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THIRD READING

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Bill No: SB 969  
Author: Reyes (D)  
Amended: 3/23/26  
Vote: 21

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SENATE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE: 5-0, 4/6/26  
AYES: Becker, Ochoa Bogh, Laird, Pérez, Weber Pierson

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

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**SUBJECT:** Developmental services: remote services

**SOURCE:** California Disability Services Association

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**DIGEST:** This bill (1) requires the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to develop a list of regional center services eligible for remote delivery and develop guidance to regional centers that includes specified processes related to implementation; (2) authorizes an individual and their family to voluntarily elect to receive remote services, as available, if it is determined that remote delivery would effectively meet the needs of the individual.

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act (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) 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)

- 3) Establishes an Individual Program Plan (IPP) as the process to ensure that services and supports are customized to meet the needs of consumers who are served by regional centers for the purpose of alleviating a developmental disability or toward the social, personal, physical, or economic habilitation or rehabilitation of an individual with a developmental disability, or toward the achievement and maintenance of independent, productive, and normal lives. (WIC § 4512(b))
- 4) Authorizes a regional center to purchase services or supports for a consumer from an individual or agency that the regional center and consumer or, if appropriate, the consumer's parents, legal guardian, or conservator, or authorized representative, determines will best accomplish all or part of that consumer's program plan. (WIC § 4648(a)(3)(A))
- 5) Authorizes the director of DDS to issue directives to the regional centers as the director deems necessary to protect consumer rights, health, safety, or welfare. Requires a regional center to comply with any directive issued by the director. Prohibits the directive from being in conflict with existing statutes or regulations. (WIC § 4639.6)

This bill:

- 1) Requires DDS to develop a list of regional center services eligible for remote delivery.
- 2) Requires DDS to develop, distribute, and post on its internet website guidance to regional centers to implement remote services that includes both of the following:
  - a) A process for informing individuals and their families of the option to voluntarily receive remote services.
  - b) Requirements for service providers offering remote services, including the processes for authorization, billing, and documentation.
- 3) Authorizes an individual and their family to voluntarily elect to receive remote services, as available, if it is determined in the IPP meeting that remote delivery would effectively meet the needs of the individual.

## Background

*Purpose of this Bill.* According to the author, “SB 969 would make the option of remote delivery a permanent resource for Californians with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Developmental Services issued a directive temporarily authorizing remote delivery for specified regional center services for Californians with IDD, ensuring the continuity of care and support during unprecedented times. What began as an emergency response has proven to be a transformative and highly effective approach for service delivery. The option for remote access to employment programs, educational services, therapy, and healthcare has led to community empowerment and independence not only for individuals with intellectual disabilities, but also for their families and caregivers. The Department has extended this temporary directive several times, but statutory changes are necessary to make this directive permanent. This bill addresses this issue by codifying remote service flexibility into law, leveraging this powerful tool to address disparities in healthcare access for all communities and affirming our commitment to inclusive health care delivery.”

*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 489,254 individuals will receive developmental services in 2025–26, increasing to 526,848 in 2026–27.

*Individual Program Plan (IPP).* Services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are outlined in an IPP, which is developed according to

the needs and personal choices of the individual. The IPP is developed by an IPP team, which often includes the consumer, their legally authorized representative, and one or more regional center representatives. The IPP serves as a tool to maximize the opportunities for each consumer to develop relationships, integrate into community life, increase control over their life, and obtain positive roles in the community. The IPP is required to prioritize the services and supports that allow minors to live with their families and adults to live in the community as independently as possible. Regional center consumers receiving traditional services are assigned a service coordinator who is responsible for implementing, overseeing, and monitoring the consumer's IPP.

*Individualized Service Plan.* An individualized service plan is a plan informed by the consumer and prepared by the provider that identifies and describes the services that will be provided to support the person's needs, goals, and objectives. An individualized service plan may also be referred to as individualized service design, treatment plan, or plan of care. Providers must develop an individualized service plan for each consumer based on their IPP and maintain documentation of each consumer's progress toward achieving expected outcomes, including any needed adjustments. An individualized service plan is required for each consumer, regardless of whether they receive services in person or remotely.

*Remote Service Delivery.* Statute authorizes the director of DDS to issue directives to regional centers as deemed necessary to protect consumer rights, health, safety, or welfare, and requires regional centers to follow department directives. In July 2020, DDS issued a directive to regional centers to provide guidance on the alternative service delivery framework to continue to provide services that meet consumers' needs and limit potential exposure to COVID-19. At this time, providers were required to submit a certification to the regional center describing remote or alternate services they intended to provide and the health and safety measures that would be employed. Providers were also required to maintain documentation related to alternative services and submit a quarterly report.

In November 2022, DDS announced through a directive that consumers could voluntarily choose remote delivery of day programs, look-a-like day programs, and independent living services. Regional centers were required to inform consumers of the option to voluntarily choose remote delivery of these services, and providers were required to engage with consumers to determine if, and to what extent, each consumer prefers remote delivery of services. Behavioral therapy services and clinical assessment activities for Lanterman Act eligibility were added as eligible

for remote delivery in February 2023. After two extensions, the current sunset for remote service delivery is December 31, 2026.

This bill would make permanent a consumer's ability to choose to receive services through remote delivery. DDS shared these findings in its March 2025 directive: "The Department finds that remote services provided during the COVID-19 pandemic, and post pandemic, have been useful in ensuring continuity of and access to services, and may remove some barriers for individuals and families to receiving services. Additionally, remote services, when chosen by individuals and families, have played an important role in protecting an individual's welfare."

According to California Disability Services Association, sponsor of this bill, remote service delivery has become essential to nationwide efforts to provide person-centered supports.

### **Comments**

This bill seeks to make permanent regional center consumers' ability to choose remote services when remote delivery would support the goals outlined in their IPP. Consumers have been able to utilize remote services since July 2020. A consumer may choose remote service delivery because it is convenient or more comfortable for them, or because it protects their health for individuals who are more vulnerable or immunocompromised. Although there is limited data on the current utilization of remote services, according to DDS, providers have anecdotally shared that remote services are in high demand.

Since issuing the original directive allowing for remote delivery of regional center services, DDS has extended remote service authority several times, citing the benefits to service continuity and increased access for individuals and their families. The current authority to receive and provide remote services is set to expire December 31, 2026. The most recent remote services directive states that DDS does not intend to further extend this deadline outside of statutory authorization. Trailer bill language (TBL) included in the Governor's Budget proposes to authorize consumers and families to choose to receive specified services remotely if offered by the authorized service provider if receiving those services remotely would effectively meet the needs identified through the IPP process. The TBL limits services eligible to be received remotely to day programs, look-a-like day programs, independent living programs, behavioral therapy services, clinical assessment activities for Lanterman Act eligibility, and any other services determined by DDS that could appropriately address a need of a consumer

identified in an IPP. The TBL would additionally require providers to document the number of remote services each individual receives on a monthly basis.

This bill proposes a more formal structure to establish the ongoing provision of remote services. This bill would require DDS to develop a list of regional center services eligible for remote delivery and develop implementation guidance for regional centers, including processes for authorization, billing, and documentation.

### **Related/Prior Legislation**

AB 162 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 47, Statutes of 2024) removed the sunset date for meetings regarding the provision of services and supports by a regional center, including an IPP meeting, to be held by remote electronic communications if requested by the consumer, or, if appropriate, by the consumer's parents, legal guardian, conservator, or authorized representative. The bill required a regional center to hold an in-person meeting or visit if a regional center has not held an in-person meeting or visit with a consumer in the previous 12 months.

AB 121 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 44, Statutes of 2023), a budget trailer bill, extended the sunset date for remote meetings regarding regional center services and supports until June 30, 2024.

SB 188 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 49, Statutes of 2022), a budget trailer bill, required DDS to develop a pilot project to test the feasibility of remote consumer services and supports that use technology solutions. The bill also added remote electronic communication as a flexibility option for tailored day services and extended the sunset date for remote meetings regarding regional center services and supports until June 30, 2023.

AB 136 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 76, Statutes of 2021), a budget trailer bill, authorized, remote meetings regarding regional center services and supports until June 30, 2022.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

**SUPPORT:** (Verified 4/20/26)

California Disability Services Association (Sponsor)

Adjoin

Alchemia

Arc Imperial Valley

Autism Speaks  
California Respite Association  
Care-rite Vocational Services INC  
Cedars  
College of Adaptive Arts  
Disability Rights California  
East Bay Legislative Coalition  
Hope Services  
Inalliance  
Jay Nolan Community Services  
Manos Home Care INC.  
Merakey  
Momentum  
Momentum Work INC.  
On My Own Independent Living Services  
Oparc  
Options for All  
Pathpoint  
Porterville Sheltered Workshop  
Scdd  
Simplyhome LLC  
The Arc Fresno Madera Counties  
Tri-county Respite Care Service  
Ukiah Valley Association for Habilitation

**OPPOSITION:** (Verified 4/20/26)

None received

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4/21/26 16:19:35

\*\*\*\* **END** \*\*\*\*