
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Becker, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1575
Author: Arambula
Version: May 18, 2026
Urgency: No
Consultant: Diana Dominguez

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Fiscal: No

Subject: Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act

SUMMARY

This bill updates the word “consumer” to “person eligible for regional center services” throughout the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act (Lanterman Act).

ABSTRACT

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes the Lanterman Act, which states that California is responsible for providing a range of services and supports sufficiently complete to meet the needs and choices of each person with developmental disabilities, regardless of age or degree of disability, and at each stage of life, and to support their integration into the mainstream life of the community. (*Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] 4500 et seq.*)
- 2) Defines “developmental disability” as a disability that originates before an individual attains 18 years of age, continues, or can be expected to continue, indefinitely, and constitutes a substantial disability for that individual. As defined by the Director of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), in consultation with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, this term shall include intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autism. This term shall also include disabling conditions found to be closely related to intellectual disability or to require treatment similar to that required for individuals with an intellectual disability, but shall not include other handicapping conditions that are solely physical in nature. (*WIC 4512(a)(1)*)
- 3) Adds criteria for a child under five years of age who does not meet the definition of developmental disability under (2) to receive regional center services:
 - a. Provides that a child who is under five years of age shall be provisionally eligible for regional center services if the child has a disability that is not solely physical in nature and has significant functional limitations in at least two areas of major life activity, as specified. Provides that a child is not required to have one of the developmental disabilities listed in (2) to be provisionally eligible. Provides that a

child who is provisionally eligible shall be reassessed at least 90 days before turning five years of age, and the child must meet the definition of developmental disability set forth in (2) to continue to be eligible for regional center services at five years of age.

- b. Provides that an infant or toddler referred for early intervention services may be concurrently assessed, if appropriate, to determine whether the infant or toddler is provisionally eligible for regional center services or eligible for regional center services if they have a developmental disability pursuant to (2). If the regional center determined that the infant or toddler qualifies for early intervention services from the regional center but has not been found to have a developmental disability pursuant to (2) or to be provisionally eligible, the regional center shall assess the child at least 90 days prior to the date that they turn three years of age for purposes of determining their eligibility for regional center services. If the regional center determines the child is not eligible, the regional center shall give adequate notice, as specified. *(WIC 4512(a)(2-4))*
- 4) Defines “consumer” as a person who has a disability that meets the definition of developmental disability. *(WIC 4512(d))*
- 5) Establishes a system of nonprofit regional centers, overseen by DDS, to provide fixed points of contact in the community for all persons with developmental disabilities and their families to coordinate services and supports best suited to them throughout their lifetime. *(WIC 4620)*

This Bill:

- 1) Updates the word “consumer” to “person eligible for regional center services” throughout the Lanterman Act.

FISCAL IMPACT

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) estimates ongoing General Fund costs of an unknown but significant amount, likely in the tens of millions of dollars annually, depending on the volume of requests from families and utilization. DDS indicates the addition of community integration and socialization as respite goals would constitute a new service.
- 2) DDS anticipates minor and absorbable costs for any updates associated with replacing “consumer” with “person eligible for regional center services throughout the Lanterman Act and removing gendered language.

According to the Legislative Analyst’s Office, the General Fund faces a structural deficit in the tens of billions of dollars over the next several fiscal years.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Bill:

According to the author, “Adults with disabilities continue to experience discrimination in education, employment, and healthcare settings. These challenges predictably result in reduced access to care and more limited opportunities, creating an often inescapable cycle of frustration for families trying to navigate the system. Shifting away from the use of harmful language will help in eliminating this stigma. AB 1575 updates the Lanterman Act to ensure consistent use of person-first language, emphasizing each person’s humanity and moving away from stigmatizing language.”

Lanterman Act

In 1969, the Lanterman Act established that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families have a right to receive the necessary services and supports required to live independently in the community. The Lanterman Act enumerates the rights of individuals with developmental disabilities, as well as the rights of their families, what services and supports are available to these individuals, and how regional centers and service providers work together to provide these services and supports. The term “developmental disability” is defined as a disability that originates before a person reaches 18 years of age, is expected to continue indefinitely, and is a significant disability for the individual. Such disabilities include, among others: epilepsy, autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, and cerebral palsy.

In addition to establishing the rights of individuals, the Lanterman Act also created California’s regional center system, comprised of 21 nonprofit regional centers throughout the state whose primary purpose is to connect individuals with services in the community. The Department of Finance estimates that approximately 487,114 individuals will receive developmental services in 2025–26, increasing to 526,848 in 2026–27.¹

Person-First and Identity-First Language

Person-first or people-first language refers to a person before describing their disability or condition. Person-first language is meant to humanize the person and de-stigmatize their condition. Some examples of person-first language include: person with autism, person experiencing homelessness, or person with a substance use disorder. Identity-first language refers to a person’s identity first. Identity-first language is preferred by some self-advocates and disability advocates because it recognizes the identity as an inherent part of the person. Some examples of identity-first language include: Autistic person, Deaf person, or Indigenous person. While there is no one-size-fits-all choice between person-first or identity-first language across all groups and identities, advocates and experts agree that offensive and othering language should not be used. Examples include outdated or condescending terms or descriptions, slurs, using adjectives as nouns (nominalization), and language that implies deficiency or restriction.²

¹ https://www.dds.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/DDS_MayRevisionsHighlights_202605.pdf

² <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/disability>

Social Science & Medicine, a journal that publishes peer-reviewed original research, published an article in December 2024 entitled “Person-first and identity-first disability language: informing client centered care”.³ The article was based upon a survey of 875 people, ages 14 to 89, on their self-reported health condition and use of person-first and identity-first language. The researchers published the following findings, among others:

- 94.4% of participants were aware of person-first and identity-first language.
- When referring to oneself, 42.4% of participants preferred identity-first language, while 34.1% of participants reported using person-first language, and 23.7% used both interchangeably.
- When referring to others, 39.4% of participants reported using person-first language, while 26.6% of participants reported using identity-first language, and 34.0% used both interchangeably.
- People who reported using person-first language were more likely to be older, while people who reported using identity-first language were more likely to be younger.
- Preference for person-first versus identity-first language varied by disability. The survey included the following disability categories: nervous system, neurodevelopmental, developmental anomaly, mental health, musculoskeletal, hearing, digestive, pain, vision, and other/undisclosed.

The article concluded that use of person-first language appears to be more appropriate than identity-first language for all settings, including healthcare, education, media, the general public, and among people with a disability or health condition. The article also described an “ingroup-outgroup” phenomenon where identity-first language may be acceptable among people with a disability or health condition but less acceptable when used by third parties.

This bill would replace the term “consumer” throughout the Lanterman Act with “person eligible for regional center services”.

Related/Prior Legislation:

AB 162 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 47, Statutes of 2024), a budget trailer bill, amended the definition of “developmental disability” to allow a regional center to concurrently assess an infant or toddler referred for early intervention services for provisional eligibility or full eligibility for regional center services.

COMMENTS

This bill would adopt person-first language by changing the term “consumer” throughout the Lanterman Act to “person eligible for regional center services”. According to the bill sponsor, the term “consumer” implies a commercial relationship between a person and the developmental

³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953624008980?via%3Dihub>

services system, which is not a proper representation of services and supports provided under the Lanterman Act. This bill would not affect a person's eligibility for, or receipt of, services and supports under the Lanterman Act.

PRIOR VOTES

Assembly Floor:	78 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11 - 0
Assembly Human Services Committee:	5 - 0

POSITIONS

Support:

The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy California Collaboration (Sponsor)

Alameda County Board of Supervisors

California Disability Services Association

Oppose:

None received

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