

Redwood Coast Regional Center

Redwood Coast Regional Center (RCRC) is one of twenty-one private, non-profit regional centers in California that serve people with developmental disabilities. RCRC is the entry point through which residents with developmental disabilities and their families can obtain community supports and services in Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake and Mendocino counties.

California law defines a developmental disability as a substantial disability resulting from cognitive impairment, cerebral palsy, autism, epilepsy, or other disabling conditions closely related to, or requiring treatment similar to that required for people with cognitive impairment. The condition must have had its onset before the age of 18 and, in addition, have the probability of continuing throughout the life of the individual. Disabilities that are "solely physical in nature" are not included.

Cognitive impairment (sometimes referred to as mental retardation) is a condition in which there is a permanent impairment that may cause a delay in the development of academic, intellectual, social or physical skills. About three percent of the general population have cognitive impairments. Diagnosis of cognitive impairment is often based upon such indicators as slowness in areas such as sitting, walking or talking and a below average score on psychological tests. There are many other factors that are taken into consideration when an evaluation is made.

Cerebral palsy is a lack of normal muscle functioning caused by damage to areas of the brain involved in the control of muscles. The damage usually is caused by an injury before, at, or shortly after birth. A person may be stiff, weak, lack balance, or have extra movement of the head, arms, or legs that cannot be controlled. The ability to speak and to eat may also be impaired. Cerebral palsy is the most common, permanent physical disability of childhood. Its incidence has been estimated at five per thousand in the population under 20 years of age. Approximately one-third of the children with cerebral palsy have normal intelligence, while the remainder may have some deficits in their learning abilities.

Epilepsy is a condition that causes disturbances of electrical activity in the brain. Sometimes these disturbances result in a temporary loss of consciousness or motor control. There are a variety of types of epilepsy. About one percent of the general population has epilepsy, three-fourths of whom develop it before the age of 21. About 80 percent of people with epilepsy will have good control of seizures through medication. In many instances, an individual who has epilepsy as a child will not have it as an adult.

Autism is a condition that usually appears in the very early years of life. It is a disorder of development that may include withdrawal from other people, difficulty in relating to people, and difficulty in using language. A person with autism may become preoccupied with a particular activity or topic. Autism and its associated behaviors have been estimated to occur in as many as 1 in 500 individuals. Autism is four times more

prevalent in boys than girls. Family income, lifestyle, and educational levels do not affect the chance of autism's occurrence.

"Other disabling conditions" are disorders that require treatment similar to those required by a person with cognitive impairment. People who require treatment similar to that needed by people with cognitive impairment may learn new skills much more slowly than normal and/or need similar kinds of assistance or teaching to a person with cognitive impairment.

PREVENTION SERVICES:

The Regional center collaborates with families and various community agencies to deliver services through the California Early Start Program. This program provides services to a child, birth to age three, if he or she shows delay in development, or whose genetic, medical or environmental history is predictive of a greater risk of developmental disability than that of the general population. Services include genetic counseling and prenatal diagnostics; interagency case management; medical, developmental and nutritional assessment and consultation; and services that are purchased to lessen developmental disabilities.

DIRECT SERVICE:

Regional center staff always work personally with the child and the family to help obtain the needed services. If you believe that the child you are advocating for may have a developmental disability, direct service staff perform comprehensive assessments and provide diagnoses to determine eligibility for regional center services. The staff work individually with the child and the family or guardian and other persons who are significant, to formulate a Person Centered Plan (Individual Program Plan or IPP). Direct service staff help to design the Plan to specifically fit the particular needs and are charged with seeing that the plan is kept up to date with preferences and life changes.

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Advocate Resource library at National CASA <http://www.casenet.org/library/index.htm>