

September 21, 2026

G-2026-Regional Center Operations-002

TO: REGIONAL CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: REGIONAL CENTER DEAF ACCESS SPECIALIST POSITION DUTIES

The Budget Act of 2021 provided specialized funding for regional centers to have a dedicated deaf access specialist position. Specifically, the Budget Act provided, and the Department of Developmental Services (Department) allocated funding for, regional centers to have a position dedicated to supporting the identification and expansion of deaf service resources, provide training and expertise to regional center staff, and coordinate with the Department on statewide efforts. The position supports individuals that are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind and have an intellectual and/or developmental disability (I/DD).

This guidance letter outlines the responsibilities of the deaf access specialist and activities these employees should perform as they assist regional centers with expanding outreach and supporting access to individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind and have I/DD. The following outlines the duties a deaf access specialist should fulfill:

1. Coordinate and serve as lead for activities, including supporting resource development aimed at identifying and expanding regional center services, for individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind with I/DD. Duties may include acting as a subject matter expert for the regional center regarding Department funding opportunities, which include the current Community Placement Plan and Community Resource Development Plan, Language Access and Cultural Competency, and Service Access and Equity Funding.
2. Liaison and partner with generic agencies that provide services for individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind with I/DD. Coordinate and serve as a lead for these services to be available to or be adapted for individuals served by the regional center. Build partnerships with Deaf community representatives.
3. Work closely with and educate service coordination staff regarding deaf culture, language access and other needs of individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind. Provide guidance to service coordination employees to promote culturally and linguistically appropriate services which are required to be incorporated in individuals' Individual Program Plans (IPPs).

4. Oversee the regional center's communication assessments and work with service coordination staff to incorporate the assessments into IPPs.
5. Coordinate and conduct culturally and linguistically appropriate training developed either by the Department or developed or contracted by the regional center for service coordinators and vendors.
6. Provide expertise and incorporate their recommendations for regional center efforts to provide housemate matching services.
7. Act as a resource for the regional center regarding compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and have familiarity with the regional center service delivery system.
8. Assist the regional center with its development and review of communications and materials, including the dedicated webpage offering local resources and supports.
9. Act as a resource for the regional center's efforts to provide intake and assessment, Early Start, quality assurance and Special Incident Reporting follow-up for individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind with I/DD.
10. Participate in statewide collaboration meetings with deaf access specialists from other regional centers and the Department's deaf access specialist to identify best practices, strategies and processes to implement at the regional center.
11. Work closely with regional center staff to improve the accuracy and quality of data collected and recorded for all individuals served by the regional center who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind.
12. Prepare regional center data, reports and other materials regarding services for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind to be presented at meetings.
13. Working closely with the Department, assist in the development and maintenance of systems for capturing data, including but not limited to, individuals needing assessments, assessment results, service utilization and expenditures, and demographics.

Regional center deaf access specialists should be a resource for case management employees. They should, when appropriate, participate in planning team meetings for individuals for whom the deaf access specialist can provide expertise and support.

The deaf access specialists shall not perform service coordinator duties, carry a caseload or provide American Sign Language interpretation services.

If you have any questions about this guidance, please contact your primary regional center liaison at [cob@dds.ca.gov](mailto:cob@dds.ca.gov). For questions about the duties of the deaf access specialist please contact Lisa Gonzales, Chief, Service Innovation and Oversight Division at [lisa.gonzales@dds.ca.gov](mailto:lisa.gonzales@dds.ca.gov) or (916) 400-9707.

Sincerely,

*Original Signed by:*

MICHI GATES, PH.D.  
Chief Deputy Director  
Program Services

cc:           Regional Center Administrators  
              Regional Center Directors of Client Services  
              Regional Center Community Services Directors  
              Association of Regional Center Agencies