

## How to Get Regional Center Services through Your IPP

Decisions about *what* services you need and want, *who* will provide these services, and *when* are made at your Individual Program Plan (IPP) meeting. This Supplement explains:

- How often IPP meetings take place
- How to get an IPP meeting,
- How to prepare for your IPP meeting, and
- What to do if you cannot get the services you need.

## When is my IPP meeting?

If you are a *new regional center client*, the regional center must develop your IPP **within 60 days**. If you have not heard from the regional center within 2 weeks, call or write the regional center.

If you already have an IPP, but are *moving to a new regional center area*, your new regional center must follow your current IPP until your next IPP meeting. If your current IPP lists services that are not available in your new area, your new regional center must have an IPP meeting within **30 days** and provide alternative services until then.

You will have an IPP meeting **every year** if:

- You get services under the Medi-Cal Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver<sup>1</sup>, or
- You live in a facility licensed as an “Intermediate Care Facility” (ICF-DD, ICF-DD/H, ICF-DD/N, ICF-DD/CN).

For everyone else, your IPP meeting will take place once **every three years**, unless your needs change or if you ask for a meeting.

## Ask for an IPP meeting whenever:

- Your needs change
- Your achievements make you ready for something new
- You need a new or different service

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the Medi-Cal HCBS Waiver for people who are eligible for regional center services, see Chapters 1 and 13.

- You need help from the regional center to get cash or services from another agency

When you ask the regional center for a service or help, you are actually asking that your IPP be changed to include the service or help you are asking for. If you ask for an IPP meeting, the meeting must happen within 30 days.

## **How to Ask for an IPP Meeting**

You can:

- Call or write your service coordinator and ask for a meeting or to change your IPP. If you want a particular service, say which service you want when you call or write. Sometimes regional centers agree to provide or pay for a service without having an IPP meeting. If this happens, ask the regional center to add it to your IPP and to send you a copy.
- Ask family or friends to help you write a letter to request an IPP meeting. You can send the letter to the Regional Center or your Service Coordinator.

Here are some examples:

Dear Regional Center:

I want to start working and earning money. I want an IPP meeting about the help I need to work.

**Or:**

Dear Regional Center:

I want to learn how to use the bus to get from my house to the bowling alley. I want this added to my IPP.

**Or:**

Dear Regional Center:

I need help because Social Security is looking at my SSI. I want my IPP to say that you will help me keep SSI.

Your IPP meeting must take place within **30 days** of your request.

## **Before Your Meeting**

- 1. Know Your Goals** — Use the IPP Planners in Supplements J and K or the publications listed in Chapter 4 to help you think about your goals. Goals can be where you want to live and what you want to do each day. The IPP Planners will help you figure out what services and supports you need to reach your goals.
- 2. Review Your Current IPP** — Think about the services and supports you get now. Talk to family, friends, and advocates to help you fill out the planner or make your own list. Ask yourself these questions:
  - Do you want to keep some or all of the services you are getting now?
  - Do you no longer need some of the services you are getting now?
  - Do you need different services?
  - Do you want to change who provides your services?
  - Do you want to change where you live?
  - Are there services from other agencies that you need help from the regional center to get or keep?

### **3. Tell the regional center what services you want now**

Let the regional center know what you will ask for *before the meeting*. That way, the regional center can be ready to make decisions *at your meeting*.

Ask the regional center to have a *decision maker* at your meeting. The decision maker is someone from the regional center who can say “yes” or “no” to decisions about your services and supports. The law says that a

decision maker from the regional center must be at the IPP meeting where final decisions are made on services and supports.

You can use the sample letter in Supplement N to write to the regional center. Your letter should include:

- Your completed IPP Planner
- A list of services you get now
- Your last IPP with the changes you want
- Request for a decision maker

Here is a sample letter:

Dear Regional Center:  
Here is my filled-in IPP Meeting Planner. I really want to learn to use a computer. Please ask Becky from the Day program to come to my IPP meeting. Please have a decision maker at my IPP meeting.

#### **4. Ask people to be part of your IPP Planning Team.**

You can invite anyone you want to your IPP. Ask people who know you and can help you at the meeting. You can invite your family, someone from where you live, from your day program, from your child's school, or any other service provider. Ask your regional center to invite them.

The people you invite and the people from the regional center make up your IPP team.

**Tip!** Some people start "buddy" programs where they each go to the other's IPP meeting for support.

#### **5. Ask for an interpreter**

Communication at your IPP meeting is very important! If you do not speak or understand English well, or if you feel more comfortable speaking a different language, ask for an interpreter. The regional center must provide an interpreter at your IPP meeting. They should also translate your IPP and other documents. Supplement T shows you how to ask the regional center for an interpreter.

## At Your Meeting

### **Your IPP Meeting must be *person-centered*.**

Your IPP is all about you and your choices. *Person-centered* means that you are the most important person at the meeting. The meeting is about your hopes, your likes and dislikes, where you need help, what services you want, and what you think are the most important services and supports to include in your IPP. It is not about what services happen to be available or are usually provided.

The people at the meeting should work as a team to come up with ways to meet your goals and dreams. You have the right to understand what is said. The people at the meeting need to take the time to make sure you understand what is said. Everyone's ideas should be listened to. Don't be afraid to ask someone to say something again. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Your questions will help everyone at the meeting understand your choices and needs.

### **Make sure a *decision maker* is present.**

Sometimes, a planning team will only "recommend funding" for services and supports. The regional center may say that the POS (Purchase of Service) committee or another committee has to approve your request. You have the right to meet with the person who can say "yes" or "no" to your request.

Unless a decision maker is at the meeting, there is no one at the meeting who can say "yes" or "no" about what goes into your IPP. As soon as the meeting begins, make sure that one of the people from the regional center is a "decision maker," someone who can say "yes" or "no" to a service.

If a decision maker is not present, the regional center must have a second meeting within 15 days (unless you agree to a longer time). A decision maker must be present.

You can still talk about the services you need or want. But no decisions can be made.

### **Choose someone to take notes.**

Ask someone to take notes on big pieces of paper put up on the walls. Ask them to write down things you have agreed and disagreed on. At the end of the meeting, the note taker can read the list to the team and make sure that everyone agrees with what has been written.

## **Complete the IPP document.**

The IPP document must include:

- *what* services and supports you need and want (the type and amount),
- *who* will provide the services (another “generic” agency or a particular provider or type of provider), and
- *when* the services will start.

If the services cannot start right away because other steps are needed, such as, there is no available provider or you must first ask Medi-Cal or a health plan, your IPP must say:

- what steps will be taken,
- who is responsible for each step,
- the timelines for completing each step, and
- what services will be provided in the meantime.

## **Sign the IPP (or a list of the agreements made) at the meeting.**

The IPP you sign should list the specific goals and objectives, and the services to be provided, who will provide them, and when they will start. If the regional center will not write the entire IPP at the meeting, make a handwritten list of the agreements so everyone can sign the list. Take home a copy of the list. The regional center can then type up the list on the form it uses and send it to you.

***Important:*** Do not sign a paper that says you agree with a Proposed Plan.

## **You can agree with part of the IPP and disagree with other parts.**

You can agree to parts of the IPP and not agree with other parts. Or you can disagree if the regional center refuses a new or continued service.

Only the parts of an IPP that you agree to can be implemented. If you are denied a new service that you wanted and a substitute service was written into your IPP, you should disagree in writing.

Here are some examples:

I disagree with the denial of “*requested service.*” I agree to accept “*substitute service*” while I try to get the “*requested service.*” Give me notice of the denial of the “*requested service.*”

Or:

I disagree with the denial of “*requested service*.” I accept the “*substitute service*” under protest. The “*requested service*” would better meet my needs.

**You can schedule another meeting within 15 days or file an appeal if no final decision can be made.**

If the team cannot come to a final agreement at the meeting, another meeting must be scheduled within 15 days (unless you agree to more time). Sometimes an assessment is needed before the team can decide what services are needed.

**Get a written notice of any denial.**

If the regional center says “no” to a new service you ask for, they must send you a written denial notice **within 5 days**. If they say they want to change or end a service you already get, it must give you written notice **30 days before** the change or cut-off. The notice must also have a form you can use if you want to appeal.

If you disagree with the decision not to include a new service in your IPP or to change or end a service you get now, you must say so in writing.

Here is an example:

I disagree with the decision to give me fewer independent living services hours per week. Please send me a notice explaining why the hours are cut and how I can appeal.

**What to do if things don't work out**

- If you want to fight the denial, file an appeal within **10 days** of the written notice if you want to continue receiving your current services during the appeal process. This is called “aid paid pending.”
- If the denial is for a new service or you do not need them to pay for the service during the appeal, you have **30 days** to appeal.
- You can appeal even if you do not get a notice.

## Supplement I

- If you do not get a denial letter, contact your case manager. If you still do not receive it, you can appeal by filing an administrative complaint (a *4731 complaint*) along with a letter of appeal.
- If you do not get the services that the regional center has already agreed to provide, file an administrative complaint.
- If the regional center delays making a decision about your services, insist on a decision. Or you can consider the delay as a denial and file an appeal.