

## The Many Hats of a Regional Center Service Coordinator

A California Regional Center service coordinator helps people with developmental disabilities and their families get the services and supports they need. Service coordinators wear many hats! They meet with the person and family, write and update the person's individual plan, find and arrange services and supports (like education and training, job supports, housing), check that services are working, respond in crises, and help families understand benefits and rules. They also keep records, report suspected abuse, and work with schools, doctors, and other agencies so everyone is on the same page.

A service coordinator's work is essential and rewarding, but it is typically challenging because of heavy workloads, complex client needs, strict rules, and emotional demands. With training, support, and manageable caseloads, many coordinators succeed and make a big difference for the people they serve. The main "hats" they wear include:

- **Case manager / Organizer** - the person's plan for services and supports, sets meetings, and keeps records.
- **Advocate** - Stands up for the person and family to get the right help and defends their rights.
- **Resource finder / referral** - Finds community providers, programs, housing, and job supports and connects families to them.
- **Planner / meeting leader** - Runs person-centered planning meetings and turns goals into clear services and steps.
- **Benefits helper** - Explains and helps with Medicaid (Medi-Cal), SSI, IHSS, and regional center funding processes.
- **Monitor / quality checker** - Watches that providers do their job, tracks progress and service hours, and does home or provider visits when needed.

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- **Crisis helper / safety planner** - Responds to emergencies like sudden behavior problems, loss of services, or urgent safety issues and helps arrange immediate supports.
- **Investigator / reporter** - Reports and follows up on suspected abuse or neglect and works with protective services or police when required.
- **Mediator / problem solver** - Helps solve disagreements between family, providers, schools, or agencies.
- **Teacher / coach** - Teaches families about rights, how services work, and practical strategies they can use at home.
- **School/system connector** - Works with schools, doctors, and other agencies so services work together.
- **Cultural and language helper** - Makes sure services respect a family's culture and language and arranges interpreters if needed.
- **Record keeper** - Keeps notes, meeting minutes, authorizations, and important paperwork.
- **Fiscal coordinator** (within limits) - Helps the individual's team decide how to use regional center funds and writes up reasons for services that need funding.

### **Legal and required duties**

- Follow the Lanterman Act and regional center rules.
- Hold required meetings on time and keep authorizations up-to-date.
- Report suspected abuse or neglect (they are mandatory reporters).
- Help with appeals or fair hearings if services are denied.

### **Limits and boundaries**

- Service coordinators usually are not therapists or doctors – they do not provide clinical therapy unless they have separate credentials.
- They cannot promise unlimited money or services. Services must be needed, reasonable, and approved through regional center rules.
- They must keep information private and cannot make decisions for an adult unless there is a legal guardian.