

Department of Developmental Services
UPDATE REGARDING SB 138 INITIATIVES
March 2026

This document provides an update on implementation of the 2023 Developmental Services Budget Trailer Bill, [Senate Bill 138](#) (Chapter 192, Statutes of 2023). That law has several topics. After each bolded topic below, there is a description of the law's requirements, and an update on the work being done to meet that requirement. This document intentionally is written to be easily understood. The actual law is the most accurate description of the law's requirements.

1. Generic and Common Regional Center Services

WIC [4435.2](#) tells the Department of Developmental Services (Department) to:

- a. Provide a definition of generic services, identify barriers to individuals using generic services, describe what regional centers do to help people get generic services, and identify ways to help more. This must be done by July 1, 2025 with community input.
- b. Review whether the new electronic records management system can track generic services that individuals use.
- c. Do an evaluation of the regional center services individuals most often use, and find out if they all are available across the state. Make recommendations for making their availability more equal.
- d. An update must be provided to the Legislature by January 10, 2025.

Update:

- The law says an individual has to try to use generic services before the regional center can provide funding for services from a regional center vendor or service provider. The difficulty in obtaining generic services can be a barrier to some individuals getting needed supports.
- The Department will provide a definition for generic services. Generally, generic services are services that are provided by another public agency that should be available to anyone who qualifies for them. Some examples are school, health, dental, housing, behavioral health, and in-home supportive services.
- The Master Plan for Developmental Services provides many ideas from the developmental services community to help individuals get generic services.
- The Department is connecting with other State agencies and SCDD and DRC and ARCA to identify more ways to help. Their input has been requested by the end of March 2026.
- The generic services and common regional center services identified in this work will be used to inform the design of the Life Outcomes Improvement System (LOIS), the State's new electronic case management system.
- The evaluation of common regional center services is underway, with rate reform making it easier to understand what kinds of services are being

provided. The provider directory will give us information about service providers, their capacities, and geographic availability. The Department is evaluating the information currently available and anticipates completion by Summer 2026.

- The Legislature meets quarterly with the Department and is receiving this update verbally and in writing at a March 2026 meeting.

2. Race, Ethnicity, and Language Data Definitions

WIC [4435.1\(b\)](#) tells the Department to:

- a. Create standard definitions and individual choices for race, ethnicity and language so that our data can be more useful.
- b. All regional centers must use these new definitions and individual choices to record data beginning January 1, 2025.

Update:

- After a lot of research, work with the community and other state departments, and a month-long public comment period, standard definitions and individual choices were established on July 1, 2024, for the following things:
[Updated Requirements for Collecting Race, Ethnicity, and Language Data](#)
 - [Enclosure A - Race and Ethnicity](#)
 - [Enclosure B - Preferred Language](#)
 - [Enclosure C - Name, Pronouns, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#)
 - [Enclosure D - Residence Codes](#)
 - [Enclosure E - Status Codes](#)
- Creating common data definitions is an important step to improve our understanding of individuals, and allowing individuals to identify and see themselves in the information that is collected.
- These changes have been programmed into the regional center case management systems.
- These changes comply with recently updated federal reporting requirements, and with state laws.
- The Department is working with regional centers to make sure the new data sets are downloaded directly into our data warehouse for processing.
- The Department is using these updated categories in its dashboards and reports.
- Passage of AB 91 in 2025 added more detail to the Middle Eastern and North African race/ethnicity category, to be effective January 1, 2028.

3. Respite Assessment Template and Processes

WIC [4435.1\(c\)](#) tells the Department to:

- a. Create one way for all regional centers to review an individual's need for respite services. This must be done by June 30, 2025.
- b. All regional centers must begin using the new way on January 1, 2026.

Update:

- Respite services are intended to give a break to people who take care of someone else.
- To provide respite services more consistently across the State, a tool is being created that will be used by all regional centers to figure out an individual and family's need for respite services.
- The Department first planned to use the tool to also figure out how much day care and personal assistance an individual may need. That plan has changed. The tool will be used just for respite services.
- This single tool used the same way by all regional centers will help people with similar needs get a similar number of respite hours, no matter where they live in California.
- The new tool will make it easier for individuals and families to provide information, and understand the amount of their services.
- A draft version of the tool was shared on July 29, 2025. Anyone who had comments could provide them to the Department through August 29, 2025.
- The Department received over 850 comments and reviewed them.
- The tool has been revised based on the comments. The revisions include:
 - Simplifying language,
 - Reducing text in the tool which makes the tool shorter,
 - Combining some sections of the tool, and
 - Adjusting some of the possible responses.
- The tool is being tested again to collect data. The data will be used to figure out how many respite hours should be authorized once the tool is implemented.
- Regional centers began testing the revised tool in late January. This testing will continue through April 30, 2026. The Department hopes to finalize the tool and train regional centers to use it in Summer 2026.

4. Intake Processes

WIC [4435.1\(f\)](#) and WIC [4642\(a\)](#) tell the Department to:

- a. Create one way for individuals to find out if they are eligible for regional center services.
- b. All regional centers must report how many individuals went through the process and how long it took them. This begins June 30, 2025 and must be done every three months.
- c. The new electronic records management system must be able to include certain information about these individuals.

Update:

- There are many different reasons people contact a regional center to find out if they are eligible for services. Today, each regional center has its own process for working with individuals and families to determine eligibility. This process is called intake and assessment.
- The intake and assessment requirements for Early Start services (ages 0-3) and Lanterman Act services (ages 3 and older) are different, so they need to be reviewed and planned separately.
- To make the experience of applying for regional center services easier to understand, the law requires one process that all regional centers will use. This will help make access to regional center services more consistent across the State and provide a consistent experience for individuals and families.
- The law's deadline of January 1, 2025 was not met. The intake and assessment process is complex. It is important to get it right by working with everyone. The work on changes to the intake process is being done in stages.
- Regional centers will receive instructions about what they need to do to complete the reporting on how many individuals have gone through the intake process. Staff may need to be trained on some changes, and it might take a while for the reports to be the same across regional centers.
- A workgroup has been meeting since December 2024 to get information from regional center representatives who are familiar with the current procedures and requirements.
- Beginning Summer 2025, community input is being collected in focus groups which will continue in 2026.
- The Department will create informational materials to help individuals and families understand the process. They will include definitions for some of the words used in the intake process.
- In December 2025, [instructions were given to regional centers](#) for how to report on how many individuals went through the process. More work is being done to improve the quality of the data over the next year.

5. Vendorization Procedures

WIC [4435.1\(e\)](#) tells the Department to:

- a. Create one way for new service providers to become vendors of the regional centers. This must be defined by June 30, 2025.
- b. All regional centers must use the new way beginning January 1, 2026. They must provide an updated list of their service providers to the Department every three months.

Update:

- Having one way to become a vendor of a regional center can make it easier to get more service providers and make the approval process easier for them.
- Having more service providers available should help individuals get support sooner and provide more choices in their services.
- In 2024, the Department began working closely with regional centers.
- The new way to become vendorized was created ahead of the June 30, 2025 deadline.
- The statewide [Provider Directory](#) is the single list of available service providers. The new way to become a vendor of a regional center will use the Provider Directory.
- Regional centers have been trained.
- Service providers were given a demonstration on December 2, 2025. It was recorded and can be viewed online.
- Regional centers were able to use the Provider Directory for new vendorizations as of December 3, 2025. They must use it by March 1, 2026.
- New vendorizations for Purchase Reimbursement (service code 024) must use it by July 1, 2026. It is later because it is used by many families.

6. IPP Template and Procedures

WIC [4435.1\(d\)](#) tells the Department to:

- a. Create one way to make an individual program plan (IPP) and provide directions. This must be done by June 30, 2024.
- b. All regional centers must use the new IPP beginning January 1, 2025.
- c. The new electronic records management system must be able to include information from the IPP.

Update:

- After a lot of community engagement, the new IPP template and an instruction guide was released on June 28, 2024:
[Standardized Individual Program Plan Template and Procedures](#)
 - [Enclosure A – Individual Program Plan Template](#)
 - [Enclosure B – Individual Program Plan Agreement and Signature Form \(latest\)](#)
 - [Enclosure C – Individual Program Plan Guide for Regional Centers \(latest\)](#)

- All regional centers were trained to use the new IPP during the Summer of 2024.
- A guide for adults, called Your Plan, was created. This optional guide can be used to prepare for an IPP meeting. It is available in 11 languages, on the “Your Plan” section of this [webpage](#).
- Additional versions, called “Your Child’s Plan” for families with children ages 3-13 and “Your Youth’s Plan” for young adults ages 14-22 and their families are available on the same [webpage](#). These guides are available in 11 languages.
- Family Resource Centers and community-based organizations were trained, and public meetings were held, in December 2024. Community education continued throughout 2025.
- The Department is considering holding a series of engagements with individuals and families and regional centers to review the implementation experience of the standardized IPP.