

**ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL CENTER AGENCIES
REGIONAL CENTER CASELOAD RATIOS
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One of the primary functions of California's regional centers is to provide life-long case management to the 280,000 people who have a developmental disability (clients) served by the regional centers. The regional centers assign each client to a Client Program Coordinator (CPC). These CPCs go by different names at different regional centers. Some are called Client Services Coordinators, some Case Managers, and others Counselors. The number of clients that a CPC has assigned to her or him is called their caseload.

Welfare and Institutions Code section 4640.6(c)(3) mandates the following average caseload ratios which are also guaranteed to the federal government in the Health and Community Based Services Waiver:

"Commencing January 1, 2004, the following coordinator-to-consumer ratios shall apply:

(A) All consumers three years of age and younger and for consumers enrolled in the Home and Community-based Services Waiver program for persons with developmental disabilities, an average service coordinator-to-consumer ratio of 1 to 62.

(B) All consumers who have moved from a developmental center to the community since April 14, 1993, and have lived continuously in the community for at least 12 months, an average service coordinator-to-consumer ratio of 1 to 62.

(C) All consumers who have not moved from the developmental centers to the community since April 14, 1993, and who are not described in subparagraph (A), an average service coordinator-to-consumer ratio of 1 to 66."

Regional centers are required by law to report their actual caseload ratios annually to the Department of Developmental Services. Over the years these reports have indicated a decline in the ability of regional centers to maintain the required caseloads. The most recent reports for March 2014 indicate that not one regional center was meeting all of the caseload ratio requirements.

The most significant factor in the inability to meet the caseload ratio requirements has been the salary budgeted for each service coordinator in the Core Staffing Formula. Service coordinators make up approximately 54% of the regional center workforce, and the core staffing formula sets the position's salary at \$34,032. By way of comparison, the current state equivalent salary is \$50,340. But regional centers must compete with local counties for skilled case management staff. In Contra Costa County the salary for similar positions is \$62,841; in Kern County it is \$61,071. Had the budgeted annual salary for the service coordinator position kept pace with inflation, it would now be in excess of \$61,000 per year.

This reality leaves regional centers no choice but to pay more than budgeted salaries (the average real salary is \$46,121) by hiring fewer service coordinators and other critical employees, using that money for more realistic salary levels. Those coordinators who are hired must therefore carry a larger caseload. This is a problem that continues to grow, demonstrated by the fact that in 2011 regional centers

employed only 88% of the service coordinators they were statutorily required to have; by 2014 the percentage dropped to 84%, with centers employing 661 fewer service coordinators statewide than they need to meet required caseload ratios. And as other key regional center positions go unfilled in order to allow centers to pay service coordinators more than is budgeted by the state, service coordinators must also fulfill more functions, leaving them even less time to spend directly working with each individual.

However, these caseload ratios are too high and, even if they were being met, they would still be short-changing the clients served by the regional centers. Other states have much lower caseload ratio requirements which give the CPCs more time to address the individual needs of the clients. The following are some of the caseload ratio requirements in other states:

- *Workload Standards Study Technical Report: Case/Resource Management in the Division of Developmental Disabilities* by the Washington State Department of Social Services Division dated March 1999 – in it they reference a 1996 National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) survey and display the results in a graph listing the caseload ratios for 42 states. The highest caseload was Washington at 1:175 and the lowest was Wyoming at 1:13. The median was 1:40 and California came in at 1:75, the fifth highest.
- A NASDDDS Report, *Survey of State Case Management Policies and Practices*, dated August 2006 that showed that in 2005 there were 2 states with a caseload ratio of less than 1:20, 3 states were in the 1:20-29 range, 15 states in the 1:30-39 range, 5 states in the 1:40-49 range, 7 states in the 1:50-59 range, 3 states in the 1:60-99 range, and 2 states reported over a 1:100 caseload ratio.
- The state of Maine mandates a caseload ratio of 1:35 for its case managers in its Aging & Disability Services department.
- Minnesota Administrative Rules limit the caseload ratio for case managers for “services to adults with serious and persistent mental illness” to 1:40.

Many people in the field believe a caseload ratio of 1:45 would be ideal. Unfortunately, this would require additional funds. Even at the currently inadequate rate of \$34,032 per CPC, \$52,392 for a Supervising Counselor, and \$18,757 for secretaries, it would cost \$90 million. However that \$90 million would not even begin to enable regional centers to hire enough staff to meet a 1:45 caseload ratio. There are many other factors that also need to be addressed, such as the low budget rates for regional center staff, the low budgeted fringe benefits rate, and the \$44 million in past unallocated reductions that continue to be deducted from the regional center budget each year.