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INTRODUCTION

The regional center system that serves people with developmental disabilities in California has grown from the first two centers in 1966 to a network of 21 agencies covering every area of the state. Each center is a private, nonprofit corporation, funded by a contract with the State Department of Developmental Services. Each has a Board of Directors that includes clients*, parents, professionals, and other concerned community members.

This guide will introduce you to Westside Regional Center (WRC) and the services we offer, as well as provide general information that we hope you will find useful. But please feel free to ask us if you have questions not addressed here.

At our web-site, www.westsiderc.org, you can find notices about special events or important issues, including invitations to meetings, workshops, information sessions, and training opportunities. We hope you will participate in as many activities as you can. This participation will help you learn about new developments; meet other clients, parents, and families who have concerns similar to yours; and make informed choices about those services and programs that will work best for you and your family.

Everyone on the Westside Regional Center staff is dedicated to providing support and assistance to all our clients, and to developing a working partnership with families. Everything we do points to one mission: to help persons with developmental disabilities achieve the greatest possible enrichment and fulfillment in their lives.

Welcome to Westside Regional Center.

* Regional Center clients are usually referred to as "consumers." In response to the preference expressed by our Client Advisory Committee and other groups, you will find the word "clients" used throughout this guide.

MISSION STATEMENT

It is Westside Regional Center’s mission to empower people with developmental disabilities and their families to choose and access community services that facilitate a quality of life comparable to persons without disabilities.
If you or someone in your family has been diagnosed with a developmental disability, you probably have many questions, and may be feeling frightened and uncertain. Westside Regional Center is here to help answer your questions and to offer guidance, support and services. We want to be a partner in your journey down an unfamiliar and sometimes confusing path.

Developmental disabilities include mental retardation, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, autism, and conditions that require treatment similar to that provided to persons with mental retardation. When someone is diagnosed with any of these conditions, parents and family members are faced with a variety of emotions, questions and concerns. The more you learn about developmental disabilities the more effective you will be in making choices and decisions.

At Westside we devote as much time necessary talking with you about your goal, needs and desires. By doing so, we are able to assist you while you determine and design the types of supports you need.

One of Westside’s goals is to help you by focusing on your and/or your family’s strength, abilities and challenges in achieving the highest level of independence possible. You and your family create your own support team. As the central figure on this team, you will determine who will provide the services and supports to help you reach your goals.

Westside Regional Center serves individuals with the following developmental disabilities – if the onset was prior to age 18, and if the condition is substantially handicapping:

**MENTAL RETARDATION**

Individuals with mental retardation develop at a slower rate than their peers and experience some unique challenges in the areas of learning, social adjustment, and independent living skills. Individuals with mental retardation require the same basic services that all people need for normal development. These services include education, vocational preparation, health services, recreation, and emotional support. Like all individuals, people with mental retardation benefit from a supportive family and/or social network.
CEREBRAL PALSY

Cerebral palsy is a disorder of posture and movement due to a dysfunction of the brain. In some instances, the cause of cerebral palsy can be identified, such as central nervous system infection or bleeding, head injury, certain birth defects, or insufficient delivery of oxygen to the brain of the fetus or newborn. In many instances, however, the cause is not known.

Cerebral palsy is not a disease. It is neither progressive (i.e., it does not get worse) nor communicable. Some people with cerebral palsy may have mental retardation; many, however, have normal or above-normal intelligence.

Stiff and difficult movement, involuntary movement and balance problems, poor body tone, or a combination of these can characterize cerebral palsy. It can affect all four extremities (quadriplegia), the lower extremities on one side only (hemiplegia), or the lower extremities only (paraplegia). Speech problems may also be present.

Persons with cerebral palsy are usually able to attain a substantial degree of independence, while some may need considerable assistance. Early identification of cerebral palsy can lead to early intervention programs that can lessen developmental problems.

In addition to regular education, services for the school-age child may include continuing therapy, counseling, technical support, and recreation programs. A significant number of individuals with cerebral palsy attend colleges and universities.

Recent scientific advances have had a positive effect on the long-term welfare of persons with cerebral palsy. Specifically, advanced technology has produced innovations in the areas of speech and communication, self-care, adapted living arrangements, and work sites.

An important social development has been the increased ability of persons with cerebral palsy to live independently in the community with varying degrees of support services.
EPILEPSY

Epilepsy is caused by a sudden, brief change in the brain’s electrical activity. When brain cells are not working properly, actions, movement, or consciousness may be altered for a short time. In medical terms, these physical changes are called epilepsy, or recurrent seizures.

Some people can experience a seizure and not have epilepsy. For example, children may have convulsions from high fevers; this type of seizure is called a febrile convulsion. Other types of seizures not classified as epilepsy include those caused by an imbalance of body fluids or chemicals, or by alcohol or drug withdrawal. Seizures of this nature can, in certain instances, develop into epilepsy if they continue to recur in the absence of the initial cause.

A person experiencing a seizure can appear dreamlike, or be staring ahead and unresponsive. Depending on the part of brain involved during the seizure, there may be abnormal motor movement in the body.

Treatment for epilepsy is aimed at controlling the seizures as well as treating any known underlying cause of them. In the majority of instances, seizures can be partially or completely controlled by anticonvulsant medication. Certain types of seizures are difficult to control despite medication.

AUTISM

Autism usually appears during the first three years of life. It is characterized by impairment in three areas: social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and range of activities and interests.

Difficulty with social interaction may be shown, for example, by failure to cuddle, indifference or resistance to affection or physical contact, and/or lack of eye contact. Sometimes parents mistakenly suspect that the infant or young child is deaf.
Impairment in communication may include absent or delayed language, echolalic language in which the person is only able to repeat what is said to him or her, little or delayed use of gestures or facial expressions to communicate, and/or unusual speech inflection such as a monotone. People with autism typically have difficulty understanding humor and complex issues. Impairment in imaginative activity may include an absence of make-believe play with toys and play-acting of adult roles.

In the younger child, a restricted range of interests and activities may show itself in an attachment to just a few objects such as a string or rubber band. The child may have repetitive bodily actions such as incessant hand movements, rocking back and forth, or repeated words. There may be strong reactions to small changes in the environment. The older child may insist on following routines in a precise way and have a low tolerance for frustration.

A very wide range of conditions that cause brain dysfunction may be involved in the development of autism in an individual. It should be stressed that factors in the home environment have not been shown to cause autism.

Although early diagnosis of autism is important, appropriate help given at any age can be very significant. The school-age individual with autism profits from a high degree of structure in the educational setting. Programs frequently stress social and language skills with behavior management techniques to develop appropriate actions and enhance the learning process. Although some people with autism are severely delayed in learning, most can learn skills when offered the appropriate program.

Research in the field of autism continues to increase our knowledge of innovative program interventions that help the individual with autism develop and learn.
HIGH-RISK INFANTS

We also provide Early Start services to children birth to three years of age who are at high risk of having a developmental disability. Early intervention provides the child and family services that help increase the child’s skills as well as maximize his or her potential.

A baby or young child may be considered eligible for Early Start if one or more of the following is present:

- Delay in one or more developmental areas.
- Medical issues or complications such as severe breathing problems, central nervous system infection or bleeding, low birth weight, prematurity, birth defects, failure to thrive, and exposure to toxic chemicals or drugs during pregnancy.
- Parent(s) with a developmental disability.

SERVICES

Westside Regional Center offers a wide range of services to clients and their families. Some of these, such as assessment or consultation, may be provided directly by Westside staff members. Other services, like independent living skills, might be purchased by the Center from an agency in the community. Your services will be coordinated by Westside Regional Center Service Coordinators, who will make every effort to match them with your individual needs.

INTAKE

Intake is a procedure by which data is gathered to determine eligibility for regional center services. This includes social, medical and psychological information. This information may come from outside sources or from in-house interviews, examinations and testing. If a person is found ineligible, referrals are made to the appropriate services in the community.
CASE MANAGEMENT

Once the intake process is completed and the individual is found eligible for regional center services, the client and family are assigned to a Counselor who specializes in their particular age group or service need. The Counselor (also known as a case manager or service coordinator) belongs to a team, or unit, supervised by a Program Manager.

As described in California’s Lanterman Developmental Services Act, the regional center is responsible for providing “program coordination.” Working as a team with you and/or your family, each service coordinator will assist in arranging appropriate services with you.

Case management includes every aspect of support, including regular evaluations of progress, arranging services, and sometimes just providing someone to listen.

The first step in case management is usually meeting with a Counselor to develop an Individual Program Plan (IPP). The IPP outlines your needs and determines ways in which those needs can be met.

For example, if your son or daughter might benefit from an infant development program that focuses on building socialization skills, as well as motor skills such as holding a bottle and rolling over, the Counselor may include purchasing that program in the IPP. Or if your son or daughter needs a hearing evaluation, the Counselor will include that in the plan and refer you to a professional who can provide this service.

The IPP shows how each member of the service coordination team of advocates (including parent, Counselor, teacher or therapist, physician) will work together. It details who will do what and how the pieces fit together. In future years, the IPP will also serve as a yardstick to measure the effectiveness of previous plans.
During that first meeting, you may also be discussing entitlement programs for which you and your family may be eligible, such as California Children Services (CCS), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medi-Cal, or Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). If you need assistance, your Counselor can help you apply for these programs.

We have booklets that explain various public programs, as well as written material and videos on a wide range of topics, such as specific training programs, parent support groups, disability descriptions, and activity programs in the community. Please feel free to visit our family resource center for any of the above listed items.

Some common services your counselor can assist you in include referrals to community programs, educational support while you work with your local school, written information about developmental disabilities, consultation with medical specialists, referrals to parent support groups, and other specialized services as needed.

Because our services are individualized, there is no one single list of what is available to you. However, the dictionary at the end of this booklet lists many common services.

As a parent, you may choose to provide case management for your child yourself. If you do, Westside will train you for this role and provide ongoing support.

Following are brief descriptions of common case management services, listed by the age that you or your child will likely receive them.

**THE INFANT OR PRESCHOOL CHILD EARLY START**

If your son or daughter was born with a developmental disability, or is at high risk of such a disability, your initial work with the Counselor may focus on ensuring that any medical concerns are evaluated and receive follow-up attention from a health care specialist. For example, if you need help in feeding techniques, your Counselor can refer you to a physical or occupational therapist.
Many infants benefit from an infant development program that can include training for you and your child in a home-based or center-based program tailored to your individual needs. Your Counselor explains the types of programs available and helps you select natural environments best suited for you or your family member.

Respite care is a service that your counselor may suggest if your child has significant disabilities that require care beyond what is normally expected. This is a service that will give you a needed break away from your caregiver responsibilities.

Case management services also include providing a wide variety of written material on disabilities and helping find any additional information you may need. Think of your Counselor as a resource who can steer you in the directions that interest you, or provide you with needed assistance.

THE SCHOOL-AGE CHILD

When your child begins school, your Counselor will help you with issues that arise from your child’s disability. Often, parents wonder what educational program is right for their child. They learn that many children benefit from the more stimulating learning environment in classes of children without disabilities. As a parent, you have the right to a variety of options regarding your child’s educational program. Westside Regional Center encourages families to be well informed and we support inclusive environments.

Your Counselor can also help you work with your local school. He or she may suggest questions that you can ask during school meetings. In particular, you may want your Counselor to help you prepare for the school’s discussion of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which will described in detail the goals, objectives and services implemented for you child. At your request, your Counselor can also attend your IEP meeting to help arrange available services and to address special problems your child may be having at school.
Westside also provides Education Support Services to assist families in obtaining appropriate educational services. Education Advocacy includes consultation and attendance at IEP meetings, as well as ongoing training regarding Special Education Rights and Responsibilities. The advocate’s role is to provide resources, information, strategies and support to families and staff. Education Advocates also act as liaisons between Westside Regional Center and the ten different school districts within our service area.

THE ADOLESCENT AND THE YOUNG ADULT

Adolescence is a time for transition into adulthood with an emphasis on becoming more independent and a part of the total community; a process referred to as community integration. If your adolescent has few opportunities for community integration, Westside Regional Center may recommend and help you locate appropriate social or recreation programs, summer camps, or other resources that will help him or her participate with other adolescent peers in an inclusive environment.

Young adulthood also marks a period of transitioning from the academic setting of school to the outside world of a job and community life. Young adults begin to apply the skills learned in school to the rest of their lives. They often develop lasting friendships and begin a deeper involvement with their community.

You will receive information on the transition from school to work settings, and have the opportunity to ask questions about the variety of training or job placement programs available after public education has ended. Your Counselor can provide referrals to appropriate training, placement resources, and college programs in the community. If your adolescent can take public transportation, your Counselor may set up a training program.
ADULTS

Adults can choose from a wide variety of case management services. Your Counselor will assess a young adult’s previous training and work experience so that you can continue adult education, training, or supported employment.

Supported Living

One of our strongest commitments is to ensure that all adult clients can live where they wish, whether in their own apartment or house, in a group home, with friends, or at home with their families. If you choose to live on your own, you can take advantage of various support services to make that possible – a concept Westside has promoted for many years, called Supported Living.

Supported Employment

Westside has been a leader in the development of services assisting clients to take their place in the workforce. With the belief that every person who wishes to work should have the opportunity to do so, Westside has committed itself to helping clients find employment and providing the support they need to maintain their jobs.

We work closely with local businesses, as well as with other service agencies, and have developed an active and productive network of individuals and groups in our efforts to expand employment opportunities for our clients.

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

As parents know, there may be a time in their child’s life when he or she will not live with the family. Perhaps the severity of the disability and the need for special care or short- or long-term problems in the family will necessitate separating from the family. Or, as the child becomes an adult, he or she may want to live with other adults with similar interests.

In any of these circumstances, your Westside Counselor is ready to help you and your family understand what resources are available as you make this important decision.
We provide a variety of residential programs for our clients.

- Health care living arrangements can meet specific medical or rehabilitative needs.
- Community Care living arrangements are for those without significant medical or physical limitations, and can help address such important needs as providing behavior intervention for challenging behaviors, independent living skills and self-care skills.

After a client has moved out of the family home, Westside provides him or her with a counselor in the Residential Services Unit. The counselor will coordinate services to maximize each individual’s potential. Specifically, the counselor will monitor the care and training the person receives, ensuring that he or she is treated with respect and dignity, as well as given choices about all aspects of life within a homelike environment. In addition, the counselor will provide quality assurance to guarantee that the residential provider follows all the appropriate laws and regulations.

PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING

Person-centered planning is a term you will hear often as you work with Westside. This approach, to determining, planning for, and working toward the future of a person with a developmental disability focuses on the short- and long-term desires of the client and family. In making decisions about the client’s life, person-centered planning builds on the individual’s strengths, abilities, preferences, lifestyle and cultural background.

Of course, the type and amount of case management services that you receive will vary widely depending on your personal circumstances. All Westside clients receive some case management. If your living arrangement, day program, and other aspects of life are generally stable, the Counselor may contact the client only once a year to ensure that new needs are being addressed. Always keep in mind that you and/or your family may contact your counselor at any time to ask for assistance, voice concerns, or notify them of a change in your situation.
It is a good idea to notify your Counselor of any changes you think are significant even if you do not need assistance. For example, you should telephone your Counselor if your child’s school program changes, if a new medical problem is discovered, or if you move. If your child is attending a public school program, you also should keep your Counselor informed about your Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

Westside staff regularly attends workshops and conferences to keep abreast of new developments that might affect your child. By keeping your Counselor updated, you will help him or her give you the latest information on potentially helpful services that become available, as well as new suggestions to help you cope with the many decisions you will face as a client or parent.

**COUNSELOR CHANGES**

Changes in Counselors may occur when a client grows into the next developmental stage or moves to a residence in another area. Occasionally, Counselors leave or are added to Westside’s staff. We try to keep these changes to a minimum. However, sometimes they are unavoidable, and we have to ask individual clients to adjust to shifts made for the benefit of all clients.

**WESTSIDE FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER**

First established in 1993 as an adjunct to Early Intervention Services for at-risk children up to three years of age, the Westside Family Resource is now a resource open to the entire community. This center maintains an extensive resource library, and a friendly, understanding, and resourceful staff, ready to provide parents with information, available resources, useful training in effective advocacy for their children, and parent to parent support. They also organize and host a variety of support groups. Please call (310) 258-4063.
HEALTH SERVICES

Westside’s Health and Medical Services Department offers evaluations, consultations and referrals that serve all the interconnected physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and psychological aspects of well-being.

The department’s team, which includes healthcare consultants such as nurses, physicians, psychiatrists, occupational therapists and pharmacists, emphasizes prevention and health maintenance.

WHEN YOU HAVE PROBLEMS OR EMERGENCIES

Westside continually provides regular training opportunities for our staff. Unfortunately, sometimes despite all of our efforts, you may believe your counselor is not doing the best job possible. We encourage you to discuss your concerns with him or her first. If you continue to feel dissatisfied, your next step should be contacting the unit supervisor (Program Manager). You may ask your counselor his or her Program Manager’s name or ask the main receptionist to connect you.

If you have an urgent or emergency situation and are unable to reach your Counselor for assistance, ask for the “Counselor of the Day” (the person assigned to give assistance in emergencies) or the Program Manager. After the office has closed for the day, or on holidays and weekends, call the regular Westside number, (310) 258-4000, to reach a 24-hour answering service that will take your message and connect you with an assigned emergency coordinator. We ask that you use this 24-hour service only for true emergencies that you are unable to handle by yourself.
YOUR RIGHT TO APPEAL

If you disagree with any decision made by Westside Regional Center, you have the right of review and appeal. You have the right to appeal to the State Department of Developmental Services or try to reach an agreement by speaking with the Fair Hearings coordinator. Instructions and forms for appeal are available from any Westside staff member or on our web-site.

ANNUAL/PROGRESS REVIEWS

You will have the opportunity to review the progress you or your child has made during the previous year. Then, depending upon the need, your Counselor will modify the previous Individual Program Plan (IPP) with new objectives and target dates. If you need a program change, your Counselor will help locate an appropriate resource.

If you need a service that is not available through a public community program, your counselor may make a request for funding from Westside. These services are provided by a Westside vendor or service provider. It is important to remember that these annual/progress review meetings are opportunities for you and your family to ask questions and make plans for the future.

If new information is needed to determine the type of service best suited for you, your Counselor may ask for a consultation from one of Westside’s specialists, such as a nurse, doctor, occupational therapist, or psychologist. Individual Westside staff members have many years of experience working with people who have developmental disabilities and their expertise is available to you.
FAMILIES AND WESTSIDE REGIONAL CENTER

TEAMING UP FOR SUCCESS

Families of our clients play a key role in their son or daughter’s life. In addition to nurturing, caring and providing for a child’s well being, your responsibilities include understanding special needs and the services that are available to help. As an advocate, you need information from Westside, service providers, and schools, as well as community programs and resources.

FAMILIES HELP EACH OTHER

Family members often find that sharing their feelings and experiences in a supportive setting can be meaningful and helpful. Westside develops and provides a number of parent support groups that encourage relationship building.

These groups serve families with many different disabilities, cultures, age groups, situations and geographic areas. Most groups offer support, information sharing, education and training, and guest speakers at their regular meetings. New members are always welcome.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF WESTSIDE’S SERVICES

These are some suggestions that may help you be the best advocate for your child.

- It can be difficult to keep track of important information from WRC, doctors, schools and service providers. Many parents find that starting a special notebook – with labeled dividers for the regional center, medical issues, education, assessment reports and correspondence – keep information organized and readily available. This notebook can also contain the names and phone numbers of important people and programs.
- Keep your counselor informed about Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings. Your counselor can help you advocate for your child. When you need specialized assistance, your counselor can make a referral to one of Westside's Education Specialists.

- Let us know about any changes in a client's situation that may require adjustments in program plans and services. We can help the most when we are kept informed.

- You may want to take part in training programs organized by Westside or others. These programs can provide you with additional information or skills pertinent to your child's development.

- Westside is interested in the opinions of our clients and parents. We encourage you to participate in Westside's policy-making and planning. Our Board of Directors includes many clients and parents. All interested people are welcome at Board meetings. Clients and their families are also invited to participate on Board Committees, which address a variety of topics, including client services, legislative issues, and regional center finances.

  Adult clients may want to join the Board of Director's Client Advisory Committee, which represents community self-advocacy groups. Acting as a liaison between Westside's Board and those groups, the committee sends a representative to participate in decision-making at the monthly Board meetings. The committee also provides self-advocacy training for Westside clients, staff and vendors, helps complete the biannual "Speak For Yourself" newsletter; and plans Westside's annual self-advocacy conference. Working with self-advocacy groups, the committee empowers individuals to become active and influential members of their communities, as well as agents of change concerning their rights and wishes.

  For information about Westside's Board of Directors or the Client Advisory Committee, call (310) 258-4000.
THE WESTSIDE REGIONAL CENTER VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Three words guide Westside’s staff in their relationship with clients and their families, and in their vision of the regional center’s role:

LISTEN
SUPPORT
EMPOWER

These words form the basis of four principles to which Westside is committed for all of the services we provide. Those principles are as follows:

■ **Total Participation**
All people with disabilities and their families will be – not only integrated – but involved, included and welcomed in community life, in jobs, in school and at home.

■ **A Family Perspective**
Each client will be viewed as part of a social unit defined as “family,” which includes those people who have a close and significant relationship to the individual. Westside will support and protect the strength and stability of this unit.

■ **Empowerment**
Individuals with developmental disabilities and their families will develop the skills to take control of, and be responsible for, their lives. Make informed choices about where and how they live, where they go to school, and where they work. Become active and influential in their communities. And become agents of change concerning their rights and wishes.

■ **Putting People First**
We are people-driven and focused on the development of partnerships. Both families and staff will be encouraged to be responsible and creative with a full range of information and education available to them.
SOME FACTS ABOUT SERVICE DELIVERY

COORDINATING SERVICES
Regional centers were designed to be community focal points for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Their primary functions include lifelong planning and coordination of needed services, whether generic or through private providers. In addition to developing and/or identifying services, regional centers may purchase certain services that are not available through other sources. A key consideration: rather than the client fitting the available services, all services must meet the specific needs of the unique individual.

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE
Westside focuses on helping people with developmental disabilities become as independent as possible. We are here to assist clients and families in decision-making, finding and utilizing resources, broadening their support systems, and advocating for their rights. The key word is “assist.” We do not want to foster dependence, but to ensure that clients and families are equipped to help themselves effectively and productively.

DEVELOPING NATURAL SUPPORTS
Westside helps clients and families utilize such resources as businesses, legislators, volunteer and generic services, educational programs and self-help groups, as well as neighbors and family members. These “natural supports” are important elements in the planning process that addresses the needs of each individual.
SERVICES FROM A TO Z

Together with your Counselor, you will develop an Individual Program Plan (IPP), which will identify the specific services needed to help reach your goals. Because Westside tailors services to fit the individual client, you may receive any, all, or few of the services described below. It would be impossible to name every service that might be available, and this list describes only the major service categories.

Some of these services may be available through various community organizations or agencies, and Westside may purchase these services from vendored service providers. Basic funding guidelines are described in the Westside Regional Center Service Standards. Your Counselor can provide you a copy of these standards and can also help you through the funding process.

ADULT DAY PROGRAMS

Clients can take advantage of a variety of programs suited to their individual needs. They can learn self-help and socialization, and daily living skills. These programs also offer vocational training, employment and support on the job as needed.

Sample adult day programs include the following:

- Employment/Supported Employment Programs
- Activity Centers
- Adult Development Centers
- Behavior Management Programs
- Independent Living Programs
- Work Activity Programs
- Habilitation Programs
- Community College Programs
BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Assistance is available when clients and their families face challenging behaviors. Behavior intervention services are programs to help families, clients and caregivers in developing positive strategies and techniques to manage behaviors. Your counselor can consult with you and Westside’s psychologist about possible referrals to a behavior intervention consultant, behavior intervention workshops, seminars, and support groups.

COUNSELING

Your Counselor can guide and support clients and families as they deal with the challenges of a developmental disability. When more help is needed, the Counselor can make a referral to mental health professionals in the community. These programs are covered by insurance, Medi-Cal, and some also provide sliding-scale fees.

EARLY START

Early Start Programs, for children birth to three years of age – emphasize the development of language, personal, social, cognitive, and motor skills. These services can include:

- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Specialized Infant/Toddler Center-Based Program
- In-Home Child Development Programs

When a child in Early Start turns 2.6 years of age, families are notified that he or she may be eligible for special education and related services. The Early Start counselor then makes a referral to the Local Education Agency (LEA) to begin the transition process. Around age 2.9 years, the regional center, LEA and family hold an IFSP/IEP meeting to develop the transition process to pre-school services.
INDEPENDENT LIVING

Adult clients may receive training to become more independent in daily living. These programs often help adults reach their goal of living on their own or with a roommate. Program participants receive training in shopping, cooking, budgeting, housekeeping and self-care skills.

INTERPRETER/TRANSLATOR

For families with limited or no English skills, Westside can provide an interpreter for meetings with your counselor. Your Counselor can also arrange simultaneous translation for group meetings at Westside. Please request this service from your counselor a minimum of 2 weeks prior to your appointment.

HEALTH/MEDICAL SERVICES

Westside’s Health and Medical Team is available for consultation and can provide referrals to community professionals who specialize in the medical needs of people with developmental disabilities.

Our Health and Medical Team includes consulting physicians, psychiatrists, nurses, a speech pathologist, a registered occupational therapist, and a registered dietician.

MOBILITY TRAINING

Westside encourages adult clients to learn mobility skills for public transportation. Special mobility training programs train clients to travel safely and independently to their daily jobs, special programs and social activities.
FAMILY HOME AGENCY LIVING OPTION

Family Home Agencies (FHA) are the newest living options for consumers 18 years of age or older. Family homes through FHA’s create new, alternative or extended families for adults and provide age appropriate services, respectful of personal and cultural preferences and life experiences. The Family Home Agency services include monthly social work visits to monitor the living situation and ensure that the necessary supports and services are being provided. The FHA operates in accordance with State regulations.

RESIDENTIAL CARE

When a family is unable to continue care for a family member at home, Westside can help locate the least restrictive residential care setting available. Westside, Children’s Services, Social Security (SSI), and Medi-Cal can help fund these placements. Many facilities are highly specialized to meet client needs, including severe behavior challenges or intensive medical issues.

These facilities are as follows:
- Foster Family Agency Homes for Children
- Foster Family Agency Homes for Adults
- Small Family Homes
- Group Homes
- Intermediate Care Facilities for the Developmentally Disabled
- Skilled Nursing Facilities

RESPITE CARE

Parents and other family members can get periodic assistance with the constant care and supervision of a client to relieve family stress or in emergencies. When respite services are included in a person’s Individual Program Plan (IPP), the Counselor can arrange many types of respite care, including the following:
In-home, respite. There are several choices with this service. Parents select their own respite provider. After selecting a respite provider, parents can choose to have the respite provider become vendored to receive direct payment from Westside. Or, under certain circumstances, parents can also receive in-home respite services under the Parent Voucher system. Parent Vouchers provide funding directly to the parent who is then responsible for paying the respite worker. The authorization for services is based on individual needs and your counselor will work with you in arranging for this service.

In-home nursing respite. Licensed certified agencies provide home health aides, Licensed Vocational Nurses, or Registered Nurses for people who have significant medical challenges requiring specialized care.

Out-of-home respite. Residential services may be available for a brief respite, appropriate for an overnight or weekend visit.

SOCIAL RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

These programs provide recreational opportunities, develop social interaction and leisure skills, and increase community involvement. Many city recreation departments offer therapeutic recreation programs for children and adults with developmental disabilities. Other community recreation programs for the general public are increasingly able to serve individuals with special needs.

Such programs offer the added benefit of respite for the family or, when offered during after-school hours, extended day care for working parents. These programs include the following:

- After-school and Saturday recreation programs
- Extended school year programs during school breaks
- Camping programs
THERAPY SERVICES

Many of our clients receive a variety of therapy services through programs in the community, such as California Children’s Services, the public school, or other agencies. Westside usually provides only those therapy services not available through one of these generic resources and only to the extent of clinically determined need. Depending on the age and needs of the client, as well as the resources available.

- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Social Skills Training
- Sensory Integration Therapy

TRANSPORTATION

Westside may provide transportation to and from a primary day program. Assistance will vary according to distance, times, and special equipment needed.

The local school district is responsible for providing this service to students in public education programs. Generally, parents or caregivers are responsible for transportation to social and recreational activities, as well as medical or therapy appointments.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

As clients move from school to the workplace, Counselors join them, their families, and school staff in planning for job training or more education. The client’s Individual Education Plan will outline goals and specific activities, such as an Adult Day Program.
WESTSIDE AFFILIATES

THE ACHIEVABLE FOUNDATION

The Achievable Foundation serves as the charitable arm of Westside Regional Center and its affiliates. Achievable provides assistance to clients and their families to improve their quality of life. When services and programs are not available from other public or private sources, Achievable creates innovative and cost-effective solutions to help clients and families increase their independence, advance their inclusion in community life, support expressions of their talents and strengthen the family unit. By concentrating resources in four key areas – support to families, housing, jobs, and community participation – Achievable has a direct, dramatic and lasting impact in the lives of the people we serve. If you are interested in learning more about Achievable and the available grant funding, please contact your counselor. More information regarding the Achievable foundation can be accessed on their web-site www.achievable.org.

H.O.M.E. (Home Ownership Made Easy)

A small, but growing number of clients are living in one of the apartments, condos, or houses obtained by H.O.M.E. (Home Ownership Made Easy), one of Westside’s affiliates. Founded by a group of Westside parents and staff, H.O.M.E. has devoted itself to the mission of giving clients the opportunity to learn and grow through the responsibility of maintaining a home. Even adults with severe disabilities have done well in these environments. If you wish to consider this option, please contact your counselor.
AAMR – American Association on Mental Retardation. National professional organization of people in the field of mental retardation. Publishes several journals.

AB – Assembly Bill of the California Legislature. Bills are numbered for identification, e.g., AB3804.

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act. Signed into law on July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act is a wide-ranging legislation intended to make American Society more accessible to people with disabilities.

Advocate – A person who supports and represents the rights and interests of another individual in order to ensure the individual’s full legal rights and access to services. The advocate can be a friend, a relative, a Counselor, or any other interested person.

AFDC – Aid to Families with Dependent Children. An income maintenance program of the Department of Social Services.

Amniocentesis – A medical procedure that tests fluid from the amniotic sac to determine if a fetus has any genetic defects. Westside may purchase this procedure for pregnant women at risk of parenting a child with a developmental disability.

ARC – Association for Retarded Citizens. The national organization for parents of children with mental retardation. ARC-California, the state organization, has many local chapters, such as ARC-South Bay.

ARCA – Association of Regional Center Agencies. State association for the 21 regional centers. ARCA represents regional centers on statewide policy and contractual and fiscal issues. ARCA also provides a forum for information exchange and education among the centers.

Area Board – One of 13 agencies in the state that oversees plans for people with developmental disabilities. Duties include advocacy and monitoring of programs. Westside clients can get help from Area Board X.

Aspergers – Aspergers or Asperger’s Syndrome is a term used when a child or adult has some features of autism but may not have the full-blown clinical diagnosis.

Assessment – The process to determine whether, and to what degree, an individual has developmental deficits. An assessment identifies the individual’s strengths, abilities, needs, and developmental level.

Autism – A developmental disability starting in early childhood characterized, by withdrawal, inadequate social relationships, exceptional object relationships, language disturbances, and monotonously repetitive motor behavior.

Baseline Data – Information collected about a behavior (such as frequency and severity) before the start of an intervention program. Data is used to test the effectiveness of the intervention.

Behavior – Anything a person does that can be observed and measured.

Behavior Intervention – A service designed to assist families and caregivers in developing positive strategies and techniques to manage behavior.

CCS – California Children’s Services. Provides specialized medical and rehabilitation services for physically disabled children with certain conditions. The program is financed by federal, state, and county taxes, and supplemented by family repayments when indicated.

CDER – Client Development Evaluation Report. An assessment during the intake process, and at progress reviews to determine developmental and functional levels and progress.

Cerebral Palsy (CP) – A developmental disability dating from birth or early infancy, and characterized by disorder of movement and posture.

Chaining – The process of combining simple behaviors to form a new complex behavior. For example, turning on a faucet, putting soap on your hands, rinsing them, wiping them on a towel, and turning off the faucet are a series of simple behaviors that make up hand-washing.
CDDF – Coastal Developmental Disabilities Foundation. Made up of the Board of Directors of Westside Regional Center, this nonprofit organization contracts with DDS to operate Regional Centers.

DCFS – The Department of Children and Family Services in Los Angeles County, which administers all child welfare services.

DDS – The Department of Developmental Services. This state agency administers the contracts with each regional center and sets many of the regulatory standards for service. The department also operates state developmental centers.

DHS – The Department of Health Services. Responsible for Medi-Cal administration and licensing of healthcare facilities.

DMH – The Department of Mental Health. Responsible for state and local services for people with mental illness. Approves and funds community mental health programs and administers Metropolitan State Hospital in Norwalk.

DOE – The Department of Education of the State of California.

DPSS – The Department of Public Social Services. In Los Angeles County, DPSS administers public assistance programs and disability evaluations.

DR – The Department of Rehabilitation. Responsible for vocational training and job placement of disabled persons.

DSS – The Department of Social Services. Responsible for overseeing the distribution of many government services. Licenses community care facilities.

Epilepsy – A developmental disability involving single or recurring loss of consciousness.

FRC – Family Resource Center.

Generic Services – Services offered or available to the general public, as distinguished from specialized services for specific groups of people. For example, training provided by the Department of Rehabilitation is a generic service available to any California resident in need of rehabilitation. In the absence of a generic service, Westside may purchase that service for its clients.

Genetic Counseling – Consultation that focuses on the risk factors involved in parenting a child with a developmental disability. Westside offers this service to a family or individual when a genetic defect is suspected.
Genetic Defect – Abnormalities in the genes that cause mental retardation.

Goal – A general statement of purpose that defines the end result of a program’s impact on an individual. Westside’s goals describe the behavior or skills that a client will acquire in the future, usually within a three- to five-year period.

Group Home – Any facility of any capacity which provides 24-hour non-medical care and supervision to children in a structured environment, with such services provided at least in part by staff employed by the licensee.

ICF-DD – Intermediate Care Facility. A residential program for people with developmental disabilities who have medical conditions requiring health professionals on staff at the home.

ICF-DD/H – Intermediate Care Facility/ Habilitative. Similar to an ICF-DD, but with six or fewer beds, and with an emphasis on training residents to live independently.

ICF-DD/N – Intermediate Care Facility/ Nursing. Similar to an ICF-DD/H, but serving clients with greater needs for nursing and supervision.

IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (PL105-17).

IEP – Individual Education Plan. A written statement of objectives and plans to achieve those objectives, required for every child in a special education school program.

IPP/ISP – Individual Program Plan/ Individual Support Plan. A written statement of goals and specific objectives in areas important to the client. Each objective contains one or more plans to achieve it and a target date for completion. The IPP is coordinated by your counselor, who will ensure that it is consistent with the IEP.

Informed Consent – The voluntary acceptance of any procedure, program or practice that is performed by another individual. This agreement requires knowledge of possible outcomes, including adverse reactions and alternative procedures to accomplish the same outcome.

Lanterman Act – The Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act, legislation that mandated the right of people with developmental disabilities to receive appropriate services.

LD – Learning Disability.
LPS – Lanterman, Petris, Short Act. This act provides for the detention of people with mental disabilities for evaluation and treatment, and the establishment of a conservatorship for people with mental disabilities.

LRE – Least Restrictive Environment

Medi-Cal – California’s version of the federal Medicaid Program that pays medical expenses for public assistance recipients and other low-income persons.

MR – Mental Retardation. A developmental disability involving below-average general intellectual functioning. Originates during the developmental period (before the age of 18) and is associated with impairment in adaptive behavior.

MTU – Medical Treatment Unit. Administers CCS services in school settings for children with physical disabilities.

Multidisciplinary Team – A group of persons who have individual areas of professional expertise and/or know the client and his or her skills and behavior. This group develops the IPP. Sometimes referred to as the ID team.

NICU – Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

Nonverbal Communication – Signals and messages from one person to one or more other people through facial expressions, body movements, verbal tone, or posture.

Normalization – The use of culturally valued means to establish and maintain personal behaviors, experiences, and characteristics that are equally culturally normative or valued.

OMH – Other Multi-Handicapped. An educational classification for children with two or more unrelated handicapping conditions.

OT – Occupational therapist or therapy

Objective – A statement of an expected behavior that is related to the achievement of a goal.

Observable – One of the requirements in the definition of a behavior. Refers to behaviors that can be seen or heard, rather than emotions or feelings that are inferred to exist.

PH – Physically handicapped. An education classification for children with physical handicaps. Previously referred to as orthopedically handicapped.
PL – Public Law. PL 105-17, for example, sets rules for special education.

POS – Purchase of Service. Refers to client services that Westside buys. When clients need services that are unavailable from generic resources, Westside Counselors may negotiate service contracts with vendors.

PT – Physical therapist or therapy.

Person-Centered Planning – An approach to planning for the future based on the client’s and family’s wishes, and on the client’s abilities and preferences.

Protection and Advocacy, Inc. – A federally funded agency that advocates for both individuals and systems. Staffed primarily by attorneys and paralegal staff, this agency represents clients who have been deprived of their right to services.

Public Law 94-142 – Federal legislation ensuring that all handicapped children have the right to a free and appropriate public education.

SB – A Senate Bill of the California Legislature.

SELPA – Special Education Local Planning Area

Sensory Integration – Sensory integration is an innate neuro-biological process and refers to the integration and interpretation of sensory stimulation from the environment by the brain.

Service Coordinator – The Service Coordinator/Counselor is responsible for collecting and giving information to the consumers and families, coordinating services for the consumers and families to enable them to have a leadership role in service design, and advocating for consumer rights. The Service coordinator assures that the Individual Program Plan and Person Centered Plan is successfully implemented. Service coordination is essential to assuring that consumers and families are assisted in securing services and supports which maximize opportunities and choices in living, working, learning, and participating in recreation in the community. The primary direct service provided by the regional center is service coordination. A service coordinator/counselor is assigned to each consumer and family.

Service Provider – This term is also used for a Vendor.

SIR – Special Incident Report. It is the documentation of any detailed information provided to the Regional Center regarding special incidents.
SNF – Skilled nursing facility. This residential facility aids individuals with considerable medical needs.

SSA – Social Security Administration. This Federal agency administers benefits to retired or disabled workers and their surviving dependents.

SSI – Supplemental Security Income. These government funds are available to many people with a disability and limited financial resources.

State Council on Developmental Disabilities – An agency established by federal law and the Lanterman Act to plan and review activities from a statewide perspective.

Supported Employment – These services are aimed at finding competitive work in the community integrated work setting for persons with developmental disabilities who need ongoing support services to learn and perform the work. Placements can be individual placements, group placements (called enclaves), and work crews, such as landscaping crews. Support is usually provided by a job coach who meets regularly with the individual on the job to help him or her learn the necessary skills and behaviors to work independently. As the individual gains mastery of the job, the support services are gradually phased out.

Vendor – Any community agency or professional that provides services purchased by the regional center for its clients. Also known as a Service Provider.

WRC – Westside Regional Center. Westside serves almost 5,000 people with developmental disabilities living in West Los Angeles communities as far south as Gardena and as far north as Malibu.