

# San Diego Regional Center

*Eligibility and Services for School-Age Children  
with ASD*

Gohar Gyurjyan, PhD and Rachel Vedder, PsyD

# Regional Center System

- 21 RC's in the state
- All are private non-profits
- Not a state agency, receive funding and leadership guidance from the Department of Developmental Services
- There is no cost to families for diagnosis and assessment of eligibility
- Required by law to provide services in the most cost-effective way possible. Must use all other resources, including generic resources, before using any regional center funds (e.g., CCS, school districts, Medi-Cal)

# SDRC overview

- Serve approximately 35, 000 individuals
- Serve San Diego and Imperial Counties with offices in Kearney Mesa, Santee, El Centro, National City, Carmel Mountain, Eastlake, and San Marcos
- Second largest RC in the state
- We are growing at a rapid pace with hundreds of requests for intake every month

# Who's Eligible Early Start

- Birth to age 36 month-must meet one of the criteria listed below:
- Have a developmental delay of at least 33% in one or more areas: cognitive, communication, social or emotional, adaptive, or physical and motor development including vision and hearing
- Or-have an established risk condition of known etiology, with a high probability of resulting in delayed development
- Or-be considered at high risk of having a substantial developmental disability due to a combination of biomedical risk factors

# Lanterman Eligibility

- Individuals with developmental disabilities living in San Diego and Imperial Counties
- Intellectual Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy, and other conditions similar to Intellectual Disability
- Originating prior to 18 years of age and likely to continue indefinitely
- Substantial disability in at least 3 areas:  
Communication, Self-Care, Self-Direction, Mobility, Capacity for Independent Living, Economic Self-Sufficiency

# Referral Process

- Visit SDRC website: <http://sdrc.org/index.php/how-to-apply/>
- Call or email SDRC and ask for an Intake Coordinator
- Unconserved adults must be available to give consent
- SDRC 101 Interview must be done over the phone
- Family will meet with Intake Coordinator
- Staff will gather collateral and review
- May be referred to medical or psychological evaluation

# Helpful referral information

- Specific concerns such as ASD “red flags” such as scripted speech, repetitive behaviors, sensory difficulties
- Examples of ID concerns such as reading below grade level and poor adaptive functioning
- The family is reporting specific concerns that warrant a referral; please give specifics
- The term “diagnostic clarification” is too vague and will likely make it difficult to move forward with a referral

# Common referrals that are ineligible

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Specific Learning Disability
- Communication Disorders
- Mental Health issues such as depression and anxiety
- History of febrile seizures
- Solely physical issues that do not fall under CP



# Referral Timelines

- Initial contact must begin within 15 business days of the request for assistance
  - This initial contact determines if the case will be opened for formal intake. This is called the “inquiry”
- If the Regional Center determines that a case should be opened for intake they have 120 days to determine the eligibility status

# Is there a fast track for intake?

- Not really! There is no “fast track.” For example, if you refer someone from an ED visit that you think has ASD and needs services the Regional Center has the full timeline to determine eligibility
- However, if the delay in intake would result in a risk to the person’s health and safety, the Regional Center will determine eligibility within 60 days

# Why does it take up to 120 days?

- Gathering collateral from multiple resources in the community can be time intensive and yield limited results
- We have more referrals for psychological testing than we can keep up with, especially for non-English speakers and more complex cases
  - Psychological testing also takes time to write up and then be reviewed by the DDST tea.
- Intake coordinators often need to make multiple attempts to obtain all of the information needed from families

# Eligibility Team

- Lanterman Act requires a psychologist, physician, and a program manager to make eligibility decision
- Careful review of past evaluations, impressions of Service Coordinator, and any other collateral
- In some cases, we make a child eligible and require a redetermination of eligibility at a future date
- Appeal Process:
  - Informal Meeting (no judge) or Mediation (with judge)
  - Fair Hearing (with Judge)

# Information Considered for Qualifying Conditions

- Diagnoses of Autism, ID, CP, EP or Borderline IQ
  - Psychological evaluations
  - Medical records and diagnoses
  - School records
  - Individual's presentation
- There must be some evidence for condition originating before 18 years
- Qualification for special education does not necessarily mean SDRC eligible

# Psychological Evaluations

- We consider outside as well as SDRC psych evals for eligibility (Kaiser, Rady's, UCSD, etc.)
- SDRC psychological evaluations:
  - Currently only done remotely
  - Over 30 psychologist vendors contract with SDRC
  - Standard ASD and ID evaluations using measures like ADOS-2, CARS-2, Vineland-III, IQ tests, etc.
  - School Observations (when needed, pre-pandemic)
  - Phone calls to therapists, teachers, etc.

# Information Considered for Substantial Disability

- Communication (verbal IQ; communication scores; professional observation; etc.)
- Learning (IQ; achievement; memory; etc.)
- Self-Care (adaptive scores; hygiene care; etc.)
- Mobility (gross and fine motor abilities)
- Self-Direction (interpersonal relationships)
- Capacity for Independent Living (telling time; counting money; household chores; driving, etc.)
- Economic Self-Sufficiency (work related)

# Over 3 Service Plans for School Age

- Individual Program Plan (IPP)-A yearly plan that identifies goals, services, and supports that is unique to each client
- Who makes the plan-the Service Coordinator, along with the child and their family encompass the planning team
- The plan may include areas such as respite care, incontinence supplies, and behavior services



# Public School Education

- The primary provider of services for school-aged children with developmental disabilities is the publicly funded educational system.
- The planning team may determine that additional, non-educational services are needed to support a child and that regional center funding would be appropriate.

# Services offered for school age children

- **Service coordination**
- Specialized day care
- Therapy services such as occupational and nutritional
- Behavioral services
- Medical/dental equipment and services
- Respite care
- Learning about sexuality and proper boundaries
- Increasing social skills
- Co-payment assistance
- Transportation assistance
- Individual family training
- Residential services

# Points of Contact

- **SDRC website:** [www.sdrc.org](http://www.sdrc.org)
- **Early Start for Children 0-3 Years Old:**  
**(858) 496-4318**
  
- **Intake Process for Individuals over Age 3:**  
**By Email:**
  - San Diego County – [intake@sdrc.org](mailto:intake@sdrc.org)
  - Imperial Valley – [imperialintake@sdrc.org](mailto:imperialintake@sdrc.org)**By Phone:**
  - San Diego County – **(858) 576-2938**
  - Imperial Valley – **(760) 355-8383**

# Points of Contact

- Psychological Services
  - Gohar Gyurjyan, Ph.D. [Gohar.gyurjyan@sdrc.org](mailto:Gohar.gyurjyan@sdrc.org)
  - Rachel Vedder, Psy.D. [Rachel.vedder@sdrc.org](mailto:Rachel.vedder@sdrc.org)
- Autism Services Coordinator-Kim Gains, PhD  
[Kim.gaines@sdrc.org](mailto:Kim.gaines@sdrc.org)
- Behavioral Services Coordinator-Melissa Melgar, BCBA  
[Melissa.melgar@sdrc.org](mailto:Melissa.melgar@sdrc.org)
- Early Start Services [Sarah.burton@sdrc.org](mailto:Sarah.burton@sdrc.org)