

Making it happen



YOUR
HARBOR REGIONAL
CENTER COUNSELOR



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Introduction

Welcome to Harbor Regional Center! Now that your family member is eligible for regional center services, we want to tell you about the person who will be your main contact and partner here at the center – your HRC Counselor. This book answers many of the questions that people usually have about their Counselor, including:

- What is a Counselor?
- How is my Counselor assigned to me?
- What does a Counselor do?
- How will my Counselor and my family work together?
- How can I be an effective partner with my Counselor?
- What's the best way to keep in touch with my Counselor?

We hope that getting to know more about your Counselor will be your first step toward developing and maintaining a strong and productive relationship with Harbor Regional Center.

SECTION 1

What is a

Counselor?

Although you will probably have contact with other staff members here at the regional center, most of your interactions will be with your Counselor. She is the person who will get to know you and your family member and provide you with support, information and service choices so you can help your family member achieve the outcomes that he desires and that you want for him.

Counselors are professionals in the area of developmental disabilities. This means that they have a degree in a human service field such as social work, psychology or special education and are knowledgeable about developmental disabilities and the resources, supports and services that you and your family member may need.

SECTION 2

How is my

Our Counselors are organized into teams designed to make them more effective and more knowledgeable about services and the people they serve. The primary organization is by client age, allowing Counselors to develop specialized knowledge about the needs of clients within their age group and the types of services that they most often require. Within the age-based units, Counselors are organized into geographically-defined teams to help them become familiar with the services available in the neighborhoods and communities they serve.

In assigning Counselors, we make every effort to be sensitive to cultural differences and meet the language needs of our families. We have a multi-ethnic staff and Counselors who speak languages such as Spanish, Cambodian, Chinese, and Korean, in addition to English.

Once you are assigned a Counselor, we will make every effort to ensure continuity in that relationship. Despite this, there will be times that your family member's Counselor will change. Sometimes, of course, change comes because an employee leaves the regional center or is promoted to another position. Changes occur at other times because of how our service coordination teams

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are organized, as described above. Because of the age specialization, a child coming into the regional center as an infant or toddler will change Counselors a minimum of three times.

While your Counselor may change, your primary relationship is with Harbor Regional Center and we will always be here for you. You can be assured that you will always have a Counselor and, when there is a change, the old and new Counselors will work together to ensure a smooth transition for your child and your family.



What does

At HRC, we recognize that your family is the most important and most consistent source of care and support for your son or daughter with a developmental disability throughout his or her life. Our goal is to strengthen your family's ability to promote the development of your family member. In order to do this, your Counselor will offer you **support, information** and **choices**.

Support. Your Counselor will provide you with support in a variety of ways. She will offer direct support by listening to your concerns and respecting your opinions, and by advocating for you with generic agencies such as the school district, Social Security and Medi-Cal. She will also help you find other sources of support, including peer support from other regional center families and the natural supports in your own family and community.

Information. As your child's needs change over time, so too will your need for information. Your Counselor will keep you up-to-date about training and educational opportunities and resources available at the regional center and in your community. She will also encourage you to take advantage of the wide variety of books, pamphlets, videos and software available through our Resource and Assistive Technology Center and its toy lending library. Finally, she will link you with specialists from the regional center and the community who can answer your questions.

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Choices. Your Counselor will help you make choices, develop plans and look ahead to the future. She will help you identify the outcomes you want for your family member and make sure that there is a written plan to achieve these results. She will help you identify the important people in your child's life who will be part of your planning team and she will attend meetings with you or your family member, such as **Individualized Educational Program (IEP)** meetings at your school. Finally, she will work with you regularly to review your family member's progress and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the supports and services you receive.



How will my

How you and your Counselor structure your relationship will depend partly on your needs at any given point in time. All clients and families meet with their Counselor at least once a year to review their family member's progress, discuss any changes that have occurred in his life and discuss the need for any changes in services or supports. If your family member lives in a licensed home or a supported living setting, the Counselor will visit him at least three additional times during the year – once every three months.

If everything is going along well, your Counselor will probably not see you more often than this, but we encourage you to keep in touch with her if there are things she should know or if you have questions or need assistance. Stay in contact by phone or e-mail and feel free to request a meeting. Your Counselor will meet with you as often as is necessary to ensure that your needs are met.

and my family work together?

SECTION 5

How can I be

an effective

partner

with my

Counselor?

You know your family member best and you are his best advocate. You know what kinds of services and supports he needs and how many services and interventions you and your family member can manage. For these reasons, you have an important role and a profound responsibility – but your efforts to be as active and involved as possible will pay off in improved services and the most effective use of limited resources.

Below we discuss some things that you can do to make yourself a more effective partner with your Counselor to ensure that your family member receives the services and supports he needs when he needs them. The better prepared and more knowledgeable you are, the better you will be at making decisions that will be right for your family member and your family.

LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ABOUT SERVICES AND SUPPORTS.

The information you gain will help you make better choices and decisions for yourself and your family member.

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Make yourself an informed consumer by participating in training opportunities and workshops provided by Harbor Regional Center and by regularly visiting our HRC Resource and Assistive Technology Center. Sign up for the HRC e-mail network (send a request to enetworksubscribe@harborrc.org) to receive our newsletter, Harbor Happenings, as well as other announcements and publications of interest. Finally, an excellent way to keep informed is to visit www.harborrc.org on a regular basis. Our Website will tell you what's happening at the regional center and what's going on in Sacramento that may have an impact on regional centers.

BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT AND DECISION-

MAKER. Being an active participant in your family member's life and with the regional center will make you better able to take on a leadership role in his life and in his future. You can become an active participant by keeping your Counselor informed about your family member's progress,



preparing for and actively participating in meetings involving your family member, asking questions when there are things you don't understand, and following through on recommendations and actions that you have agreed to as part of the service planning process.

BE AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE HARBOR REGIONAL CENTER

COMMUNITY. The relationships you develop as a member of the HRC community can be an important source of support for you and your family. These relationships include not only your Counselor, but service providers and, most importantly, other parents and families. You can become an active member of our community in a variety of ways, including participating in activities sponsored by the regional center, supporting others by joining a support group, and taking on a leadership role as a Board Member, mentor parent, support group leader or volunteer.

SECTION 6

What's the best

The best way to contact your Counselor is either by phone or e-mail. Ask your Counselor for her direct dial phone number and her e-mail address. (You can find the phone number and e-mail address for all HRC staff on our website, www.harborrc.org. From the home page, click on “contact information” and then “staff roster.”) If you do not have your Counselor’s direct dial number, you can reach her through our main Torrance number, 310-540-1711.

If your Counselor is not in the office when you call, you may leave a voice mail message. Your Counselor will usually return your call by the end of the next working day. If you have an urgent matter and you cannot reach your Counselor, you can ask the receptionist to connect you with the **Officer of the Day (OD)** for your family member’s service coordination team. An OD is on duty for each team, Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, to respond to matters that need urgent attention.

If you have an emergency that needs to be dealt with outside of regular business hours, you may telephone our regular phone number, 310-540-1711, and follow the instructions. An on-call manager will be automatically paged and she will retrieve the message and return your call within 30 minutes.

Remember, there is always someone at Harbor Regional Center to help you when you need assistance.

SECTION 7

A *final note*

At HRC, we like to recognize the outstanding work of our staff. If you feel that your Counselor or other staff member has provided you with extra special service, we would like to hear from you so that his or her good work can be publicly acknowledged. Just write or send an e-mail to:

Patricia Del Monico, Executive Director

Harbor Regional Center

21231 Hawthorne Blvd.

Torrance, CA 90503

pat.delmonico@harborrc.org



Other resources

Families who are new to HRC can learn more about us, our services and the services and supports that are available through the regional center from a series of “Making it Happen” booklets available in the Resource and Assistive Technology Center and on our website, www.harborrc.org. Some of the booklets that may be of particular interest to new families are:

- A Key To Your Future – For Families is a booklet for parents about the Individual and Family Service Planning process, for clients through age 17.
- Supplemental Security Benefits: Income for Adults and Supplemental Security Benefits for Children provide information about social security income for people with disabilities.
- In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) is a very important in-home support resource for people with disabilities of all ages.
- What is Medi-Cal? A Booklet for Families describes medical benefits for children and adults and who may be eligible.
- Conservatorship: A Guide for Families provides information on conservatorships as well as alternatives that are available for families who want to protect their son or daughter with a disability while encouraging independence and self-determination.

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HARBOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES FOUNDATION, INC.
21231 Hawthorne Boulevard, Torrance, CA 90503
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