

Developmental Disabilities

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A couple of months ago, I shared about identifying educational services for children who have special learning needs [When Learning Disabilities Arise](#). Today, I am sharing about Developmental Disabilities. This subject is close to my heart because one of my

sisters has this type of disability.

Some children have conditions that require deeper attention and support. These conditions may interfere with their growth and development. When parents realize that their child is not developing as other children do, they often ask:

- Could my child have a developmental disability?
- How can I get help for my child and myself, as a parent?

What is a Developmental Disability?

A developmental disability is a disability that occurs and is diagnosed before the age of 18, is substantially disabling, and is expected to continue indefinitely. Such a disability may interfere with a child's language development, learning in general, the ability to take care of oneself, or mobility. Examples of developmental disabilities include:

- Intellectual Disability

- Cerebral Palsy
- Epilepsy
- Autism

These disabilities are often first diagnosed by a doctor.

How Do I Get Help for My Child?

The state of California has twenty-one regional centers that coordinate services to people with developmental disabilities [Regional Centers by County](#). Any person, regardless of age or income, who is believed to have or be at risk of having a developmental disability, may apply to determine if he/she is eligible for regional center services.

- Parents must first contact their nearest regional center to request services for their child.
- Parents and child will attend an intake meeting to provide preliminary information to regional center staff.
- The child will be assessed.
- If the child is found to be eligible for services, the regional center staff and parents will meet to develop an Individual Program Plan (IPP) for the child. The plan will determine the kinds of services the child will need to support development and care.
- If the child is found not to be eligible, parents may appeal.

School age children will receive most services through their school's special education program. Some children will require additional services in their home. In-home services may include adaptive equipment, special in-home medical care, and respite services for caregivers.

Must be Diagnosed Before 18

Parents need to know that for children to receive regional center services in their lifetime, they must be diagnosed before the age of 18. Parents can find detailed information about eligibility and services on regional center websites. I have included links to those centers in the Bay Area.

[North Bay Regional Center](#) (Sonoma, Napa, and Solano Counties)

[Golden Gate Regional Center](#) (Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo Counties)

[Regional Center of the East Bay](#) (Alameda and Contra Costa Counties)

[San Andreas Regional Center](#) (Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey Counties)

Caring for a developmentally disabled child is both challenging and enriching in many ways. If that is your journey, know that my heart is with you.

With love and affection,

Rosemarie

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