

Department of Developmental Services
UPDATE REGARDING SB 138 INITIATIVES
August 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 was provided in Spring 2026 and discussions continue.
- A resource guide is being developed to help increase awareness of the range of services that may be useful to individuals with disabilities and their families. A draft version will be shared online for public comment before it is finalized.
- 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 is preparing a written report.
- The Legislature meets quarterly with the Department and is receiving this update verbally and in writing at a September 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.

Standard definitions and individual choices were established on July 1, 2024. Refer to [Standardizing Regional Center Procedures: CA Department of Developmental Services](#) for more information.

3. Standardized Respite Tool 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.
- 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 was 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.
- Regional centers tested the second version of the tool from January 26 through April 30, 2026.

- In these 3 months, service coordinators from all 21 regional centers tested the tool with a few thousand families. The information gathered will help determine the amount of respite hours that should be authorized when the tool is used. The testing did not change the services for these families.
- On July 31, 2026, the Department announced a pause in the plan to implement the tool statewide. During the pause, the Department will:
 - Develop a consistent definition and description of the purpose of respite services
 - Develop a standardized policy and training materials to support the regional centers
 - Review the effects on all other services
- The Department hosted an informational webinar for the community on August 26, 2026 and explained the reason for the pause in implementation, described the changes that were made on the tool in response to the community input, and presented data collected during the latest round of testing of the tool.

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.

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.

- A workgroup has been meeting since December 2024 to get information from regional center representatives who are familiar with the current procedures and requirements.
- Focus groups began Summer 2025 to collect community input and this continues 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.
- In Summer 2026, instructions were given to regional centers to invite individuals who complete the intake process to complete a survey about their experience. This will be a way to get information that can be used to help create a better process.
- A plan for the Department's work to standardize the intake process in phases is being shared. It shows the timeframe for each of the key steps to be established and tested by regional centers. It does not say when the standardized process will be used at all regional centers because this can not be planned until there is an understanding of what the changes will be, and how much time is needed to prepare to make the changes. The Department will decide that at a later time and will update the plan that is shared with its community.

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 on the new vendorization process and use of the Provider Directory.

- 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.
- Beginning March 1, 2026, regional centers were required to use the Provider Directory for all new vendorizations. Some types of service are not required to use it because they are for individuals and families, not vendors. This includes service codes 024-Purchase Reimbursement, 065-State Supplementary Payment (SSP) Restoration, 400- Non-Reimbursed Personal and Incidental (P&I), and most service codes used for the Self-Determination Program.
- The Department will continue supporting regional centers and service providers with technical assistance, training, and office hours.
- Since the beginning of January 2026, there have been 2,031 new vendorizations approved through the Provider Directory, helping make more service providers available to individuals and 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.

A standardized Individual Program Plan template and procedures were established in June 2024 and are currently in use. Refer to [Individual Program Planning: CA Department of Developmental Services](#) for more information.