



Harbor Happenings

Cover: Christopher with friends, family & LA Chargers' Cameron Dicker
Photo Credit: NFL Players Association

HARBOR REGIONAL CENTER

SPRING 2025

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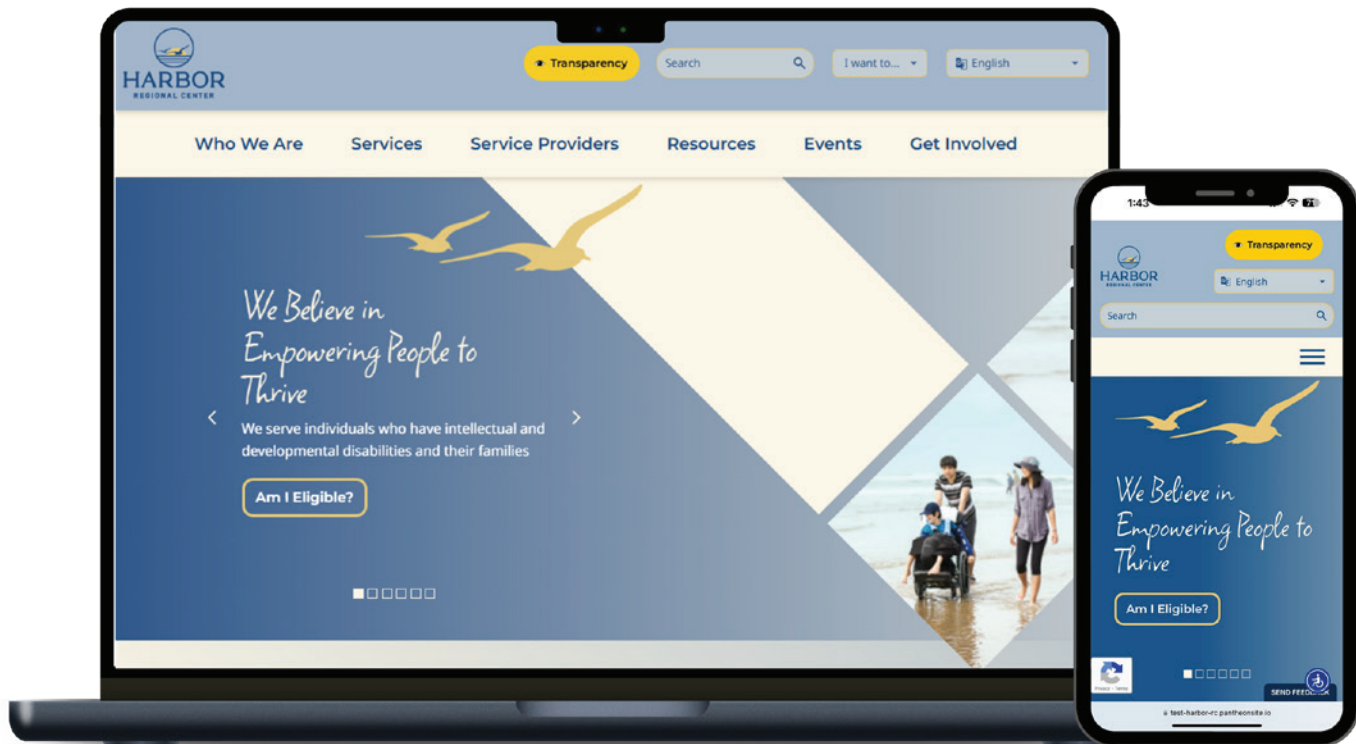


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Harbor Regional Center Launches New Website!

Thao Mailloux, Director of Information & Development



Harbor Regional Center (Harbor) is committed to providing timely, accurate, and comprehensive information for our community. We are excited to share our reimagined website with you! It was designed with you in mind—making it easier to find what you need. You can quickly learn about Harbor’s services, see the great work we are doing, stay updated on upcoming events, or get in touch with our teams.

What’s New?

The new website features a fresh look and feel, easier navigation, and updated content. One of the most exciting updates is the improvement in accessibility and language support. You can now translate the entire website using the menu at the top right of any page. In addition, you can view our website in several language options near the bottom of the page, helping more people access the

information they need in the language they prefer.

We’ve also added a new Accessibility Menu widget to help make the site easier to use. This tool allows you to adjust settings like font size, color contrast, and more—making the website more comfortable and user-friendly for everyone.

Some new information on our website include:

- Expanded Events

Calendar – you can search for trainings or events using filters such as your preferred language, time of day, and location

- List of Services – learn more about what some common services or supports might entail
- Fact Sheets – one page informational documents that provide an overview on common services

- Video Recordings of Past Trainings – allows you to learn about services and a variety of topics at your own pace if you have missed a recent training

We invite you to visit our new website and explore all the improvements. Welcome to a more inclusive and engaging Harbor online experience!

www.harborrc.org



**Harbor's
New
Website**

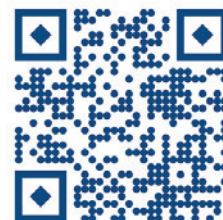
Service Needs/Resource Development Survey is Online Now!

Our mission is to provide innovative and person-centered services, supports and information that empower people with developmental disabilities and their circles of support to live their best lives in our culturally diverse communities.

Please complete this brief survey to help Harbor determine which services are most needed by the people we support and their families. The results will help us with ongoing

development of services and to inform Harbor's Community Placement Plan (CPP) and Community Resource Development Plan (CRDP) funding proposals submitted annually to the Department of Developmental Services.

We are grateful for your partnership as we work together to meet the needs of those served by Harbor Regional Center!



**Resource
Development
Survey**

Meet Tovah Lennon, Harbor Regional Center's Deaf Resource Specialist

By Tovah Lennon, Deaf Resource Specialist



Tovah Lennon
Deaf Resource Specialist



Find
Communication
Aids on our
Video Page

In March 2022, Harbor Regional Center proudly welcomed Tovah Lennon as our first Deaf Resource Specialist—a new role dedicated to enhancing services and support for individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf blind. Tovah brings a deeply personal and professional perspective to her work—she is a SODA (Sibling of a Deaf Adult) and has over 17 years of experience supporting students with intellectual disabilities as a Paraprofessional and ABA

therapist across various school districts.

Tovah's personal connection to the Deaf community, combined with her professional experience allow her to serve the community with insight, empathy, and determination. Since joining Harbor, she has played a key role in providing resources for staff, advocating for individuals, and building stronger relationships between the Deaf community and the regional center system.



Pocket Talker

Ideal for people with mild to moderate hearing loss who may not use hearing aids. This handheld amplifier helps clarify sound and reduce background noise. It's helpful in one-on-one or group settings.



Portable Hearing Loop System

This system supports people who use hearing aids or cochlear implants. It enhances sound quality in public settings by transmitting sound directly into the user's device, reducing background noise and improving clarity.

Tovah is determined to promote equal access for individuals and families with communication needs and will help bridge this gap by introducing tools and technologies that improve communication and understanding.

Tools That Make a Difference

There are several assistive communication devices now available on-site at Harbor Regional Center to better support individuals with hearing loss or have

varying communication abilities. Below are five of the devices now available on-site.

In addition to assistive technology, Harbor also utilizes several interpretation services to ensure that individuals who use ASL can access interpreters when needed for meetings, appointments, or consultations.

If you are visiting Harbor Regional Center and need

accommodations such as an interpreter, assistive device, or visual communication tool, please let us know. Harbor believes everyone should be seen, heard, valued, and empowered to succeed—and thanks to Tovah's commitment, Harbor is on its way to ensuring that access is a reality for all.



Video Phone (VP)

Designed for Deaf individuals who use American Sign Language (ASL), a VP allows users to make video calls with other ASL speakers or connect with interpreters.



UbiDuo

This is a face-to-face, real-time text communication device. It is especially useful when ASL isn't the preferred mode of communication.



GoTalk Device

A visual communication tool designed for individuals who are nonverbal or have limited speech. It allows users to select images or symbols to express their needs.

My Most Memorable Experience with the Friendship Foundation

By Sabrina Jimenez, Mother of Christopher Jimenez



Christopher pictured with his friend, NFL Kicker, Cameron Dicker

Christopher recently shared a special experience with the Harbor staff about his time with one of his favorite organizations—the Friendship Foundation’s Walking Club. During one of their outings, he had the incredible opportunity to meet Los Angeles Chargers Kicker, Cameron Dicker. Cameron participated in the event and quickly bonded with Christopher.

Wanting to make the moment even more special, he asked Christopher’s family if he had a jersey, offering to sign it for him.

But the excitement didn’t stop there. Cameron went a step further, arranging VIP tickets for Christopher and his family to attend a game. Christopher brought his mother and grandmother,

both devoted Chargers fans. The experience was unforgettable—he not only got to watch the game but also had the rare opportunity to step onto the field, take photos with Cameron and explore the entire stadium. He excitedly shared that he walked the whole stadium, browsed merchandise, and enjoyed some great food.



Christopher with Cameron and his Grandmother



Three generations of Chargers fans

Christopher's mother, Sabrina, described the experience as "the cherry on top" of his journey with the Friendship Foundation. She expressed gratitude for how the organization has helped Christopher build meaningful friendships and participate in social events, including visits to the aquarium, walking clubs, and dinners with

friends. Through these experiences, Christopher has also gained confidence in setting up Zoom calls to stay in touch with a friend, Bob. Thanks to the Friendship Foundation, Christopher continues to grow socially, making lasting friendships and unforgettable memories along the way.

My Most Memorable Experience with the Friendship Foundation ...Continued



Chris with Sarah from the Friendship Foundation

"Chris has been an outstanding participant at the Friendship Foundation this past year, and it has been an absolute pleasure getting to know him. His cheerful personality and positive energy light up every program he attends. He not only keeps me updated on our calendar

and upcoming events but also shares exciting ideas for new programs.

Chris's kindness and warmth make everyone—participants, volunteers, and staff—feel welcome. One of my favorite moments is when he spontaneously joins

in for a dance party during our programs, bringing joy to everyone around him.

At the Friendship Foundation, we are dedicated to creating fun and safe spaces for children and young adults with special needs to connect and socialize. Through activities like walking clubs, movie nights, dinner parties, and sports programs, we foster friendships and support families in the South Bay community.

We are truly grateful to have Chris as part of our community—his enthusiasm and generosity make a lasting impact on all of us."

~ Sarah Esparza, Program Manager, The Friendship Foundation

"Christopher is a cheerful and friendly individual who loves spending time with his friends. He has a great sense of humor, enjoys joking around, and is always kind to those around him. An active and social person, Christopher loves playing sports, going out to dinner, watching movies, and taking walks with friends. He stays connected with his best friend through Zoom and is always open to making new connections!"

~ Stacy Sato, Service Coordinator, Adult South

Introducing Peer Hangout

By Tim'an Ford, Peer Advocate

As an organization dedicated to supporting people with developmental disabilities, Harbor Regional Center strives to ensure the individuals we serve feel involved and included in social-recreational outings. Even with the abundance of service providers offering fun and engaging activities to individuals and their families, there has been a growing interest in services that cater specifically to people over the age of 18. The first one to bring this to attention was Harbor Regional Center's very own Peer Advocate, Tim'an Ford: an adult community member who knows the struggle of maintaining a healthy, functional social life as an adult on the autism spectrum. Listening to the feedback Tim'an provided after engaging with his peers within the Harbor community, Harbor Regional Center's Community Outreach Team got together and launched an in-house service dedicated to our adult community members, titled "Harbor Regional Center's Peer Hangout."



Games and activities at Peer Hangout

Hosted by Tim'an himself, the Peer Hangout offers individuals a calm, relaxed safe space to interact with other members of the community within their general age demographic. From 3 PM to 5 PM on the last Thursday of the month, Harbor community members over the age of 18 can play board games, read books, listen to ambient, lo-fi music, and engage with each other in various topics of conversation. The program

is still relatively new and improving its structure with the feedback of its attendees, so there is potential for this new in-house service to expand upon its original vision. Please help us spread the word about this new and exciting opportunity or join us for our next hangout!



Tim'an and a peer play jenga

HCBS Training: Empowering Through Education

By Aimee Fabila, Brian Carrillo, and Kiara Martinez, HCBS Specialists



Harbor stakeholders learn about their rights at an HCBS training

Harbor is thrilled to provide an update on the ongoing Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Final Rule trainings that have been taking place within our local community. The HCBS Final Rule mandates that federally-funded services for people with disabilities prioritize community inclusion, individual choice, and independence. Recognizing the need, we partnered with ALO Consultation to bring the **HCBS and Your Rights** training directly to individuals receiving services from Harbor. We are excited to share the success of these efforts and highlight some inspiring success stories that have emerged from the sessions!

The HCBS and Your Rights training reached over 250 individuals, empowering participants with crucial knowledge about their HCBS rights and how to advocate for themselves. These trainings were conducted across five local sessions and have made a significant impact on participants' confidence and understanding of their rights. Throughout these sessions, we have witnessed several powerful moments of self-advocacy in action.

One participant, when offered a second cup of coffee, was encouraged by their Direct Support Professional (DSP) to reconsider. Armed with the knowledge gained from the training, the

individual confidently responded, saying, "It is my right to choose whether I have another cup, and I will." This moment is a powerful illustration of how the training not only empowered the individual to assert their rights, but also shifted the perspective of the staff member involved.

Another standout moment involved a participant who, after learning about their right to have visitors, eagerly made plans for friends to visit. The excitement and sense of ownership over their personal decisions demonstrated the true value of the training in fostering independence and self-advocacy.

These moments, along with many others, are a direct result of giving individuals the tools and confidence to speak up and make their voices heard. The feedback from post-training surveys reflects a strong sense of pride among participants and a renewed desire to set higher goals for their lives, a testament of the positive impact of these trainings.

At Harbor, we are proud to continue providing these educational opportunities and look forward to seeing the lasting impact of this initiative for the individuals we support. We invite you to attend our upcoming trainings and ask you to share and encourage others to attend.

Check out Harbor's website for details on other upcoming training opportunities related to HCBS, such as:

Supported Decision Making is a series that explores practical strategies that promote autonomy and choice, and how to support people in being the decision-makers of their own lives.

Community Connecting:

This training will explore strategies to think creatively about people being engaged in their community and how to make it happen, aligning with HCBS Requirement #1: Access to Community. We'll engage in meaningful conversations that encourage exploration of new possibilities within your community.

Curious Conversations:

People with diverse perspectives come together to discuss HCBS topics in a safe and open space. Each session will focus on a different HCBS requirement, using Tri-Counties Regional Center's HCBS Final Rule: The Animated Series to spark meaningful discussions. Participants will explore real-life situations, share perspectives, and break into small groups to reflect on what worked and what could be improved.

Compassion At Work:

Working as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) is a taxing job that requires daily practice and consistent empathy. In this class, we discuss how

DSPs can engage in positive behaviors for mental health and practice self-love to allow them to give 100% of their focus to the individuals we support.

TransCen: As a person grows, they gain more independence and more responsibilities. Of these growing experiences, gaining employment is a critical one. Come and hear from speakers and trainers to learn more about the employment opportunities available to you in our community.



A curious participant during training



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 **Harbor Regional Center**

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 **HarborRC**

TORRANCE OFFICE
(MAIN OFFICE)
21231 Hawthorne Blvd.
Torrance, CA 90503

(310) 543-0100
www.harborrc.org
Email: info@harborrc.org

LONG BEACH OFFICE
1155 E. San Antonio Dr.
Long Beach, CA 90807

Editorial Team: Thao Mailloux, Erika
Segovia and Jasmin Maravilla

Design: Heather Lee, 7 Edge Creative