

Regional Center Service Coordinators: In Service to Make a Difference

Regional centers provide service coordination to all of the approximately 350,000 Californians with developmental disabilities they support. Service Coordinators help people pursue their lifelong goals through individualized planning that requires highly specialized skills and knowledge.

Service Coordinators are Skilled Professionals Who Are

Empathetic · Patient · Highly-organized · Compassionate · Flexible and adaptable
Highly cooperative · Great communicators · Creative · Self-Motivated
Skilled conflict managers · Mentors · Leaders

Service Coordinators Have Knowledge Of

Local Education Agencies · Social Security benefits · Mental health services · In-Home Support
Services Housing and Urban Development · Medi-Cal · CalABLE · State regulations
Employment supports · CalFresh · Federal and state education requirements
Developmental disabilities · Private insurance

Service Coordinators' Skills and Knowledge Allow them to Help People in the Areas Of

Person-centered planning · Crisis support · Health · Nutrition · Purchasing · Diverse communities
Health care · Education · Medication · Legal system · Training · Social skills · Advocacy
Safety · Hygiene · Housing · Documentation · Transportation · Dental

Service Coordinators Weigh In

Service Coordinators from around the state were asked to talk about the work they do, the day-to-day challenges, and how they help people and families. Here's what they said:

How many people are you supporting on your caseload?

- The average Service Coordinator tries to support more than 90 people and their families.
- Service coordination is a lifetime of support and planning for people with real needs 24 hours per day.

Doesn't the regional center just buy people services?

- No! Only 75% receive services purchased by the regional center.
- Everyone receives service coordination as a direct service.
- For 25% of people, service coordination and other community services (IHSS, Medi-Cal, SSI, special education, etc.) meet their needs.

How do you organize your work time?

- First, I tackle daily crises related to people's health and safety. I made my own tracking tools to keep track of required case reporting, finance management, and trainings.
- For each person I support, I use my calendar to keep track of individual needs, including advocacy for medical issues, housing, education, and criminal justice.

Is there any aspect of your current position as a Service Coordinator that you would like to change?

- Smaller caseloads would mean higher quality case management work, stronger relationships, and fewer crises.
- More time to spend planning for the future with individuals and families and less time doing paperwork, participating in trainings, and managing crisis situations.

What is most challenging about being a Service Coordinator?

- Feeling overwhelmed due to a large caseload of 85-95 people.
- Not having enough time to really get to know people and their families.
- Facing daily emergencies without adequate time to respond.
- Not enough appropriate resources to meet individual and family needs.
- Finding time to translate and review forms for non-regional center services when families need language assistance.

What aspects of being a Service Coordinator are usually overlooked?

- Vast areas of expertise required to provide quality case management.
- How difficult it is to say “no” to a person or family.
- Extensive support provided regularly to both the individual and their family.
- Significant time required for inter-agency collaboration.
- Service coordination is emotionally and intellectually challenging.
- All of the effort spent educating, advocating for, and encouraging people.

What makes someone an effective Service Coordinator?

- Persistence and dedication to the people they serve.
- Being selfless, organized, resourceful, creative, and patient.
- Knowledge about available services and the community.

Why do you keep working as a Service Coordinator?

- It feels good to help people meet their goals and to be part of their growth.
- I believe people with disabilities deserve quality lives in the community. I love supporting their journey.