



Michael S. Tilden, CPA *Acting State Auditor*

CONTACT: *Public Affairs Office* | (916) 445-0255

In-Home Respite Services

The Department of Developmental Services Has Not Adequately Reduced Barriers to Some Families' Use of In-Home Respite Services

Background

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) oversees the coordination and delivery of the care and treatment of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. One of the services DDS oversees is the State's in-home respite services program (respite services), which provides temporary care and supervision to those with such disabilities who reside with family members. The State's 21 contracted regional centers coordinate respite services in their respective geographical areas. Our audit of four of these regional centers—Golden Gate, Inland, San Andreas, and San Diego—found that DDS has not taken adequate action to reduce barriers to some families' access to these critical respite services.

Key Findings

- Among the barriers that prevented some families from accessing respite services was a lack of available respite workers and difficulty finding respite workers who speak the family's language.
 - » Although DDS ensures that regional centers obtain feedback to identify disparities in using respite services, it has not ensured that regional centers adequately act to reduce those disparities.
- DDS has not done enough to ensure that regional centers allow families to receive the full number of allowable respite service hours.
 - » Years after the repeal of a state law limiting respite hours, inadequate DDS oversight has allowed some regional centers to maintain policies that impose limits on respite services.
- DDS has not taken adequate action to ensure that all families have access to one respite service option that could help reduce some of the barriers to accessing services.
 - » Of the 21 regional centers in the State, 13 seldom or never offer this potentially beneficial service option.

Key Recommendations

The Legislature should do the following:

- Require DDS to submit annually a plan outlining the specific, measurable actions it will take to reduce barriers and disparities in the use of in-home respite services.
- Require DDS to regularly adjust reimbursement rates to attract an adequate number of respite workers.
- Require regional centers to identify measurable actions to reduce barriers and disparities and require DDS to annually follow up with regional centers on the status of these actions.

DDS should do the following:

- Perform a more comprehensive analysis on the data it collects from regional centers to identify disparities in the use of respite services and take action to address those disparities.
- Review regional center policies to ensure that they no longer contain hourly limits to respite care.
- Develop standard outreach materials about different service options, require regional centers to train staff on the benefits of each option, and require regional centers to plan for an adequate number of service providers for each service option.

Some of the Barriers to Accessing Respite Services Include ...



LACK OF AVAILABLE WORKERS

In some areas, there is an insufficient supply of respite workers because of low reimbursement rates or scheduling difficulties.



INCOMPATIBILITY

Some families struggle to find respite workers with whom they are comfortable, personally or culturally.



LANGUAGE GAPS

Families have difficulty finding respite workers who speak their language.



SHORTAGE OF SPECIALIZED WORKERS

There is a shortage of respite workers trained to work with particular needs, including specific behaviors.