

Guide to the California Disabilities Services Association (CDSA)

Mission and Values – January 2011

I. CDSA: The Basics

Formed in 1980, the California Disability Services Association (CDSA) is an association of community-based non-profit and for-profit organizations providing services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The mission of CDSA is to advocate for and strengthen member organizations and to ensure public and government support of services for persons with disabilities.

CDSA members provide services and support to over 40,000 Californians with developmental disabilities and their families each year. Each member organization works in its local community to improve the lives and opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. By advocating for appropriate funding and regulatory support, CDSA helps member organizations operate efficiently and provide the best possible services to their enrollees who require life-long support.

The services provided by our members include:

- Residential services
- In-home support
- Day programs
- Vocational and skills training
- Work programs
- Transportation services
- Respite services(Caregiver relief)
- Early intervention services

The 40,000 individuals served by CDSA members represent 27% of the adult population with developmental disabilities receiving DDS-supported services. In the specific arena of employment, CDSA members serve 78% of individuals receiving Supported Employment services and more than 50% of the participants in other work programs.

Roughly 90,000 people with developmental disabilities are of working age in California, but fewer than 25,000 have jobs. That is an unemployment rate of 72%. CDSA works to reduce this figure by advocating for the expansion of employment services for the disability community. Continuing to further the association's varied advocacy interests, we remain true to our roots, operating as a home for service providers in the field of employment training and supports.

CARI Program

In keeping with our efforts to expand the developmentally disabled workforce, CDSA formed a program in the early 1990's to facilitate the State of California's use of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP's) in their procurement processes. The resulting California Alliance of Rehabilitation Industries (CARI) program currently enables 350 individuals to work as a result of contracts with the state, doing janitorial, landscaping, administrative and other such jobs. CDSA's education efforts in this area are intended to make State contracting officers aware of our valuable and dedicated workforce.

II. CDSA: Promoting Values that Drive the Service System

CDSA respects the dignity and diversity of the people served in our member programs. CDSA works in conjunction with parents and families, the Regional Centers, and other advocacy networks to promote better understanding of the system and the services utilized by the 240,000 individuals with developmental disabilities throughout California.

CDSA recognizes that state and federal law establish two fundamental principles that form the foundation of California's developmental disabilities system:

1. Every Californian with a developmental disability has the right to be included in his or her community as a full and active participant.
2. Individuals with developmental disabilities in California have the right to determine which services and supports they need to realize their life goals.

Based on the individual program plan (IPP), California's unique system of services and supports for people with developmental disabilities embodies these fundamental principles. Through the IPP process, the needs of an individual are assessed and services and supports are identified based on the person's choices, strengths, capabilities, lifestyle and cultural background. The individually tailored services and supports identified in the IPP are guaranteed to that individual (consumer) – it is a legal entitlement.

CDSA member agencies are committed to advancing community participation and greater independence for each and every individual receiving services and supports. CDSA recognizes the importance of building community capacity for accessibility, acceptance, and opportunities for employment, volunteerism, recreation, and fostering of social networks.

CDSA incorporates the following values in our advocacy efforts:

1. Creative options that bring greater opportunities for community integration and inclusion should be encouraged and funded for quality and sustainability.
2. The elimination of service models by the Department of Developmental Services should be part of a planning process that includes the individuals and families served and that clearly identifies appropriate available alternatives.
3. All individuals deserve to have support staff who are well-trained, competent and compensated at a level that ensures quality and continuity of services.
4. At all levels, those in a position to influence public policy must solicit the views of affected consumers and families when major policy changes are being considered.
5. Early intervention and crisis services are key to mitigating the severity of long-term disabilities, ultimately improving outcomes and California's bottom line.
6. Changes to the system should not limit an individual's ability to choose the services they need and/or want.

III. CDSA: Budget Priorities

With California's ongoing fiscal crisis, CDSA recognizes the necessity of providing quality services at reduced cost. We believe that cost reductions should occur at levels of the service delivery system that are as far removed from the individual being served as possible. To be specific, people and organizations providing direct, personal service should realize the least possible impact. To do so, we have identified the following four ongoing budget priorities and corresponding policy suggestions:

1) Broad Response to the Fiscal Crisis is Needed

- No segment of the system should be "immune" from careful and thorough examination of appropriate ways to reduce costs with minimal effects on the quality and quantity of service delivery. Solutions should include:
 - Department of Developmental Services (DDS)
 - Regional Centers
 - State Developmental Centers
 - Department of Social Services (Community Care Licensing Division)
 - Department of Health

2) Develop Long-Term Strategies to Improve the System

- Specifically, efforts should be undertaken to reduce duplication of effort (e.g. in quality assurance) and to study the entire structure created by the Lanterman Act and/or subsequently developed to implement the Act, to ensure that resources devoted to people with developmental disabilities are expended in the most cost-effective manner.
 - Ensure program monies spent to support individuals in the State Developmental Centers (DCs) follow that person into the community, with any savings dedicated to improving the overall quality and availability of services for other community-based individuals.
- Prohibit further spending to rebuild existing Developmental Centers or acquire/build new facilities.
- Expedite the institutional closure plan, identifying the necessary resources to provide housing and other services in community settings. This strategy will result in dramatic, long-term savings for the state.
 - All proceeds from the sale, lease or other use of the capital investment represented by the 7 institutional sites – many of them representing extremely valuable real estate holdings – should be retained by the system to meet capital needs (like housing) for community-based clients, including DC transfers.
- Require all appropriate agencies to expedite and implement California's Olmstead Plan to create systemic changes that will provide services in the most integrated setting appropriate for persons with disabilities. The Olmstead Plan is required by the federal government to comply with the United States Supreme Court's Olmstead decision. This plan is not optional, and if not completed will result in serious fiscal and other consequence for California. In addition, the plan will help expedite the DC closure process that will lead to better services at a lower cost over time.

3) Uniformity and Flexibility are Key

- Many organizations serving consumers maintain working relationships with more than one State agency and more than one Regional Center. To the extent that uniformity among State agencies and Regional Centers can promote efficiencies (e.g. uniformity of closure schedules, regulations, forms, processes, procedures, etc.), then such uniformity should be adopted.
- However, with increased uniformity, State agencies and Regional Centers should maintain the flexibility to enter into unique negotiated agreements to promote cost savings or to best serve the individual needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.

4) Pursue Federal Monies

- If California continues an aggressive pursuit of available federal waiver dollars and redirects the dollars currently spent in institutions to community-based services, the state will have sufficient funds to provide appropriate outcome-based services to all children and adults with developmental disabilities in their communities.

IV. Conclusion

CDSA members are the backbone to California's unique service delivery system. Our members provide choices and service options to the more than 240,000 persons with developmental disabilities in the state – enabling these individuals to receive the services and support they need to lead more independent and productive lives in their communities. As California's caseload and utilization of our vital services continue to grow, we will continue to advocate for public and government support of services for persons with disabilities.