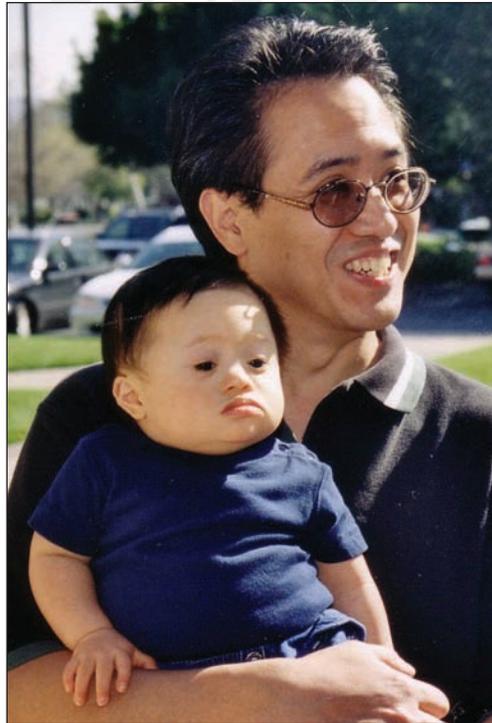




*H*AND • IN • HAND  
A GUIDE TO  
EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES  
AT HARBOR REGIONAL CENTER

# Welcome



Welcome to Harbor Regional Center and our Early Childhood Services program. For the next few years – at least until your infant or toddler is three – we’ll be working hand-in-hand with you to provide the best possible early intervention services for your child with special needs.

We want you to know that you’re not alone. You’re part of a caring team of people who really do understand, and are here to help you make informed choices.

We’re here to listen and respond with information and coordination of services. We encourage families to be active participants in the process of planning and decision-making. Consider us your partners.

The pages that follow answer the questions we know are on your mind, and give you a sense of our Early Childhood Services as a whole. But we understand that each child and each family is unique, so please feel free to contact your Counselor for more information.



## What We Believe



t Harbor Regional Center, our focus is the family. You, after all, are your child's primary and most constant source of care and nurturing, and our goal is to help each of you maximize the development of your child with special needs.

We believe that a family-centered approach to Early Childhood Services is the most effective, and we see you as capable, competent decision-makers, working together as equals with professionals on the Early Childhood team.

We see your child as an important, valued member of your family and community. And we see your family and your community as a natural support system that will be there throughout your child's life. We will work with you to make sure that, whenever necessary, you also get help from formal sources such as teachers and doctors.

## What are Early Intervention Services?

Early intervention services are ongoing supports for infants and toddlers born with identifiable special needs that may interfere with normal development. These services are designed to pinpoint and treat a problem as early as possible.



Research has proven that early intervention works and provides an important foundation for future growth and development. We now know that if we provide support and services to children with special needs and their families as early as the need is apparent, the child's development will not be delayed as much as it would be if left unattended. This also lessens the stress on your family, so you are better able to meet the challenges you face.

Finally, early intervention services help you gain confidence in your own skills and those of your child.

## How can we help you?

Harbor Regional Center is a place for you to turn, a place with people who will listen, provide information, and work as partners in coordinating services and supports for you and your child.

You can receive early intervention services and supports in a variety of places. For example, we may help you access an infant development program in your home, a preschool program, training and support for your family, or perhaps therapy services. As your child develops, we will work together with you to find appropriate school placement.

We also offer additional supports, such as groups composed of other parents who understand the challenges and stresses of having a child with special needs, educational workshops, a resource center, and opportunities for community involvement.

## Who are your partners on your child's team?

When your infant or toddler is referred to Harbor Regional Center, you are assigned a Counselor from our Early Childhood Services Department.

Your Counselor is a key member of your family's team and the person you call when you need help. Your Counselor is familiar with early childhood development, as well as early intervention services and how to access them. He or she will work with you and your family as long as your baby is receiving services from Harbor Regional Center. Your Counselor also helps you review information from the assessments of the various professionals who have worked with your child, and discusses how these complement your own observations.

Members of your natural support system, such as extended family, friends, neighborhood programs, religious groups, other parents and service providers from our community can also be important parts of your team. Other members of your team may include clinical specialists on our staff, such as a physician, nurse, psychologist, or occupational therapist.

When you and your Counselor meet to create or review your Individual/Family Service Plan, we encourage you to include or consult with any of these individuals if you'd like.



## What is the Individual/ Family Service Plan?



The Individual/Family Service Plan (IFSP) is a document that you create together with your family, your Counselor and service providers.

It identifies:

- Your child's strengths and needs
- Your family's concerns, priorities and resources
- Both formal and informal sources of support outside your family that can help address the needs of all family members, including those related to your child's development.

The IFSP process recognizes that children live in families, families live in communities, and all of these influences affect a child's development.

The guiding principles of the IFSP are that the family is a child's greatest resource, that a baby's needs are closely tied to the needs of the family, and that the best way to support children is to support and act upon the strengths of the family.

The plan sets forth long-term goals and objectives, what services your child will be receiving, and how we will work together to promote and monitor your child's development.

The IFSP is not an end in itself, and it is never truly finished. It is an ongoing process designed to continually reassess your child's and your family's needs and priorities, and it continues as long as your child is receiving early intervention or ongoing Harbor Regional Center services.



## What kinds of services may be identified in the IFSP?

**B**ased on your child's and family's needs, services and programs that may be identified and coordinated as a result of your IFSP are:

- Physical therapy, to help with sensory-motor coordination
- Occupational therapy, to help with developmental or physical skills that will aid in activities of daily living
- Speech/language therapy, to support the development of communication skills
- Parent consultation in behavior management
- Respite services
- Nursing services
- Nutritional consultation and feeding therapy
- Medical, dental, vision and hearing evaluations and treatment

These services and supports may be coordinated through a variety of community resources, and whenever possible, will be provided in a natural setting where children of the same age without disabilities spend time – such as a neighborhood preschool. Service providers will also instruct you, your family, pre-school teacher, etc., in ways to promote your child's development.

Your child's progress, and the need for continued services for you and your child, are evaluated every three to six months based on your child's development.



## What happens as your child gets older?

As your child gets older, your toddler may continue to receive services in your home, or in a “mommy/daddy and me” or typical preschool program, depending upon your child and family’s specific needs. Services and supports may be provided in these community settings that will continue to teach many of the same things that your child has been learning at home. A community program or preschool provides the added benefit of enriched opportunities for your child to develop early childhood learning, language, and socialization skills in the company of other children.

## How do we provide family support?

The HRC Resource and Assistive Technology Center offers a place for families within the regional center where they can receive information, get to know other parents, find out about parent educational workshops, and be connected to parent support groups.

The Resource and Assistive Technology Center is a total resource center, containing a multi-media library of books, videotapes, DVDs, developmental toys, and other materials especially selected for families like yours, as well as an assistive technology lab and computer lab. The Resource and Assistive Technology Center is open Monday through Friday at our main Harbor Regional Center location in Torrance. We are also open for selected hours at our Long Beach branch. We encourage you to visit us and browse through our

shelves, or just talk with the staff. The library also offers books, videos, DVDs, software, and developmental toys for loan.

If you aren’t able to visit, you can call our helpline and talk to our trained staff and volunteers. Just call (310) 543-0691. If the line’s busy, our voice mail system will take your message. A staff member will call you back, usually on the same day or the next business day.



Families tell us that there is nothing that quite equals the support one parent offers another. In our parent support groups, members share information and resources as well as the emotional experiences which families have in common when they realize that their child has special needs. The HRC Resource and Assistive Technology Center works together with parent groups serving families of different disabilities, cultures, age groups and communities. We also coordinate with trained volunteers, called “Parent Mentors” who would be happy to talk one-on-one with you.

We also offer training workshops on topics of special interest to families. These include understanding disabilities, early childhood and child development, coping with feelings, overviews of various therapies, health, nutrition, community resources and advocacy.

Finally, the Resource and Assistive Technology Center offers a variety of opportunities for volunteer involvement, such as helping in the library, becoming a trained peer support volunteer (Parent Mentor), and much more.



## What about your role and responsibility?



As a parent, you are the heart of your child’s team, and the essential partner in the process. We encourage you to be active, informed participants in every aspect of your child’s development. Children do best when parents learn and reinforce the information and techniques taught by specialists, and follow up with them during the week.

You should also keep records and regularly communicate with other team members – especially your Counselor – about your sense of what is happening with your child, so that together you and your team can make appropriate choices for your child.

We also suggest that you take advantage of the many educational programs and workshops available to you. If you can, we invite you to participate as a parent volunteer, helping other families who have children with special needs.

## When your child turns three

The period of change from one stage of service to the next is called “Transition” – and it’s both exciting and stressful. Once again, we’re here to help you move your child from infant to preschool services or from one developmental stage to the next.

Most families reading this booklet will find that, as a result of our teamwork and early intervention, your child will be doing well and will no longer need continuing regional center services, but will be eligible for continued services in the community. In this situation, your Counselor will provide information to assist you in using all appropriate community resources for continuing your child’s development.

Depending on the school district in which you live, at age three (or sometimes younger) many children with special needs are eligible for early intervention programs in the public schools at no cost to families. At this point your Counselor will help you learn what programs are available to your child.

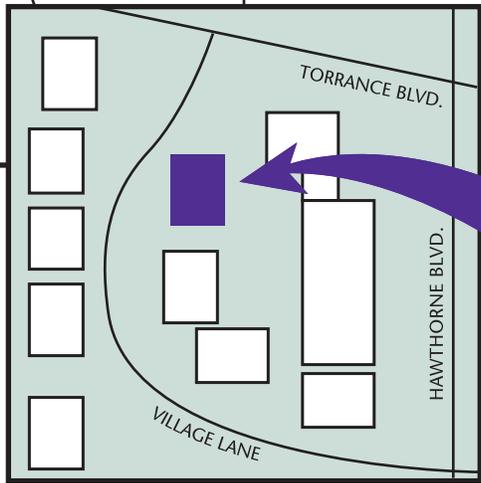
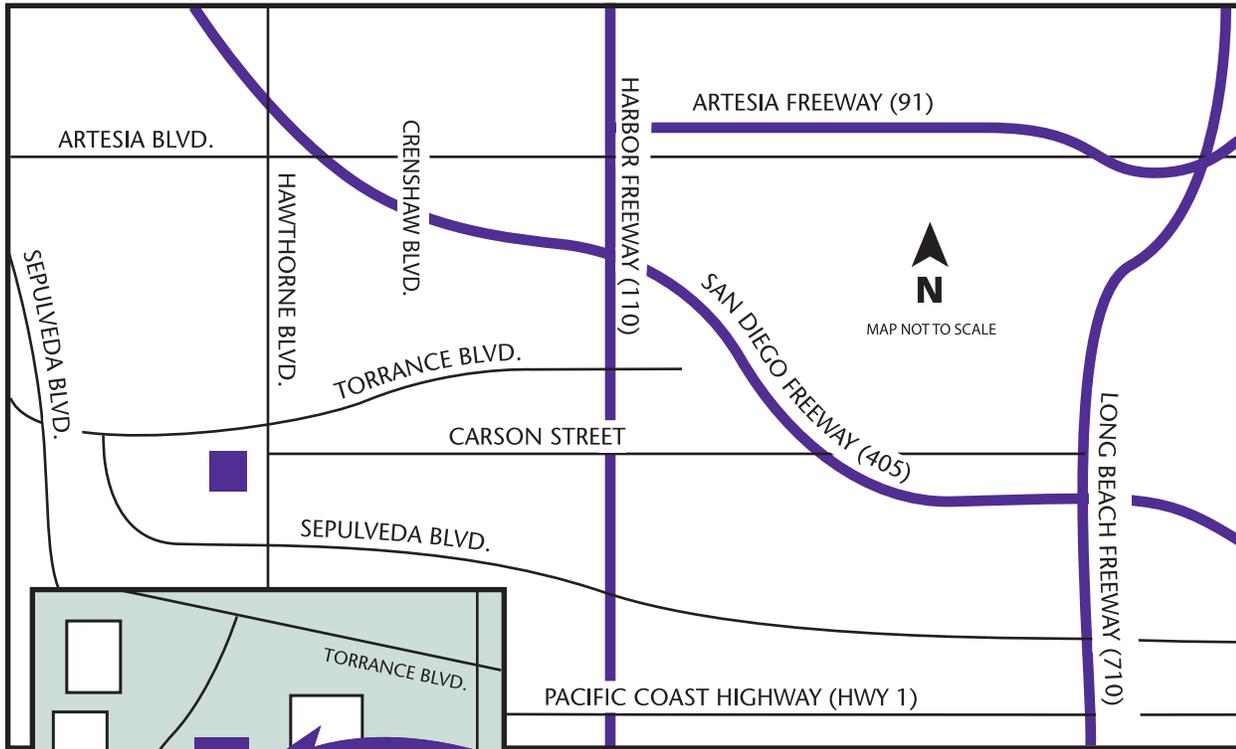
For some parents who will read this booklet the services of the regional center will continue to be available when your child turns three, if it is determined that a diagnosis of developmental disability is appropriate. Your Counselor will provide information regarding resources suitable to your child’s needs in the years to come.

## Who are we?

Harbor Regional Center (HRC) is part of a statewide network of 21 community-based centers which provide information and support, and coordinate services.

- Through the California Early Start Program, we serve infants and toddlers from birth to age three who have a developmental delay, or are at risk of having a developmental disability, and their families
- We provide lifelong services and supports for children and adults with developmental disabilities, and their families.

Regional centers are the hub of a comprehensive network linking people to services, a community focus for individuals with developmental delays or disabilities, their families and service providers. We are your partners in support.



**Please Note:**



Although our address is Hawthorne Blvd., our building is not visible from Hawthorne Blvd.

**ARTESIA FREEWAY (91 West)** – Go to the “end of the freeway” west to Hawthorne Blvd. Turn left (south) to Torrance Blvd. Turn right (west) onto Torrance Blvd. and enter first LEFT-HAND TURN LANE (Village Lane). This is the entrance to the Village Del Amo, our building is on your left.

**SAN DIEGO FREEWAY (405)** – Traveling North – Exit on Crenshaw Blvd. Proceed south on Crenshaw Blvd. (about two miles) to Torrance Blvd. Proceed west on Torrance Blvd. (about one mile). Cross Hawthorne Blvd., to first LEFT-HAND TURN LANE (Village Lane). This is the entrance to the Village Del Amo, our building is on your left.

**SAN DIEGO FREEWAY (405)** – Traveling South – Exit on Hawthorne Blvd. Proceed south on Hawthorne Blvd. (about four miles) to Torrance Blvd. Turn right (west) onto Torrance Blvd. to first LEFT-HAND TURN LANE (Village Lane). This is the entrance to the Village Del Amo, our building is on your left.



Harbor Developmental Disabilities Foundation, Inc.

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