

**Addressing Disparities in the Self-Determination Program**

The Self-Determination Program (SDP) provides individuals living with disabilities and their families with more freedom, control, and responsibility in choosing the services and supports needed to help meet objectives in their Individual Program Plan. It is a voluntary regional center program providing participants with an individual budget, which they use to purchase the services, activities, items, care, and support they need to carry out and achieve their Person-Centered Plan and Individual Program Plan. This program has had a significant impact on many people with disabilities throughout the State, as it has given them and their families more choice, independence, freedom, and control over their services and care. Some participants use the funding to purchase services from traditional providers or local businesses, directly hire support workers, or negotiate unique arrangements with entities in their communities. This program puts people with disabilities in direct control of their own lives, instead of with the professionals or systems that support them.

As of July 1, 2021, the SDP was made available to all eligible individuals

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receiving services from a regional center. Regional centers are nonprofit private corporations that contract with the State Department of Developmental Services to provide or coordinate services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities. These regional centers identify people who may need their services, evaluate people for eligibility, coordinate services for all regional center consumers, develop the Individual Program Plans, develop new services and supports, and critically oversee the SDP. There are several regional centers in Los Angeles County providing services to residents, including the East Los Angeles Regional Center, Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, Harbor Regional Center, North Los Angeles County Regional Center, South Central Los Angeles Regional Center, San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center, and the Westside Regional Center.

Despite the success and popularity of the program, recent data indicates that Latinos are vastly underrepresented in participation in the program. As of December 2023, only 20% of participants are Latino. This is in stark contrast to all receiving services through the Department of Developmental Services, of which 41% of the consumers are Latino. Additionally, Black Californians and people who primarily speak Spanish are underrepresented as well. A June 2023 report conducted by the UCLA Tarjan Center, Disability Rights California, the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, and Children's Hospital Los Angeles found that the primary barrier for most participants access the SDP is administrative burden. In engaging with participants, the report noted that "participants felt that the problem with SDP is not the concept or its principles, but the administrative burden in obtaining and keeping SDP enrollment." Participants felt that the SDP could be improved by "reducing complexity and

administrative burden,” making it less time-consuming, labor-intensive, and demanding. This especially resulted in inequities in the program, as communities with less time for engagement were less than likely to participate.

Although the County does not directly oversee the SDP or the regional centers, the Aging and Disabilities Department (AD) is actively engaging and coordinating with the regional centers to ensure the needs of Los Angeles County residents are being met. They are also collaborating directly with the State and the regional centers to create an Aging and Disabilities Resource Center (ADRC), to create a seamless network of care and transitions between the regional centers, the two Area Agencies on Aging, and AD services. AD has received a \$1.8 million grant from the State to establish this critical infrastructure, to create a one-stop shop for long-term care and services for people with disabilities. AD is aiming for full ADRC designation by July 1, 2025, but its current collaboration with the regional centers presents an opportunity to help uplift the SDP.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Aging and Disabilities Department (AD) to engage with the regional centers within Los Angeles County to develop a plan and recommendations in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Commission on Disabilities for actions the County can take in assisting with disparities in the Self-Determination Program. The report back is due within 90 days and should include, but not be limited to, the following considerations:

1. Assessment of available demographic data obtained from the regional centers of LA County participants in the SDP and an identification of needed populations of focus experiencing disparities in enrollment and participation in the SDP;

2. Develop and execute a community engagement strategy in multiple languages utilizing traditional, ethnic, hyperlocal, and social media, to raise awareness of the SDP Countywide, with an emphasis on identified communities and populations experiencing disparities;
3. Partner with the regional centers and make recommendations to assist interested participants in overcoming administrative challenges; and
4. Recommendations for advocacy at the State level to reduce barriers and increase access to the SDP for vulnerable communities.

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