



# Harbor Happenings

Cover: Renee, Self-Determination Program Participant  
Photo Credit: Felice Zoota-Lucero, Renee's Mother

HARBOR REGIONAL CENTER

FALL 2024

**Listening to Our Community**  
page 2

**A Journey Through the Decades**  
page 4

**All About Self-Determination**  
page 7

**Flexing for Success: Studying Tactics for Academics**  
page 10

**Resource Needs Assessment Survey**  
page 12

**We Value Your Feedback!**  
page 13



**The Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Final Rule** page 14





## Listening to Our Community



For the past two years, Harbor Regional Center has hosted Listening Sessions to improve cultural competency within our organization. These sessions were designed to occur in small settings at various community locations to welcome people from the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to share about their experiences. We wanted to listen, learn, and better understand any challenges that may limit access to our services.

The feedback that we have received from these sessions has been invaluable in guiding us to improve how we deliver services. We have taken your insights to heart and are working on concrete ways to better support our community. Here are a few things that we have learned so far.

### **Language and culture remain important factors for improving accessibility.**

Many individuals expressed the need for more service coordinators who speak their preferred language, and informational resources in some languages are lacking. Other participants shared that there are also language barriers between service providers and those we serve, as many direct care professionals do not speak the preferred language of the individuals they work with. Some families shared how many new immigrants in our service area are unaware of what services are available. Additionally, many families rely on word-of-mouth from other families or friends, rather than directly from service coordinators. Culturally, some families may

hesitate to seek services due to distrust of public entities. Families also asked for more opportunities to connect and share information with each other.

### **Listening Sessions are new and a valuable way for Harbor to hear from and learn from our community.**

Most participants said that they were satisfied with the listening sessions and appreciated the opportunity to come together as a community, share, and receive information and support. The sessions were held in-person during the week, with some sessions in the afternoon and a few in the evening. Many participants suggested offering sessions at different times or on Zoom. Some families asked for more frequent sessions

to give new participants a chance to share input. Others suggested recording the sessions and posting them on our website so that people can know what to expect before joining. Some families mentioned that if service coordinators encouraged participation, it would be especially helpful, as many families trust their service coordinator's guidance.

### **The quality of Harbor's service provision varied widely among participants.**

Some families shared that their service coordinators have been more informative and/or more compassionate than others. Some families requested more home visits so that the service coordinators can get to know them better. Feedback was provided about the need for consistency in the quality of services, including the knowledge that service coordinators possess of services and resources, as well as responsiveness. Additionally, some individuals and families are still unaware of the services

available through Harbor Regional Center. Families also pointed out that certain areas lack resources like service providers, events, social opportunities, and generally, community resources.

### **To ensure accessibility to services and supports, there is a need to advance equity across service systems.**

Families expressed concerns about discrimination across public services like schools and healthcare. Some shared that professionals dismissed their concerns about their child's behavior and development, which delayed access to resources and services.

The first step to improving is listening, and we appreciate all the feedback participants have provided through our listening sessions. We are committed to addressing these concerns, and a few actions have already been taken.

We are updating our printed and electronic materials to make it easier for the com-

munity to understand what Harbor Regional Center offers. Recognizing the need for well-trained staff, we have implemented trainings on Implicit Bias, Cultural Humility, Person-Centered Thinking, Customer Service, and Diversity, Service Access and Equity. We also know how important it is to provide trainings and information in each individual's or family's preferred language. We continue to offer workshops, listening sessions, focus groups, and materials in multiple languages, with interpreters available when needed.

To everyone who has participated, your voice matters and your feedback is shaping the future of Harbor Regional Center as we work to build a more accessible, inclusive, and supportive community. Thank you for your continued support and trust.

Best Regards,



Patrick Ruppe  
Executive Director



# A Journey Through the Decades

Reflecting on 50 Years of Service

## 1970s

397 - 2,727  
Individuals Served

Over 10,000 persons with developmental disabilities are institutionalized in state hospitals.

Harbor Regional Center is established in 1973, administered by Harbor General Hospital (now Harbor-UCLA) under contract with the State Department of Health.

Frank D. Lanterman and LA County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn attend the ribbon cutting at a trailer on the hospital grounds.

Dr. Marvin Weil, Executive Director, establishes the first leadership team that includes Joan Amundson (Director of Program Services), Bob Boughn (Director of Administration), Dr. Charlie James (Clinical Psychologist), and Patricia Del Monico (Director of Community Programs).

The Harbor Regional Center for Developmentally Disabled Citizens, Inc. was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1977 and is governed by a Board of Trustees.



Proposition 13 leads to reductions in funding, causing waiting lists at some regional centers.

## 1980s

3,100 - 4,501  
Individuals Served

About 8,200 individuals continue to reside in state developmental centers.

Harbor Regional Center contracts with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and with the Department of Health for an Infant Development Program located at Miller Children's Hospital.

In 1981, our corporate name changes to Harbor Developmental Disabilities Foundation.

The regional centers face another major funding crisis in the early 1980s. Assembly Bill 40X provides emergency funding and DDS issues emergency regulations to reduce categories of services.



In the *Association for Retarded Citizens v California Department of Developmental Services*, the California Supreme Court defines the Lanterman Act as an entitlement to services.

Hearings are scheduled throughout the state in 1988-1989 to review the value and effectiveness of the regional center system. Regional Center self-advocates, families and service providers speak out in hearings, letters, and large rallies in Los Angeles and Sacramento to save our service system.

## 1990s

4,700 – 7,098  
Individuals Served

Approximately 7,000 people with developmental disabilities are institutionalized in eight state hospitals. By the middle of the decade, this number reduced to 5,000. Plans began for gradual closure of state hospitals.



In 1992-1993, Susan Rodde is the first person with a developmental disability to join Harbor's Board of Trustees. The Consumer Advisory Committee hosts training workshops.

California implements the Early Intervention Services Act (Early Start) to serve infants and toddlers with developmental delays.

In 1994, Harbor opens the Family and Professional Resource Center staffed by parents and volunteers. An Adaptive Technology Center is established to support individuals in communication and activities of daily living.

We open an office in Long Beach to serve as a training center for individuals and families in 1995-1996.

A massive letter writing campaign is launched by families and service providers in support of regional centers during a statewide review of regional center services.

In 1998, the Self-Determination Pilot Project is implemented with five regional centers.

We embrace and promote the models of person-centered services and full inclusion in the community. We engage in strategic planning meetings with our community and share our new mission statement, vision, and core values.

## 2000s

9,000 – 10,043  
Individuals Served

Close to 3,800 individuals with developmental disabilities remain in the State Developmental Centers.

As our older population grows, we develop programs that are focused on the unique needs of older adults and their families.

In 2004, facing a state budget deficit of \$15 billion, the Legislature enacts the Family Cost Participation Program and Annual Family Program Fee, requiring families to share the cost of certain services.

California's First Lady, Maria Shriver engages in efforts to promote employment for individuals with developmental disabilities, and commends Harbor Regional Center for our efforts. She reaches out to Mayors statewide. In 2008, David Gauthier, an individual served by Harbor, becomes the first individual to be hired by Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster under this initiative.

The focus of early childhood intervention shifts from child-centered to family-centered, optimizing parent-child interaction through parent training. The Resource Center adds a Toy Lending Library to assist parents with child development.

Harbor Regional Center works with residential service providers to promote sustainability of licensed homes.

In 2009, California experiences a budget shortfall of \$60 billion. In an emergency session of the State Legislature, cost-cutting measures include payment reductions for service providers and regional centers, prohibition of many services, narrowing the definition of developmental delays, and eliminating eligibility for infants and toddlers at risk of having a substantial disability.





# A Journey Through the Decades

Reflecting on 50 Years of Service

## 2010s

10,500- 14,618  
Individuals Served

For the third year in a row, the Governor and Legislature must reduce a significant budget gap in 2010.

Rosa's Law officially replaces the term Mental Retardation with Intellectual Disability.

The number of individuals living in State Developmental Centers decreased to less than 2,000 statewide. The number of individuals served by Harbor in state development centers decreased to 50.

Legislation to establish the Employment First Policy makes integrated competitive employment a priority.

Regional Centers successfully advocate with legislators to restore Early Start services that had been reduced during California's budget crisis.

The Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services publishes the HCBS Final Rule, mandating states to provide integrated living and competitive integrated employment services by 2019 in order to continue receiving federal funding.

In August 2018, our last individual at Fairview Developmental Center moves into the community.



In October 2018, the state implements a soft-roll out of the Self-Determination Program to 2,500 individuals across the state. In 2019, Harbor had five individuals participate in this service model.

## 2020s

15,000 - 19,000  
Individuals Served

All individuals served by Harbor who previously lived in a State Developmental Center now live in the community, except six who are placed in Porterville State Development Center by court order.

The COVID-19 Pandemic in March 2020 causes regional centers and service providers to convert services to a new socially-distanced and virtual environment. Emergency resources and vaccination clinics stemming from the pandemic are still put in use.

Patricia Del Monico retires after 47 years of service to the community and 42 years as Executive Director. Patrick Ruppe becomes the new Executive Director.

In 2021, the Self-Determination Program is expanded to be available to all individuals.

Implementation of fully funded rate models for each service provider type begins in 2021, to be completed by January 1, 2025.

Harbor's Mission, Vision and Guiding Values are enhanced and adopted in 2022. A Strategic Plan is developed and adopted.

After many years of advocacy by regional centers, we are funded to hire additional service coordinators to work towards achieving required caseload ratios.

In July 2024, all family fees under the Family Cost Participation Program and Annual Family Program Fee are eliminated.

In 2024, our team has grown to over 470. A fifth location on our Torrance Campus is under construction and scheduled to open December 2024.

## All About Self-Determination



Participant Choice Specialists provide training to Harbor staff

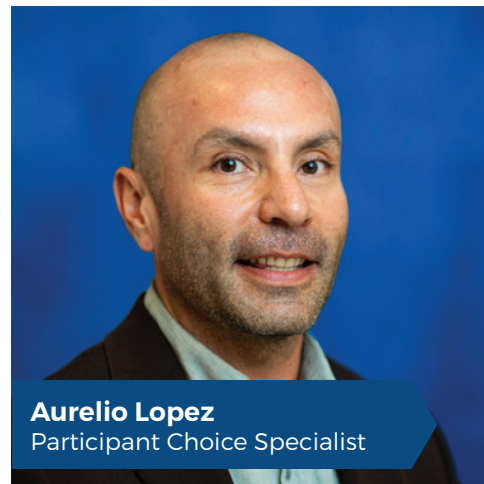
The Self-Determination Program (SDP) allows participants the opportunity to have more control in developing their service plans and selecting service providers. Each regional center has Participant Choice Specialists to provide support to individuals who are interested in learning more about service options that increase choices and control through SDP and participant-directed services.

Participant Choice Specialists:

- Expand awareness of the SDP by providing information and training to self-advocates, families and regional center staff about participant-directed service options;
- Provide training to regional center staff;
- Lead efforts for the regional center to meet and track SDP enrollment targets and benchmarks; and
- Identify and address concerns and barriers to enrollment.

At Harbor, Aurelio Lopez and Bernice Perdomo-Chavez work closely with service coordinators, self-advocates, and families. You can find them providing monthly

orientation trainings to the community and regional center staff, sharing data during monthly local voluntary advisory committee (Self-Determination Advisory Committee) meetings, as well as supporting the daily implementation of SDP—helping answer questions and assisting interested individuals to enroll in the program.

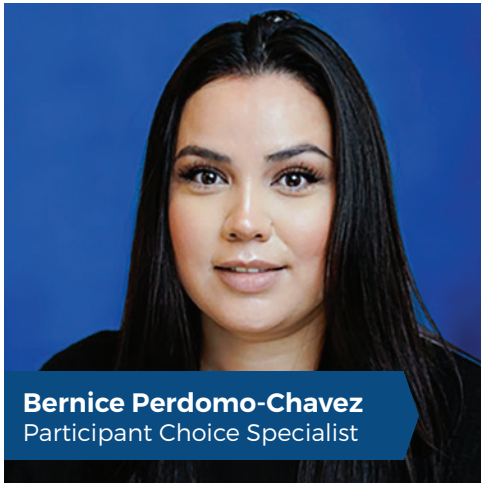


**Aurelio Lopez**  
Participant Choice Specialist

“The PCS position allows me to reach more individuals and families than when I was a Service Coordinator. I contribute positively to informing our community about SDP, in a way that makes it digestible and an attainable goal. I strive to be a source of encouragement through honest, authentic, and meaningful interactions.”

~ Aurelio Lopez  
(310) 543-0162

## All About Self-Determination...Continued



**Bernice Perdomo-Chavez**  
Participant Choice Specialist

"Being part of a service coordination team that worked with individuals and families in SDP, it became more intriguing to me and it sparked my interest to better learn and understand the program. It felt natural for me to join the PCS team so that I could help educate staff and the community on the program. It's great to be a part of the ever-evolving changes and growth of the Self-Determination Program."

~ Bernice Perdomo-Chavez  
(310) 543-0163



Hunter on the court

"My son, Hunter, is on the spectrum and he loves basketball. He developed a love for basketball around 5 years old when I signed him up for our local parks and recreation summer basketball league. Since then, he plays alongside his twin brother, Dylan, for an AAU basketball team, SBS Hoops. The SDP has allowed Hunter to participate in the league and personal one-on-one training with his coach. We are very grateful for the SDP because it allows Hunter to live out his dreams." ~ Daphne, Mother

**Directory of  
Independent  
Facilitators &  
Service Providers**



**FMS Contact  
List from DDS**



**SPD Frequently  
Asked Questions**







Renee poses in front of an exhibit at SD Wild Animal Park

Meet Renee! She received the extended lens for her camera as part of the SDP to support her to be more comfortable in the community. This has made her feel comfortable going to music festivals, zoos, botanical gardens, concerts where her boyfriend performs as a musician, and large family events. These purchases through SDP help her maintain deep connections with animals and go to places like the zoo that bring her huge joy.

“My name is Renee, I’m 26 years old and was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 19. I have been in the Self-Determination Program for the last 3 years and through the various items and services I have received, I’ve gained the skills and confidence necessary to finish my associate’s degree and open my own business, Lazaryth Adventures. With the help of transportation services, I can now run errands, go to work, and live my life without having to rely on my parents to



Renee takes a break from photography

drive me around. My job/life skills coach has helped me develop strategies to complete the often-difficult daily tasks, which are essential to independent living, such as cooking, laundry, budgeting, writing emails, and time management. I am also learning skills related to customer relations and other business practices. Equipped with the building blocks SDP has helped me to create, my dream to give back to the neurodivergent community has recently become a reality. My business works with small groups of neurodivergent adolescents, using in-person tabletop roleplaying games like “Dungeons & Dragons” to teach and cultivate the skills I wish I had at their age. The services within SDP have given me a level of independence that I could not have achieved otherwise and for that I will always be grateful.” ~ Renee

**For more information about the SDP, contact your service coordinator or Harbor’s Participant Choice Specialist Team at [PCSpecialists@harborrc.org](mailto:PCSpecialists@harborrc.org)**

## Flexing for Success: Studying Tactics for Academics

By Tim'an Ford, Peer Advocate



Tim'an shares his diploma

College represents a large transition between two different chapters of your life. For me, that meant a heavy workload that involved weekly discussions, essays, research papers, and exams that tested my willingness to learn and viability as an expert in a chosen field of research. Higher education is a highly sought-after, yet demanding goal that many young adults pursue, and people with developmental and intellectual disabilities are no exception. However, the constant surge of new workloads, increasing academic demands, and the struggle to maintain a

healthy work/life balance can feel overwhelming for even the most astute minds. For those struggling to stay focused and organized as they tackle their studies, I have provided a list of strategies to optimize your studies and cope with the stress of pursuing your academic goals while living with an Intellectual and/or Developmental Disability.

### **Seek out help when you need it**

As someone who spent an early portion of my undergraduate studies feeling like I needed to prove I was capable of doing things as well

as my neurotypical peers, I struggled to ask for help at times at the risk of losing credibility or appearing less than qualified to complete a task. But with reassurance from my instructors, I realized that asking for help would further my path to success at a much faster rate than just figuring things out on my own. Seeking help from another, whether it be your professor, a teacher's aide, or your fellow students is a necessary step to succeeding in an academic environment.

### **Form your support network**

The college experience is not, nor should it ever be, one of limited contact and resources. Having multiple sources of support on your path to more education is part of what makes the journey, especially for people with disabilities who may otherwise feel isolated as they work towards their goals. Fortunately, nearly all public colleges and universities have some form of Disability Resources on campus.



## Manage your time wisely by mapping out your schedule

Not all of your time will be spent in the classroom or working on assignments. College is also meant to be a time for you to establish connections with others and enjoy a newfound sense of agency through extracurricular activities. Bearing that in mind, you should find a time management tool (i.e. daily planner, Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), calendar app) and set aside time early on in the day to map out your schedule. Make sure to give yourself enough time to rest between major activities, and that includes your sleep schedule.

## Be an active learner

One of the best methods of retaining information is to participate in a lesson or discussion. Ask yourself questions such as, "Why is this important? How does A relate to B? What does this remind me of?" This signals to your brain that this is a piece of information that warrants a follow-up, therefore it would be in your best



College students head to class

interest to keep that information stored in your head or on a piece of paper for later reference.

## Plan ahead for exams and papers

In any academic program, it helps to know the deadlines for midterms, projects, and assignments that will have the largest impact on your grade. You're not expected to start all your major assignments as early as possible, but it definitely helps to do a preliminary review of your notes and the reading materials for your courses before you tackle big assignments. By the time you reach the

point in your curriculum where a big assignment is the primary focus, your preparations will pay off in getting the assignment done in a timely and efficient manner.

## Create your own learning style

Not everyone receives and retains information the same way, especially people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Knowing how your mind works and what helps you absorb information is crucial to your success. Whether it's hands-on experience, visual learning, or auditory support, you should incorporate these



## Flexing for Success: Studying Tactics for Academics

into your study sessions to the best of your abilities in order to enhance your learning experience.

### Compile your resources

Your instructors are there to support you on your learning path, and that includes making accommodations for you based on the nature of your disability. Normally, if you inform your instructors about your disability in advance, they may record the class sessions and texts for you to access when you can. Furthermore, by compiling your notes, reading materi-

als, and additional resources, you'll have easier access to information and support that will help you succeed on your journey through academia.

### Take care of yourself

All of the previously mentioned strategies build up to this final one. You may feel pressured to not only do well in your studies but outshine your peers through hard work and the dogged pursuit of academic excellence. But please bear in mind that no prize is worth sacrificing your mind, body, and spirit just to obtain it. This is why it's

important to set aside time for yourself and make sure you get the rest you need in order to function under high-stress situations like final exams or research projects. That means getting between 6-8 hours of sleep each night, eating three good meals a day, and exercising for at least 30 minutes a day in whatever capacity you can. Additionally, take some time to reach out to your support circle, which includes your campus's Disability Resource Center, as well as your local Regional Center.

## Resource Needs Assessment Survey Available Online in January 2025!

Harbor Regional Center's 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.

A brief survey is being created to help Harbor determine which services are most needed by the peo-

ple 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.

The survey is anticipated to be available on Harbor's website starting in January 2025.

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

**View Priority Areas Identified for 2024-25 Projects**



## We Value Your Feedback!

### Survey Updates



Our commitment to improving the experience and satisfaction of the individuals and families we serve remains a top priority. We distributed a survey in mid-May based on the goals and objectives within our Strategic Plan. The Individual and Family Experience and Satisfaction Survey focused on four areas: Communication and Delivery of Information, Customer Service, Person-Centered Service Planning and the Diversity of Harbor's Provider Community. We received 721 responses and will be sharing a report of the results in the coming months. We are pleased to share that 88% of the survey respondents rated their overall experience and satisfaction with Harbor as

good (20%), excellent (29%) or outstanding (39%).

Since July, service coordinators began distributing the Person-Centered Service Planning Survey to individuals and families immediately after their Individual Program Plan (IPP) meetings. Moving forward, anticipate your service coordinator giving you a survey after every IPP meeting. We are committed to a person-centered service planning process that ensures your plan is directed by you and includes things that are important to you.

Also, since July, we made a survey available as part of Harbor's broader strategic plan to cultivate a customer-centered culture.

We believe our Universal Customer Service Standards will enhance Harbor's overall customer service skills and lead to greater satisfaction with the individuals and families we serve and our broader community. Surveys are available in every Harbor employee's email signature, on Harbor's website ([www.harborrc.org/customer-service-survey](http://www.harborrc.org/customer-service-survey)) and in hard copy in our reception areas and Family Resource Centers.

We look forward to sharing results of these surveys in upcoming months. We are grateful for your partnership as we continue working together to shape the future of Harbor Regional Center.

## The Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Final Rule

By Patricia Piceno, Manager of Resource Development

The Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Final Rule is a federal policy change that aims to ensure people with disabilities receive the services they need in their communities, and have greater independence, choice, and integration within those communities. The HCBS Final Rule is a significant shift toward ensuring that the rights of people with disabilities are protected.

### Why is the HCBS Final Rule Important?

You choose your activities, where you live, and who you socialize with. You can also set your own schedule, manage your money, and ensure your privacy and dignity are respected. In a group home,



you can work with others and staff to create your own rules and policies. People with

disabilities have the right to choose their own support, for example, selecting their preferred health care providers, hairstylist/barber, or where they receive services.

As you or your family member grow older, you might have questions, how to address certain issues, and who will help to understand your rights. Harbor Regional Center is here to support you and answer any questions you have!

### The 10 Federal Requirements:

- Access to the Community
- Choice of Setting
- Right to be Treated Well
- Independence
- Choice of Services and Supports
- Residential Agreement
- Privacy
- Schedule and Access to Food
- Right to Visitors
- Accessibility



## A Fan of Comics?

Pick up issues of the HCBS Comics in our Family Resource Centers



### Watch an Animated Series on HCBS!

A series of animated shorts explain the HCBS Final Rule to people receiving services, their families, and service providers. The series was created by the Tri-Counties Regional Center in partnership with a Hollywood studio. The series is available in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, American Sign Language, and Tagalog.

### Watch HCBS Animations



### Want to Learn More?

Harbor Regional Center provides in-person and virtual trainings to individuals served, families, and service providers regularly. Additionally, join us for an upcoming Community of Practice, which focuses on using person-centered thinking to make the HCBS Final Rule a reality.

### Harbor Calendar



Join an in-person workshop on November 13th from 10:00-11:30am at the John S. Todd Community Center at Mayfair Park (5720 Clark Ave., Lakewood, CA 90712).



For more information, visit <https://www.harborrc.org/hcbs-and-your-rights>.



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