

# Making it happen



## HARBOR REGIONAL CENTER APPLICANT INFORMATION





# Welcome

Thank you for contacting a Regional Center. You have most likely applied for services from our organization because your son, daughter, or other relative has shown some developmental delays. Or perhaps your child's doctor or school has suggested that we might be helpful. No matter how you found us, we are pleased to get to know your family.

We've prepared this leaflet to let you know what to expect during the application process – and to give you an idea of how long it might take.

**INTAKE** In order for your child to receive ongoing services and supports from our Center, s/he must have a diagnosed ***developmental disability*** – and this disability must be considered a substantial disability.

This means that we will need to go through a process to determine if your child meets these eligibility conditions. We call this process “***intake.***” And we call the Harbor Regional Center person who coordinates this process with you your “***Intake Counselor.***”

Your Intake Counselor is a special and caring professional who is your key contact at Harbor Regional Center during the intake process.

**DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES** As we said earlier, in order for your child to be eligible for our services, s/he must have a diagnosed *developmental disability*. Since this term may not be familiar to everyone, we will describe it briefly.

Developmental disability includes *mental retardation (which is also referred to as “intellectual disability”), autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, or some other conditions similar to mental retardation.*

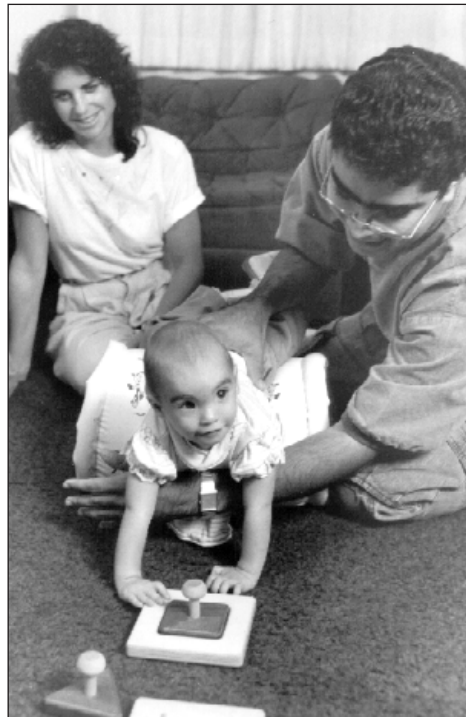
The condition must have *originated prior to the age of eighteen* (this means that it started sometime during the “developmental” period of the person’s life – even though the person may be over 18 now). And the condition must create a *“substantial disability”* for the person in at least three developmental areas.

Some people, after the age of 18, have serious accidents from which they may sustain traumatic head injuries. Though their condition is like a developmental disability, they would not be eligible for Harbor Regional Center services because their condition started after the age of 18.

Some people do have a diagnosis of autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, or intellectual disability (also referred to as mental retardation) – but their effects are so mild that these people are able to get along in almost all areas of life. For these people, their condition is not a “*substantially disability*,” and they are not eligible for Harbor Regional Center services either.

And some people have learning disabilities or mental illness that may be confused with developmental disabilities. By themselves, these conditions do not make a person eligible for Harbor Regional Center services.

As you can see, it’s not always simple to conclude that a person has a developmental disability.



# Flow chart

## STEP 1

You make your first contact with Harbor Regional Center. The HRC Intake Counselor will gather some basic information from you, and send you an application form to complete.

## STEP 2

After we receive your completed application form, the HRC Intake Counselor calls you and makes an appointment to meet with you.

## STEP 3

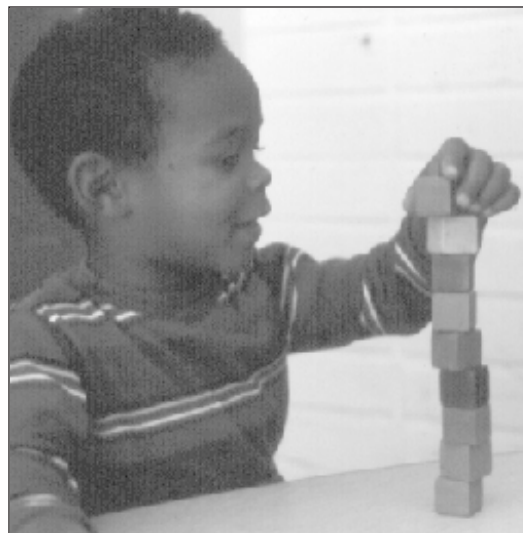
Within 15 days the Intake Counselor meets with you, to learn about your family, developmental history, and special needs.

## STEP 4

Within 75 days of your initial contact any assessment which is needed to determine your eligibility will be completed. You will receive a phone call and letter from the Intake Counselor informing you whether or not you have been found eligible to receive ongoing services from HRC.

## STEP 5

If you are eligible, an HRC Counselor assigned to work with you will contact you within 30 days. If you are not eligible, we refer you to other resources for assistance in your community.



## **ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSIS** Cerebral palsy and epilepsy

are almost always diagnosed by a medical doctor.

Intellectual disability and autism are often diagnosed by a medical doctor as well – but are also usually confirmed by a psychologist.

Perhaps your child has recently been seen by a medical doctor or a psychologist and a diagnosis has already been made. If so, and if the report is sufficiently detailed for us to determine if there is a substantial disability, it may not be necessary for us to conduct more formal assessments. Sometimes, though, previous tests may have been done long ago and need to be updated, or may not be adequate for our purposes. Or perhaps we are unable to obtain copies of the test results in a timely way. In cases like these it may be necessary for us to repeat the required assessments. We hope this will not be too inconvenient for you – but we know you want us to be certain of any diagnosis we may make.

**FEES** There is no cost to your child or your family for any of the tests or other services we provide during the intake process.

However, if your family member has health insurance or Medi-Cal, we may ask the professionals who conduct assessments to bill your insurance or Medi-Cal before billing us.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP** Be sure to keep your appointments with us – or notify us ahead of time if you find you will be unable to keep a scheduled appointment. Also, try to have the information that we request (such as your child’s birth certificate, social security number, insurance or Medi-Cal information, copies of medical records, etc.) ready when we meet with you – this will save a lot of time.

In addition, it will be helpful to us if you have the names and addresses of all the professionals who have already seen your child. With your consent, we will write for copies of their records and, if we receive them in time, we may be able to avoid having to repeat assessments and evaluations that have already been conducted. If you move or change your phone number, be sure to let us know.



**ELIGIBILITY DECISION** After your Intake Counselor has interviewed you, and after we have received or conducted the necessary assessments, we will be ready to make an eligibility determination. ***This should be done no later than 60 days after your first meeting with your Intake Counselor.***

If we find that your child is ***eligible*** for ongoing services, your Intake Counselor will notify you by phone and by mail. If we find that your child is ***not eligible***, you will also be notified by phone and by mail – and your notifications will include our recommendations for any follow-up or other services which you may wish to explore.

Whether or not your child is eligible for Harbor Regional Center services, you may see and get a copy of any assessment that we have conducted. If you choose to have copies, let your Intake Counselor know. Otherwise, we will keep all copies of reports in the files that we maintain.

Your Intake Counselor will discuss the test results with you initially and will also schedule a family team meeting with a psychologist and, if appropriate, a physician. At the family team meeting the psychologist will review the assessment report, explain the findings and implications, and answer questions. During this meeting the parents may also discuss service options for their child.

**APPEALS** Sometimes people disagree with our decision that their child is not eligible for regional center services. When you receive written notification of ineligibility, you will also receive information about how you can appeal this decision. We encourage you to appeal if you believe that the decision was not right.

**SERVICE PLANNING AND COORDINATION** When you are notified that your child is eligible for Harbor Regional Center services, you will also be told the name of your family's Harbor Regional Center regular Counselor (this is a different person from your Intake Counselor). Your Counselor will meet with you within 30 days of the eligibility notification to develop a plan for your child.

Service planning is different for everyone because everyone we serve has unique needs and preferences. Your Counselor will give you a booklet which will provide you with a general idea of the types of services and supports that Harbor Regional Center provides for people who are eligible. Your Counselor will talk with you and see you on a regular basis. Together you will modify plans and services as your family member's needs and priorities change.

**THANK YOU** We hope this information will be helpful as your child goes through our intake process. Remember, if you have any questions at all – don't hesitate to call your Intake Counselor.

Thank you for contacting Harbor Regional Center. We are interested in your views about our services. If you would like to commend one of our staff, comment on the services you have received – or register a complaint – please write to:

Patricia Del Monico, Executive Director  
Harbor Regional Center  
21231 Hawthorne Blvd.  
Torrance, CA 90503



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