



HARBOR

REGIONAL CENTER



Strategic Plan

July 1, 2026 to
June 30, 2031

From the Executive Director & Board President

Dear Harbor Regional Center Community,

We are pleased to present Harbor Regional Center's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026/27 through 2030/31. This plan builds on the strong foundation of our 2023/24–2025/26 Strategic Plan and provides a clear, forward-looking framework to guide our work over the next five years.

We believe this strategic plan is essential for several reasons. As with our current Strategic Plan (FY2023/24 to 2025/26), this new plan continues to provide direction for our organization and publicly affirms our priorities: supporting the individuals and families we serve, strengthening our partnerships with service providers, and engaging meaningfully with our community. It also serves as a declaration of the values we stand on and the vision and mission that guide Harbor Regional Center.

Equally important, the plan holds us accountable. We invite the individuals and families we serve, our service providers and our broader community to join us in evaluating our progress and ensuring we remain focused on the goals we have set. In addition to reaffirming and refining Harbor's mission, vision, and guiding values, this Strategic Plan outlines five key areas of emphasis, each supported by clear goals and objectives that will guide our work over the next five years.

- Improving individual and family experience and satisfaction
- Enhancing service coordination
- Expanding resource development and awareness of available resources
- Strengthening community engagement
- Improving organizational development

Our strategic plan is a living document that will guide our decisions, shape our priorities, and help us determine how we invest our time and resources in the years ahead. We will revisit it regularly in the coming years, measure our progress, and be transparent about where we are succeeding and where we need to adjust.

We encourage you to review the plan, envision the regional center we are striving to become, and reflect on your role in helping us achieve that vision. Together, we can continue building a stronger Harbor Regional Center, one that reflects our values and our enduring commitment to the people and communities we serve.

Sincerely,



Patrick Ruppe
Executive Director



LaVelle Gates
Board President

Harbor Regional Center's History and Current Status

In 1965, the California Legislature determined that the best way to provide community-based services to citizens with developmental disabilities and their families was through partnerships with local private sector organizations. These local organizations are known as regional centers. The legislation that created the regional center system is called the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act. It is named after Frank D. Lanterman, a California legislator with vision who first conceived this unique and progressive government/private sector partnership. The Lanterman Act sets forth in detail the mandates under which regional centers operate. The Lanterman Act is available on line at dds.ca.gov/.

Harbor Regional Center (Harbor) is one of twenty-one (21) such centers in California operating under contract with the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Our center opened its doors in 1973 and served 397 individuals with a budget of \$753,565. We currently serve over 20,000 individuals with developmental disabilities, developmental delays and/or who are at high risk for developmental disabilities in the South Bay, Harbor, Long Beach, and southeast areas of Los Angeles County with a budget of approximately \$620,000,000. Our major source of funding is a combination of state and federal government programs, and we also receive funding for specific projects or purposes from foundations, businesses, and individuals.

Since 1973, the communities we serve have grown in both numbers, and in cultural and linguistic diversity. Currently, 47% of the individuals we serve identify as Hispanic, 19% White, 14% Asian, 13% African American and 7% self-report as multicultural or other. Many languages are spoken by the individuals and families we serve. The preferred languages for receiving communication and information from Harbor are English (82%) and Spanish (15%). The remaining 3% of individuals and families request communication in a variety of other languages. Over time, we have also seen changes in the eligible diagnoses of the individuals we serve. Currently, 29% are diagnosed with an intellectual disability, 50% with autism spectrum disorder, 6% with epilepsy, 5% with cerebral palsy, and 11% with other conditions similar to an intellectual disability. It is important to note that the individuals we serve may have more than one eligible diagnosis.

To meet the changing demographics and needs of our communities, Harbor employs a diverse group of 462 staff, 298 of whom are service coordinators. The diversity of our staff reflects the diversity of the communities we serve with approximately 72% identifying as Hispanic, 9% Asian, 8% African American, 8% White, 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 3% two or more ethnicities. Of our 462 employees, 301 (65%) speak at least one language in addition to English. While the majority of our bilingual or multilingual staff speak Spanish, a total of fourteen (14) languages, other than English, are spoken by our employees.

Harbor Regional Center's History and Current Status (Continued)

Since its inception, Harbor has been committed to empowering everyone with developmental disabilities, and the people who support them, by providing innovative and person-centered services that help them live their best lives in our diverse community. Between 2020 and 2022, the organization experienced the retirement of their long-tenured Executive Director, the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, a growing and changing community, and shifts within the developmental services system. After hiring a new Executive Director, Harbor's Board of Trustees recognized the importance of strategic planning to move the organization forward in realizing its vision, carrying out its mission, and representing its guiding values. In 2022, the Board of Trustees engaged in a strategic planning process that resulted in focus areas, goals, and objectives set forth in Harbor's Strategic Plan for July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2026 (www.harborrc.org/resources/current-initiatives/#strategic-plan).

Based on the progress made to date on that plan, a new strategic planning process began in August 2025 and resulted in the strategic focus areas, goals and objectives set forth in this document for the five-year period July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2031.

Strategic Planning Process

The goal of this second strategic planning process was to develop a new living document that would provide continuing direction for Harbor. As with the first plan, we wanted the new plan to be easy to understand. We wanted the plan to align with our mission and with the shared priorities of the Board of Trustees, Executive Director, staff, the individuals we serve and their families, our service providers, and other relevant community stakeholders. We wanted a follow-up plan that would continue to hold us accountable to ourselves and to our community.

The process began with a review of Harbor's vision, mission, and guiding values by the Board of Trustees. Under Harbor's Bylaws, the Board Planning Committee is responsible for the first step in the planning process. This review took place in August 2025 and revisions were recommended for consideration by the full Board. The recommended revisions were presented to Harbor's Board of Trustees at their September 16, 2025 meeting where the Board voted to adopt the revised vision, mission, and guiding values.

During the review, the Board Planning Committee considered input from various sources including the Board of Trustees, Harbor's staff, and service providers, as well as feedback gathered through surveys and stakeholder meetings with the individuals we serve and their families. This input informed not only the review and revision of the vision, mission, and guiding values, but also other phases of the strategic planning process, including identifying Harbor's strengths, challenges, opportunities, and strategic focus areas and goals.

The Board of Trustees held a Strategic Planning Retreat in October 2025 that also included Harbor's Executive Director, Patrick Ruppe, the executive leadership team, and a contracted facilitator. The purpose of the retreat was to continue the strategic planning process by reviewing the Fiscal Year 2023-24 through 2025-26 Strategic Plan and identifying the focus areas and goals Harbor wanted to prioritize for the next five fiscal years (Fiscal Years 2026-27 through 2030-31). By the end of the retreat, five strategic focus areas along with accompanying goals and objectives had been drafted. Mr. Ruppe, the executive leadership team, and the Board's Executive Committee then worked together through January 2026 to refine the goals and objectives for each focus area. The objectives were further developed to establish key deliverables across the five fiscal years. The draft strategic plan was on the agenda for discussion at Harbor's Board of Trustees' meeting on January 20, 2026. After that discussion, the Executive Committee was charged with a final review of the strategic plan document and with bringing the plan forward to the Board of Trustees for approval at the March 2026 Board meeting.

Upon approval of the strategic plan by the Board of Trustees, Mr. Ruppe and the executive leadership team will develop the operational work plans that outline the specific projects and activities aimed at achieving the plan's focus areas, goals, and objectives. Implementation of the plans will begin by July 1, 2026. Progress toward achieving the strategic goals and objectives will be reported to, and reviewed by, the Board of Trustees on a semiannual basis in a format agreed upon by the Board and Executive Director. The strategic plan will also be reviewed annually and revisions will be made as needed.



Harbor's Vision, Mission and Guiding Values

Vision

Harbor Regional Center envisions a world where everyone with a developmental disability has meaningful relationships, is respected and empowered, is informed and knowledgeable, and reaches their highest potential throughout their life.

Mission

Harbor Regional Center empowers everyone with developmental disabilities, and the people who support them, by providing innovative and person-centered services that help them live their best lives in our diverse community.

Guiding Values

Person Centered Philosophy – We recognize and respect each person's unique strengths and contributions, and support informed decision-making and self-direction.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion – We promote a culture of inclusion and belonging that strengthens meaningful relationships and embraces differing perspectives that guide our decision-making.

Partnership – We collaborate and grow with our partners; including those we serve, the people who support them, our staff, our service providers, community leaders, elected officials, and others who share our commitment to the vision of the Lanterman Act.

Innovation – We evolve by seeking better ways to advance our future.

Accountability & Transparency – We are fiscally responsible and use resources effectively, share timely and accurate information, and actively listen to our community.

Summary of Strengths, Challenges & Opportunities

Strengths

- Commitment to continuous improvement and innovation in service provision
- Diverse, caring, and knowledgeable leadership and staff
- Engaged and collaborative Board of Trustees
- Fiscal accountability

Summary of Strengths, Challenges & Opportunities

- Focus on person-centered practices
- History of forward thinking and innovation
- Strong advocacy on behalf of the individuals served and their families
- Willingness to listen to the community and change with the times

Challenges

- Ability to expand provider capacity to meet the unique needs of individuals and their families, particularly in light of provider rate challenges and the retirement or closure of existing providers
- Current political climate and potential impact on funding/budget constraints for our system
- New legislative mandates and/or other requirements set forth in regulation and the regional center/DDS contract.
- Limited affordable housing options within our community
- Negative perceptions within the community about Harbor's transparency, cultural sensitivity, and trustworthiness
- Perceived and existing internal resistance to organizational change
- Staying current with technology trends, especially the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Workforce changes and challenges within both the regional center and the provider community

Opportunities

- Enhance consistency across case management staff
- Expand access to information and resources, especially about services available to those we serve
- Increase communication and outreach with the individuals we serve and their families as well as with elected officials and various community partners
- Increase service options and provider options, especially for individuals with significant and urgent needs (e.g., behavioral, medical, and mental health needs)
- Modernize technology and internal processes
- Strengthen Harbor's internal culture through succession planning and leadership development
- Support person-centered practices within the community

Strategic Focus Areas, Goals and Objectives

With a fresh perspective on our vision, mission, and guiding values, the progress made to date on the July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2026 Strategic Plan, an understanding of what Harbor does well, and the environment in which we operate, the Board of Trustees is pursuing the following strategic focus areas, goals and objectives over the next five fiscal years.



Improve Individual and Family Experience and Satisfaction

Goal 1: Improve availability and accessibility of information and communications for all individuals and families.

Objective 1: Deliver ongoing high quality and accessible information to individuals and families.

Year 1 (FY 26-27)

Develop a plan with timelines that includes, but is not limited to (i) an evaluation of progress from the 2023-2026 Information and Communications Plan, (ii) the role of Harbor's Strategic Communication and Engagement Department and Public Information Officer, (iii) strategies to ensure consistency and quality of the content and appearance of Harbor publications and other communications, (iv) the development of new or revised guidelines, procedures and training on how to use Harbor's communication tools to coordinate and maximize accessibility of information.

Year 2 (FY 27/28) through Year 5 (FY 30/31)

Implementation and evaluation of the plan and revisions made as needed.

Goal 2: Optimize individuals' and families' active engagement in the planning process to identify the best services and supports that meet their needs.

Objective 1: Expand infrastructure for Harbor to maintain a more person-centered organization.

Year 1 (FY 26/27)

Conduct a comprehensive self-assessment to measure progress in becoming a more person-centered organization in key areas that include, but are not limited to (i) leadership, (ii) person-centered culture, (iii) workforce capabilities, (iv) collaboration and partnership, (v) quality and innovation, and (vi) criteria for evaluating the plan's success. Use the results to develop a plan, with timelines, to help Harbor expand its person-centered approach.

Year 2 (FY 27/28)

Implementation and evaluation of the plan and revisions made as needed.

Year 3 (FY 28/29)

Repeat comprehensive self-assessment to measure progress towards becoming a more person-centered organization. Implementation and evaluation of plan and revisions made as needed.

Year 4 (FY 29/30)

Implementation and evaluation of plan and revisions made as needed.

Year 5 (FY 30/31)

Repeat comprehensive self-assessment to measure progress towards becoming a more a person-centered organization. Implementation and evaluation of plan and revisions made as needed.

Goal 3: Enhance the experience and satisfaction of individuals and families served by Harbor.

Objective 1: Increase or maintain the percentage of individuals and families reporting satisfaction with Harbor's delivery of information, person-centered plan facilitation, customer service, and service provider diversity.

Year 1 (FY 26/27)

(a) Conduct Individual and Family Experience and Satisfaction Survey and analyze results.

(b) Implement Person-Centered Plan Facilitation Survey after Individual Program Plan meetings, evaluate results and as needed, set targets, and identify strategies for improving survey response rates and for low satisfaction areas.

Year 2 (FY 27/28)

(a) Based on results of Individual and Family Experience and Satisfaction Survey results, set targets, identify and implement strategies for improving response rates and low satisfaction areas.

(b) Implement Person-Centered Plan Facilitation Survey after Individual Program Plan meetings, analyze results and as needed, set targets, and identify strategies for improving survey response rates and for low satisfaction areas.

Year 3 (FY 28/29)

(a) Conduct Individual and Family Experience and Satisfaction Survey and analyze results.

(b) Implement Person-Centered Plan Facilitation Survey after Individual Program Plan meetings, analyze results and as needed, set targets, and identify strategies for improving survey response rates and for low satisfaction areas.

Year 4 (FY 29/30)

(a) Based on results of Individual and Family Experience and Satisfaction Survey

Strategic Focus Areas, Goals and Objectives

(Continued)

results, set targets, identify and implement strategies for improving response rates and low satisfaction areas.

(b) Implement Person-Centered Plan Facilitation Survey after Individual Program Plan meetings, analyze results and as needed, set targets, and identify strategies for improving survey response rates and for low satisfaction areas.

Year 5 (FY 30/31)

(a) Conduct Individual and Family Experience and Satisfaction Survey and analyze results.

(b) Implement Person-Centered Plan Facilitation Survey after Individual Program Plan meetings, analyze results and as needed, set targets, and identify strategies for improving survey response rates and for low satisfaction areas.

Objective 2: Increase or maintain the percentage of individuals and families reporting satisfaction with their participation in the Self-Determination Program.

Year 1 (FY 26/27) through Year 5 (FY 30/31)

Conduct Self-Determination Program Survey and analyze results. Based on results, set targets, identify and implement strategies for improving survey response rates and low satisfaction areas, as needed.

Goal 4: Support the individuals and families going through the intake process.

Objective 1: Increase or maintain the percentage of individuals and families reporting satisfaction with Harbor's intake process.

Year 1 (FY 26/27) through Year 5 (FY 30/31)

Conduct Intake Surveys and analyze results. Based on results, set targets, identify and implement strategies for improving survey response rates and low satisfaction areas, as needed.

Enhance Service Coordination

Goal 1: Enhance the quality and consistency of service coordination practices across all case management departments and roles.

Objective 1: Develop, implement, and evaluate a training program that includes consistent standards and competencies for all case management staff (i.e., service coordinators, managers, and directors).

Year 1 (FY 26/27)

(a) Evaluate the current training program for all case management staff, including



service coordinators, managers and directors, to include but not be limited to (i) the standards and competencies outlined in the existing training program, (ii) compliance with case management standards or competencies that are statutorily and/or contractually required and relevant Department of Developmental Services regional center performance measures and other communications, (iii) input from case management staff about the existing training program, and (iv) a gap analysis.

(b) Based on the evaluation, update the training program as needed and develop timelines for implementation and evaluation of the new program.

Year 2 (FY 27/28) through Year 5 (FY 30/31)

Implementation and evaluation of the training program and revisions made as needed.

Goal 2: Ensure a consistent, high-quality, and efficient eligibility determination process.

Objective 1: Develop, implement, and evaluate a timely and customer-focused intake process.

Year 1 (FY 26/27)

(a) Conduct a comprehensive review of Harbor's current intake policies and processes to include, but not be limited to: (i) compliance with statutory requirements, (ii) compliance with Department of Developmental Services regional center performance measures and other communications, (iii) staff training needs, and (iv) results of intake surveys.

(b) Based on the review, update intake process as needed and develop timelines for implementation and evaluation of new process.

Year 2 (FY 27/28) through Year 5 (FY 30/31)

Implementation and evaluation of the intake process and revisions made as needed.

Expand Resource Development and Awareness of Available Resources

Goal 1: Provide individuals and families with a range of innovative service delivery options that meet their unique needs.

Objective 1: Analyze the information collected about Harbor's services to identify areas for further resource development.

Year 1 (FY 26/27) through Year 5 (FY 30/31)



Strategic Focus Areas, Goals and Objectives

(Continued)

(a) Utilize existing surveys and needs assessments to identify potential gaps in service delivery options to meet unique needs, including, but not limited to, cultural, geographic, and linguistic needs.

(b) As needed, revise existing surveys and assessments and implement other strategies for gathering input about areas for further resource development.

Objective 2: Develop targeted resources that increase service delivery options to meet the unique needs of our community.

Year 1 (FY 26/27) through Year 5 (FY 30/31)

Based on an analysis of relevant information, identify the number and type of services to be developed during each fiscal year to increase service delivery options that meet the unique needs of our community.

Goal 2: Increase availability, awareness, and accessibility of information about Harbor’s services and resources.

Objective 1: Develop, implement, and evaluate a plan for sharing information about Harbor’s services and resources.

Year 1 (FY 26/27)

(a) Review the current information shared with the community about services and resources (e.g., printed materials, posted on website). Review relevant policies, and statutory and contractual requirements related to sharing information about services and resources.

(b) Review input about accessibility of information from recent surveys and focus groups. As needed, gather additional input from staff and community regarding what and how information is currently shared as well as preferences for information sharing.

(c) Based on the review, develop an action plan with timelines for increasing availability, awareness and accessibility of services and resources information.

Year 2 (FY 27/28) through Year 5 (FY 30/31)

Implementation and evaluation of action plan and revisions made as needed.

Strengthen Community Engagement

Goal 1: Enhance engagement with the individuals and families we serve.

Goal 2: Enhance training opportunities for, and with, community partners about our regional center and the services we provide.



Goal 3: Increase legislative advocacy to address the needs of the diverse community we serve.

Objective 1: Revise, implement, and evaluate the comprehensive Community Engagement Plan.

Year 1 (FY 26/27)

Develop a plan with timelines that includes but is not limited to (i) an evaluation of progress from the 2023-2026 Community Engagement Plan, (ii) the role of Harbor's Strategic Communication and Engagement Department and Public Information Officer, (iii) strategies for enhancing engagement with individuals and families, (iv) strategies for enhancing training opportunities for and with community partners, (v) strategies for increasing legislative advocacy, and (vi) criteria for evaluating the plan's success.

Year 2 (FY 27/28) through Year 5 (FY 30/31)

Implementation and evaluation of the plan and revisions made as needed.

Goal 4: Increase Early Start Child Find and Identification activities to ensure eligible children are accessing our services.

Objective 1: Develop, implement, and evaluate a plan for engaging in Early Start Child Find activities.

Year 1 (FY 26/27)

(a) Conduct a review of Harbor's current Early Start Child Find and Identification activities as well as a review of statutory requirements and Department of Developmental Services regional center performance measures and other communications about Child Find activities.

(b) Based on the review, identify areas for improvement or expansion of activities and create an action plan with timelines to address priority areas. Implement the action plan.

Year 2 (FY 27/28) through Year 5 (FY 30/31)

Implementation and evaluation of the action plan and revisions made as needed.

Goal 5: Facilitate collective learning, knowledge sharing, skill development, and adoption of new best practices in developmental services.

Objective 1: Expand the Community of Practice (CoP) and incorporate new learning into the organization and service provider community.

Strategic Focus Areas, Goals and Objectives

(Continued)

Year 1 (FY 26/27)

(a) Conduct a CoP self-assessment to evaluate its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement in key aspects such as, but not limited to (i) member engagement, (ii) community impact, and (iii) shared practices.

(b) Based on the results, create an action plan with timelines to address priority areas. Implement the action plan.

Year 2 (FY 27/28)

Implementation and evaluation of the CoP action plan and revisions made as needed.

Year 3 (FY 28/29)

Repeat the CoP self-assessment. Update the existing action plan or create a new action plan with timelines to address priority areas. Implement the action plan.

Year 4 (FY 29/30)

Implementation and evaluation of the CoP action plan and revisions made as needed.

Year 5 (FY 30/31)

Repeat the CoP self-assessment. Update the existing action plan or create a new action plan with timelines to address priority areas. Implement the action plan.



Improve Organizational Development

Goal 1: Maintain a customer-focused culture.

Objective 1: Continue to implement and evaluate an ongoing formal customer service training program that aligns with Harbor's universal customer service standards.

Year 1 (FY 26/27) through Year 5 (FY 30/31)

(a) Continue providing customer service training as part of new staff onboarding and biennial refresher training to all staff. Evaluate feedback on training, review universal customer service standards, and make revisions as needed.

(b) Implement Customer Service Survey, evaluate results, and as needed, set targets, identify and implement strategies for improving survey response rates and low satisfaction areas.

Evaluation of Progress

Goal 2: Provide continuity and stability in Harbor's leadership.

Objective 1: Develop, implement, and evaluate a succession plan to ensure a smooth transition of leadership roles within the organization.

Year 1 (FY 26/27)

(a) Develop a board approved executive succession policy for ensuring leadership continuity during personnel changes, covering both planned separations and emergency situations by January 31, 2027.

(b) Develop a succession plan that aligns with the policy and details the process for identifying and developing talent for future leadership positions by June 30, 2027.

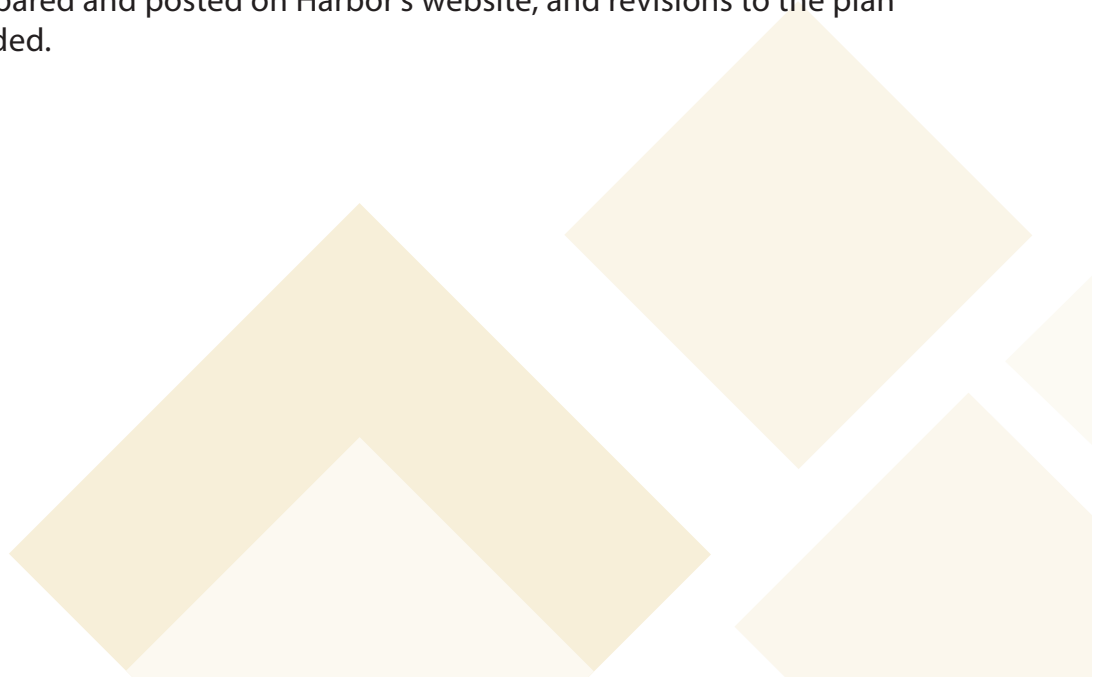
Year 2 (FY 27/28) through Year 5 (FY 30/31)

Ongoing implementation and evaluation of succession plan and revisions made as needed.

Evaluation of Progress

Upon the Board of Trustees' approval of this strategic plan, separate operational/work plans will be developed that outline the specific projects and activities aimed at achieving the strategic goals and objectives. These annual operational/work plans are the responsibility of the Executive Director and executive leadership team.

Progress toward achieving the strategic goals and objectives will be reported to, and reviewed by, the Board of Trustees on a semiannual basis in a format agreed upon by the Board and Executive Director. In addition, an annual review of the strategic plan will also be prepared and posted on Harbor's website, and revisions to the plan will be made as needed.





HARBOR

REGIONAL CENTER



June 2026
www.harborrc.org