

Self-Determination Program (SDP)

What is the Self-Determination Program?

The Self-Determination Program (SDP) is a voluntary alternative to the traditional way of receiving regional center services. SDP provides participants with more control and flexibility in choosing services and supports to help them meet their goals.

With SDP, you have:

- **More freedom** to make your own choices
- **More authority** over your services and supports
- **More responsibility** for decisions and outcomes
- **More opportunity** to live the life you want
- **More flexibility** in how your individual budget is spent

How is SDP Different from Traditional Services?

Traditional Services	Self-Determination Program
Regional center selects and arranges your services	You select and arrange your own services
Limited to vendors approved by the regional center	You can hire almost anyone, including family members in some cases
Service types and amounts are determined by the regional center	You decide what services you need within your approved budget
Changes to services require regional center approval	You can adjust services as needed as long as they support your goals
Regional center manages your service funding	You manage your individual budget with help if needed

Who Can Participate in SDP?

To be eligible for the Self-Determination Program, you must:

- Be a current regional center client
 - Live at home or in the community (not in a long-term care facility)
 - Be willing to follow program rules
 - Attend an orientation meeting about SDP
 - Be willing to manage your services within your individual budget
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Key Roles in the Self-Determination Program

Financial Management Service (FMS)

- Handles the financial aspects of your SDP
- Pays your service providers
- Helps ensure compliance with tax and labor laws
- Tracks your spending and provides regular reports

Independent Facilitator

- Helps you plan and implement your Individual Program Plan
 - Assists with finding and hiring service providers
 - Helps you solve problems and advocate for yourself
 - Can be a paid position from your budget or done by family/friends at no cost
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The SDP Process: Getting Started

Step-by-Step Guide: Applying to California's Self-Determination Program (SDP)

What is the Self-Determination Program?

The Self-Determination Program (SDP) gives people with developmental disabilities more freedom, control, and responsibility in choosing services and supports to help them meet their goals and live independently in the community.

STEP 1: Check Your Eligibility

You must meet ALL of these requirements:

- **Age 3 or older** with a developmental disability (as defined in Welfare & Institutions Code 4512)
 - **Currently receiving regional center services**
 - **Live at home, in the community, or in a group home** (NOT in a licensed long-term health care facility)
 - **Must agree to specific terms**, including:
 - Attend mandatory SDP orientation
 - Work with a Financial Management Services (FMS) provider
 - Manage services within an individual budget
 - Only purchase services eligible for federal funding that aren't available from generic agencies
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STEP 2: Contact Your Regional Center

Action Required: Call or email your Regional Center Service Coordinator

What to tell them:

- "I'm interested in transitioning to the Self-Determination Program"
- Ask for information about SDP and upcoming orientation sessions
- Request your UCI (Unique Client Identifier) number if you don't have it

Find your UCI number on:

- Your Individual Program Plan (IPP) document
 - Ask your service coordinator or current providers
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STEP 3: Attend Mandatory Orientation

This is REQUIRED by law to participate in SDP

Option A: State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) Orientation

- **Format:** Self-paced online reading materials
- **Languages:** Available in English and Spanish
- **Registration:** Visit [SCDD SDP Orientation page](#)
 - **Navigate to Program:** Click the "Click Here" button under the Self Determination Program section
 - **Enroll in Course:** Click the "Enroll" button on the "Self-Determination Orientation - English Online" option (typically the 3rd option listed)
 - **Start Training:** Go to "My Courses" in the top navigation tabs and click the "Start" button
 - **Complete Materials:** Work through all the training materials at your own pace
 - **Get Certificate:** Return to "My Courses," click the "Certificate" button, and print your completion certificate
- **Certificate:** Provided upon completion

Option B: Regional Center Orientation

- **Format:** May be in-person or online (varies by regional center)
- **Contact:** Your service coordinator for dates and locations
- **Languages:** Check with your regional center for availability

What you'll learn:

- SDP principles and responsibilities
 - Individual budgets and spending plans
 - Person-centered planning process
 - Role of independent facilitators
 - Financial Management Services (FMS)
 - Consumer rights and protections
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STEP 4: Hire an Independent Facilitator

What they do:

- Help you make informed decisions about your budget
- Assist with locating and coordinating services
- Support person-centered planning process
- Help obtain identified services and supports

Requirements for paid facilitators:

- Must receive training in self-determination principles (at their own cost)
- Cannot be providing other services to you
- Cannot work for an agency serving you
- Cannot be your parent (if you're a minor) or spouse

Funding: Regional centers can fund pre-enrollment facilitator services through Service Code 099

STEP 5: Develop Your Person-Centered Plan

This replaces your traditional IPP and must be person-centered

Who can help:

- Independent facilitator

- Pre-enrollment specialist funded by regional center
- Your support team (family, friends you choose to include)

What it includes:

- Your goals and preferences
 - Services and supports you need
 - How you want to live your life
 - Your individual budget amount
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STEP 6: Create Your Individual Budget

How it's calculated:

- Based on your current service costs and needs
- Uses the Individual Budget Calculation and Certification Tool (IBCCT)
- Reviewed with your planning team
- Must be approved by regional center

Important: Your budget will NOT be increased to cover facilitator costs

STEP 7: Develop Your Spending Plan

Work with your team to:

- Decide which services to purchase
 - Determine how much to pay for each service
 - Ensure services align with your person-centered plan
 - Stay within your individual budget
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STEP 8: Choose a Financial Management Services (FMS) Provider

This is REQUIRED for SDP participation

What FMS providers do:

- Pay your service providers
- Handle payroll for support workers
- Manage employment taxes
- Provide online budget tracking tools
- Conduct background checks

Popular FMS providers in California:

- PPL (Public Partnerships)
 - GT Independence
 - Others available through DDS website
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STEP 9: Hold Your IPP Meeting

Purpose:

- Formalize your person-centered plan
- Approve your spending plan and budget
- Set your SDP start date
- Create contract between you and regional center

Who attends:

- You (and your representative if applicable)
 - Regional center service coordinator
 - Your support team members you choose to include
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STEP 10: Begin Your SDP Services

You're now ready to:

- Start purchasing approved services
 - Hire and manage your own providers
 - Control your individual budget
 - Live according to your person-centered plan
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Important Reminders

Rights and Protections

- You maintain all the same rights as traditional regional center consumers
- Appeals process remains available
- You can leave SDP at any time and return to traditional services

Ongoing Responsibilities

- Manage services within your budget
- Work with your FMS provider
- Attend annual IPP meetings
- Only purchase federally eligible services

Additional Resources

- **Regional Center SDP pages:** Check your specific regional center's website
 - **DDS SDP webpage:** www.dds.ca.gov/initiatives/sdp/
 - **SCDD resources:** Additional training modules available
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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I still get help from my service coordinator?

A: Yes, your regional center service coordinator will still be available to provide guidance and support.

Q: What if I change my mind about SDP?

A: You can choose to return to traditional services at any time.

Q: Can I hire family members to provide services?

A: In many cases, yes. Parents of minor children and spouses have some restrictions, but other family members can often be hired.

Q: How do I ensure quality services?

A: You'll set expectations, monitor services, and can discontinue working with providers who don't meet your needs.

Q: What happens if I don't spend all my budget?

A: Unspent funds typically remain with the funding source and don't carry over to the next year.

Ready to Learn More?

Contact us to set up an appointment to learn more.

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This information packet was prepared by Independence Through Grace Foundation to help potential participants understand the Self-Determination Program. The official rules and policies of the Department of Developmental Services and your regional center take precedence over this informational material.