workshops and equipment loans, and provides related information.

FAQ

What should I include in my Lanterman Regional Center home file?

- Basic information about your child, such as special needs or medical conditions.
- A list of medications being taken by your child and authorized by the physician. Include the medication name, dosage, time of day taken, and the prescription number and pharmacy.
- A list with contact information of all the people, agencies, programs and organizations serving your child.
- Copies of reports of independent assessments from physicians, therapists and other service providers.
- Copies of all written communications to and from professionals working with your child.
- Your notes about meetings or phone conversations with regional center staff, physicians and other professionals working with your child. Include the name of the person with whom you spoke or met and the date.
- A copy of the current IFSP.

It is helpful to divide records into categories, such as health and IFSP, and organize them by date with the most recent on top.

Families' Responsibilities in the Partnership

Families who strive to be active and informed participants with Lanterman are better able to identify and access the resources necessary for their child to develop to his or her full potential. We've all heard that knowledge is a key to success, and having accurate, timely information helps families make better choices and decisions. There are many ways for families to become better informed:

- ❖ Get to know the Koch♦Young Resource Center and use it often.
- ❖ Participate in training opportunities and educational programs provided by Lanterman and other community organizations.
- ❖ Network with other families, learn about their experiences and tell them about yours.
- ❖ Keep up-to-date about the Lanterman community and what's "going on" by visiting our Web site, www.lanterman.org. There you can read our newsletter, "Viewpoint" (www.lanterman.org/index.php/Viewpoint), find community resources on the Network of Care (www.lanterman.networkofcare.org), and learn about new legislation and other changes that may affect regional centers and the developmental services system.

Be Prepared and Actively Participate

CEISA gives parents the leadership role in planning for their child. Responsibilities of that role include:

- ❖ Maintaining an effective working relationship with your service coordinator by maintaining open communication, asking questions when something is not clear, sharing your needs and concerns, and sharing both good and bad experiences that you have had with Lanterman and with service providers.
- ❖ Preparing for meetings by researching options and collecting information.
- ❖ Thinking about goals, plans, and services and supports that you would like to discuss at the meeting.
- ❖ Partnering with the professionals providing services and learning your role in helping your child build skills at home and in the community.
- ❖ Keeping accurate records and following up on the items for which you have responsibility.
- ❖ Understanding the benefits and outcomes that come with the choices and decisions you make.



Tips for Forming a Successful Family-Professional Partnership

- Sign and return IFSP amendments promptly. Your signature on these documents is necessary for the funding authorization process for the services and supports required by changes to the IFSP.
- Plan ahead to allow time for funding. The funding process for purchased services takes time, so give your service coordinator ample time to request such services. Service coordinators must follow an approval process and adhere to specific funding criteria. On average, the approval process takes about two weeks.
- Request copies of all progress reports and evaluations from anyone working with your child, whether or not the Regional Center is funding the service or support. Keep a copy of all reports for your file and give a copy to your service coordinator for the regional center file. Reports may be important when a request is made to renew funding.
- Keep your service coordinator up to date about what's going on with your family – about things such as hospitalizations or if you have a family crisis or emergency or major change.
- If you find a resource or training opportunity that you believe may benefit you or your child, discuss it with your service coordinator.

Find Support Within the Lanterman Community

Families have told us over the years that one of the most important things they learn at the Regional Center is that they are not alone – that other parents of children with special needs share their experiences and feelings. Here are some things that parents have told us that have been particularly helpful to them:

- ❖ Seek out peer support from other families who have “been there” by joining a support group or requesting a Peer Support Partner.
- ❖ Identify and make use of your own natural support system – family, friends, religious organizations, community.
- ❖ Keep your expectations high and set challenging, yet realistic, goals for your child.



Family Centered Planning

At its core, developing and implementing a family centered plan is about providing services and supports that are individualized and flexible over time, are built on strengths and needs of the child and the family, reflect priorities and concerns of the family, and respect the family's preferences and choices. Family centered planning is an approach to determining, planning for and working toward the preferred future of a child. It provides a framework for making decisions and takes into account a variety of factors that affect a child's life.

The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Family centered planning is used to develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for every child birth to 3 years of age who receives Early Start services from Lanterman. A child's initial IFSP is completed within 45 calendar days of the time the family first contacts the Regional Center. The plan is developed by a planning team including the family and the service coordinator, and may include other people who provide the child or family with support and services.

The IFSP identifies and documents the family's desired outcomes and states clearly how the team will work toward achieving these outcomes and how any health or safety issues will be addressed. It includes a statement of the infant's or toddler's present levels of physical development, including vision, hearing and health status; and cognitive, communication, social, emotional and adaptive development. The IFSP also includes:

- ❖ A statement of the family's concerns, priorities and resources related to meeting the special developmental needs of their child.
- ❖ A statement of the major outcomes to be achieved for the child.
- ❖ A schedule of all services and supports, including the type and amount of services and supports, who will provide them, whether they will be provided in natural environments, and an explanation if a service is not provided in a natural environment.
- ❖ Criteria, procedures and timelines for determining the degree to which progress is being made and whether changes to the plan are necessary.
- ❖ Steps to be taken to ensure the child's smooth transition out of Early Start at age 3.

Preparing for the IFSP Meeting

Effective planning requires your service coordinator to take the time to learn what is important to your family and to ensure that any issues of health and safety are carefully considered. In preparation for the IFSP meeting, your service coordinator will spend time getting to know your family's unique situation by reviewing your child's record, assessments and recommendations from service providers, and progress reports. He or she will also begin development of the health status review and IFSP documentation that will be completed at the meeting.

You, too, should prepare for this meeting by thinking about your child's strengths and needs, your concerns and the hopes and dreams you have for him or her. Identify the knowledge and strengths that you possess that may help your child take steps toward achieving desired outcomes. Also think about what types of training or additional knowledge you may need to help support your child, as well as what professional services or supports your child may need to achieve desired outcomes. Additionally, you should bring with you information about personal, financial and other resources, such as private insurance, that are available to you and your child.

FAQ

Why is it important for my service coordinator to visit me in my home?

Many of the issues discussed at a meeting between a family and service coordinator are personal and private, and it is difficult to maintain a desired level of privacy and confidentiality when these matters are discussed in a public setting, such as a coffee shop or restaurant. In addition, it is essential for service coordinators to be familiar with a child's home situation so they can make the appropriate recommendations, especially in regards to in-home supports. The better your service coordinator knows your family, the better he or she will be able to support you.



What Happens at an IFSP Meeting

Family centered planning meetings work best when:

- ❖ They are held in a place where everyone feels comfortable.
- ❖ Everyone knows the meeting may last a while; typically from one to two hours.
- ❖ Someone, usually the service coordinator, acts as the team facilitator.
- ❖ The needs of the child and the preferences of the family are discussed and presented along with other information needed to make choices about desired outcomes.
- ❖ All members of the planning team are equally respected and are given a chance to speak during the meeting.

The steps below are typically followed as the planning team develops the IFSP:

- ❖ Discuss the child's needs.
- ❖ Come to agreement on the desired outcomes and how progress will be measured.
- ❖ Identify and discuss the kinds of supports needed to reach desired outcomes.
- ❖ Develop the plan document that includes:
 - ▶ Desired outcomes.
 - ▶ Kinds of services and supports the child needs.
 - ▶ Who will provide each service and support, the amount and frequency to be provided, when it will begin and who will pay for it.
 - ▶ How the services and supports will help the child reach the desired outcome.
 - ▶ How to evaluate the progress the child is making toward the outcomes.

FAQ

Why are my child's services and supports different from those received by other children?

Each child's IFSP is based on individual needs and preferences. Because of this, your child's goals and objectives will be different from those of other children. The services and supports needed to achieve the goals for your child may also differ from those of other children, even if the other children have similar desired outcomes.

Implementing the IFSP

Once it is developed and signed by the family, or the family's legal representative, and Lanterman's representative, the IFSP document becomes a legally binding document. For this reason, it is very important that the document accurately reflects the agreements that are made by the people at the planning meeting and others involved in the planning process.

There may be times when the IFSP team is unable to agree at the meeting about a particular outcome, service or support that is to be included in the IFSP. A disagreement about one part of a plan, such as a specific service, does not prevent the Regional Center from implementing other parts of the plan on which the family and Regional Center do agree.

We have found that many issues that cause delay can be resolved in a timely way over the phone – generally with the receipt of additional information. If this is not possible, however, an additional planning meeting can be held.



Monitoring Your Child's Progress

At least every six months, the service coordinator reviews with the family the child's progress in achieving the outcomes identified in the IFSP and discusses the need for any changes to the plan. Once the Regional Center and the family have agreed on changes, the service coordinator writes a plan amendment and the parents indicate their agreement by signing the amendment. The service coordinator is required to complete an amendment within 15 days.



FAQ

What is required to maintain active status?

A child's status with Lanterman remains active as long as he or she is receiving services, including service coordination and maintaining a current IFSP.

A child's status becomes inactive when the family chooses to no longer receive services from the Regional Center and asks for the status to be changed, or when the Center loses touch with the family.

For this reason, it is important that families keep Lanterman informed of their current address. If we are unable to contact a family by mail and phone, we visit the last known address. If these attempts fail, we designate the child's status as inactive. The family may ask for the case to be reactivated at any time.

Examples of IFSP Outcomes and Criteria

Following are examples of IFSP outcomes and criteria that describe how the team will know whether progress is being made.

Outcome 1 *Cameron will communicate his wants and needs in a clear way.*

Criteria (How will we know if we are making progress?):

- Cameron will point to body parts and common objects and accurately name them.
- Cameron will use single words to express his wants and needs consistently.
- Cameron will use two- to three-word phrases to communicate his wants and needs consistently.

Outcome 2 *Holly will play with other children her own age.*

Criteria (How will we know if we are making progress?):

- Holly will initiate interaction with other children her own age.
- Holly will take turns with other children in play settings.
- Holly will share her toys with other children without being asked.

Outcome 3 *Charlie will improve his motor skills to a level appropriate for his age.*

Criteria (How will we know if we are making progress?):

- Charlie will walk without support.
- Charlie will ride a tricycle.
- Charlie will catch a large ball.

Transitioning from Early Start at Age 3

The primary goal of the Early Start program is to provide intensive services early in the life of a child with the expectation that these services will allow the child to “catch up” developmentally to the point that he or she no longer needs regional center services. A majority of our Early Start clients do catch up and graduate out of the Regional Center. Some of these children may still have delays that qualify them to receive services from the school district but not the Regional Center. Finally, some children continue to have diagnosed conditions that qualify them for ongoing regional center services in addition to school services.

The decisions about what, if any, continuing services your child will be eligible for are made during a formal transition process that begins when your child is 2 ½ years old. Let’s take a closer look at the decisions that are made and how the transition occurs.

Transition Planning Meeting with the School District

When your child is 30 months old, you will participate in a Transition Planning Meeting with representatives of the school district and the Regional Center. This meeting is required by law and introduces families to the different kinds of services available to young children through the schools. It is intended to address the necessary steps to support your child and family during the transition out of Early Start into school services or other community programs. These include:

- ❖ Review the current IFSP that guides your child’s regional center services.
- ❖ Agree on assessments that will be needed to give the school district the information it needs to meet your child’s service needs. The team may decide on new assessments or use some or all of the assessments that have been completed by the Regional Center, if they are current and appropriate.
- ❖ A discussion of who will complete the assessments and a timeline for completion.
- ❖ A timeline and steps for developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for your child if he or she is eligible for special education services.
- ❖ The range of classroom options that may be available for your child if he or she receives special education services.

Continuing Regional Center Eligibility

When your child turns 33 months, a multidisciplinary team from the Regional Center will review your child’s history, the progress that he or she has made, and his or her current development in the following five areas: cognitive, physical, communication, social and emotional, and adaptive. If the team determines that your child satisfies the more stringent eligibility criteria for continuing regional center services, he or she will be transferred to a new service coordinator in one of Lanterman’s School-Age units at age 3. Your Early Intervention service coordinator will work with the new service coordinator to ensure a smooth transition.

For more information about the over 3 eligibility criteria, visit the Department of Developmental Services Web site at www.dds.ca.gov.



Eligibility for School Services

If your child is diagnosed with a condition that qualifies him or her for continuing regional center services, he or she will most likely be eligible to receive special education services through the school system. We will continue to provide service coordination, but most of your child's other service needs will be met through the school.

If your child has progressed to the extent that he or she is no longer eligible for regional center services, he or she may still be eligible for services through the public schools. To determine if your child is eligible for school services, the school district will conduct its own assessment of your child's growth and development.

Finally, if your child has progressed so well that he or she is ineligible for both regional center and school district services, your service coordinator may still recommend a preschool or some other activity where he or she can receive enrichment experiences until entering school at age 5.

It's important to remember that the eligibility requirements for Early Start, ongoing regional center services and special education services differ from one another. Therefore, even though the school system may use for their purposes the same assessments that the Regional Center used to determine eligibility, the school system may reach a different eligibility decision.



Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting

Prior to your child's 3rd birthday, but following the Transition Planning Meeting, the school district will convene an initial Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting. The IEP is a planning document used by the school to describe the types of services that a child will receive. At the initial IEP meeting, the team will discuss whether or not your child is eligible for special education services and, if so, what types of services and supports will be necessary for him or her to progress in school.

The team that creates the IEP includes the parent or guardian, a school administrator and a teacher. (Your child is not required to attend this meeting.) As appropriate, other members of the team may include the child's regional center service coordinator, an early intervention teacher, psychologist, specialist, friends, family members, advocates or other supportive people.

If you wish your service coordinator to attend the IEP meeting, you must invite him or her. Be sure to issue the invitation as soon as you know the date and time of the meeting. The more notice you give, the more likely your service coordinator will be able to be there to support you.

The IEP document includes the following components:

- ❖ An eligibility statement
- ❖ The child's present level of performance
- ❖ Goals and objectives for the coming year
- ❖ Designated Instruction and Services when appropriate (the services and supports your child will receive)
- ❖ Appropriate program placement agreed upon by the IEP team

Because parents know more about their child than anyone else, they are in the best position to discuss their child's strengths and areas of needed development. For this reason, your participation in the assessment and IEP process is extremely important. You are an important member of the IEP team – and it's alright to disagree with findings or recommendations made by other members of the team.

Resolving Disagreements About Early Start Services and Supports

In California's Early Start program, families have rights and protections. These include specific processes to resolve disagreements related to Early Start services or your belief that a federal or state law has been violated. As a parent, guardian or surrogate parent you have the right to:

1. Request a mediation conference or a due process hearing any time you disagree with the Regional Center or Local Education Agency (LEA) about an assessment, the results of an assessment, services and supports your child will receive, or school placement;
2. Be informed of your right to file a complaint; and
3. File a complaint if you believe there has been a violation of any law governing Early Start services.

There are three separate processes in place for addressing disagreements which arise under the Early Start program:

- ❖ The Early Start Mediation Conference
- ❖ The Early Start Due Process Hearing
- ❖ The Early Start State Complaint Process

Your request for a conference or hearing should be made with the agency – Regional Center or LEA – with which you have the disagreement. If you request one of these options, you still have the right to attempt to resolve the disagreement with the Regional Center or LEA through more informal means while the formal process is proceeding.

Early Start Mediation Conference Request

This is a voluntary process intended to informally resolve disagreements between parents and a regional center or local education agency if the parent believes there has been a violation of federal or state statutes or regulations governing California's Early Start program. This includes eligibility, assessment, services and school placement. Mediation can be requested as a first option or at any time during the complaint or due process hearing process if a parent decides mediation would be a better way to handle the disagreement. Its voluntary nature means that either party may choose not to participate in it.

A parent may request a voluntary mediation conference by submitting a Mediation Hearing Request form – DS 1808 – which is available online at www.dds.ca.gov or from the Regional Center, LEA or the Department of Developmental Services. In lieu of the form, the parent may send a letter of request to the Office of Administrative Hearings if all the pertinent information is submitted and the letter is signed by the requester.

The mediation process may occur at the same time that other efforts are being made to resolve a disagreement. If the mediation process results in an agreement, but the agreement is not fully implemented by the Regional Center or LEA, the parent may file a complaint, as described below.

Early Start Due Process Hearing

The due process hearing is intended to address the same types of issues as are addressed by the mediation conference. A parent may file a request for a due process hearing by filing a Due Process Hearing Request form – DS 1802 – which is available online at www.dds.ca.gov or from the Regional Center, the LEA or the Department of Developmental Services. The Office of Administrative Hearings will also accept a request in the form of a letter if the pertinent information is submitted and the letter is signed by the requester.

The due process hearing will be completed within 30 days from the time the Office of Administrative Hearings receives the request. The decision from a due process hearing is final unless it is appealed to the Superior Court in the appropriate jurisdiction.

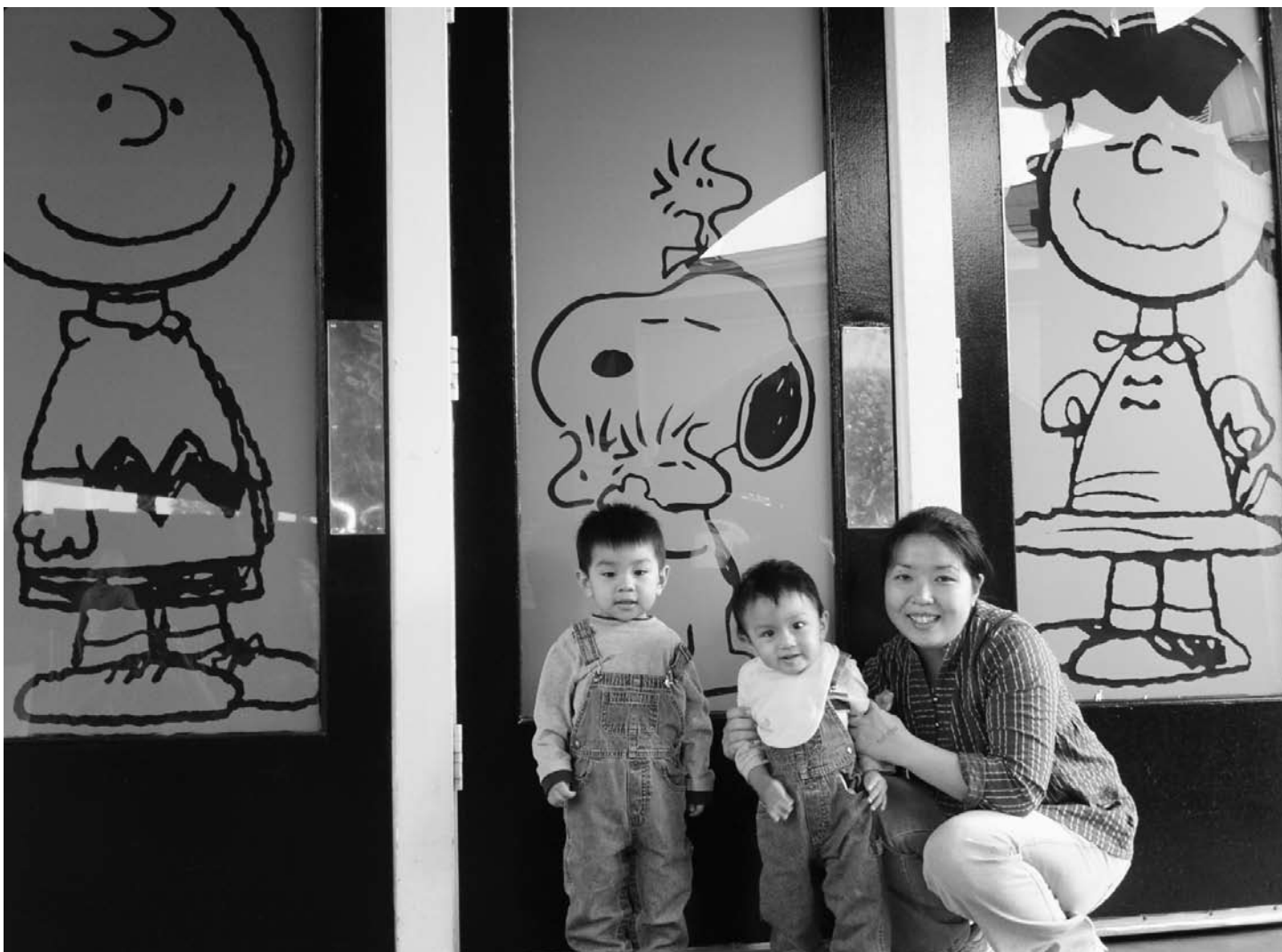
Early Start State Complaint Process

In general, the Early Start State Complaint Process is used if the Regional Center, LEA or private service receiving Early Start funds has agreed to something and it is not carried out, or if the family believes one of these agencies is in violation of the federal or state laws governing California's Early Start program. The complaint may be filed directly with the Department of Developmental Services using the Early Start Complaint Investigation Request form – DS 1827, which is available online at www.dds.ca.gov.

The Department of Developmental Services is required to investigate the allegations and issue a written decision to all parties within 60 days of receipt of the complaint. The written decision will address each allegation and include the findings and conclusions, the reasons for the final decision, the required corrective actions to be taken, and provisions for technical assistance.

A complaint must be withdrawn if the parent making the complaint agrees to participate in mediation within the 60-day complaint investigation period.

The Department of Developmental Services Web site has an appeals, complaints and comments section that features publications related to Mediation Conference Requests, Due Process Hearing and the State's Complaint Process. Visit www.dds.ca.gov to access additional information.



Families' Rights and Responsibilities in Early Start

Families have rights, responsibilities and access to procedural safeguards to assure that Early Start services are provided in a manner appropriate to the child's needs and concerns of the family.

Some of the rights and responsibilities families have are:

- ❖ The right to information about their child and their child's program.
- ❖ The responsibility for seeking and maintaining this information.
- ❖ The right to review their child's records.
- ❖ The responsibility for asking questions when they don't understand terms or reports.
- ❖ The right to be full partners in their child's program.
- ❖ The responsibility for becoming and remaining active members of the team.

- ❖ The right to stand up for their child to make sure he or she gets the services needed.
- ❖ The responsibility to base their actions on accurate information.
- ❖ The right to make suggestions and recommendations about their child's program or services.
- ❖ The responsibility for doing so.
- ❖ The right to a vision for their child's future.
- ❖ The responsibility for helping their child achieve it.

The Department of Developmental Services publishes "Parents' Rights: An Early Start Guide for Families" that provides detailed information on parents' rights under Early Start, including confidentiality and access to records; evaluation and assessment; IFSP; and mediation conferences, due process hearings, and state complaints. This publication is available on the Department Web site at www.dds.ca.gov.

Receiving Quality and Effective Services and Supports

At Lanterman Regional Center we take pride in the quality of the services provided by our staff. If there is ever some aspect of our service that does not satisfy you, give us an opportunity to address your concern by talking to us directly.

Begin by talking to your service coordinator. He or she will help you or direct you to someone who can. In the event the situation is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should request to speak with the manager of the department involved. If the manager is unable to help you, ask to speak with the director of that department. Finally, if the matter is still not resolved, you may request to speak with Lanterman's executive director.

We would also like to hear about your good experiences with our staff. Give us your comments by e-mail, a phone call or a letter.

Finally, we rely on our families to help us in our efforts to ensure the quality of the services and supports that we purchase. Our families play a very important role by sharing comments and suggestions about quality and effectiveness of the services and supports their child is receiving.

FAQ

What can I do to ensure the quality of the services being provided to my child?

Stay informed by attending meetings and asking questions. Visit and observe services or programs working with your child. If you are pleased with the progress and results, let the provider and your service coordinator know. If you observe anything unusual, such as missed appointments, coming late, or leaving early; are concerned about the quality of the service; or do not think that the service is achieving the desired outcome; you should share your concerns with the provider, but definitely share them with your service coordinator as soon as possible.





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