

FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

Supported Living Background

What is a consumer?

“Consumer” is the term used by advocates and self-advocates for the rights of people with developmental and mental health disabilities to refer to people with these kinds of disabilities. People use this term because, rather than labeling people by their diagnoses, it denotes that they access needed goods and services, as do any people in society, regardless of the scope of their abilities. At CLO, we often use this term because it is referenced in SLS regulations and is used and recognized by many different agencies and organizations. However, we believe that the people we support have as much to give as they “consume.” When it is possible, we like to simply call the people whom we support “people.”

1.2 What is the Lanterman Act?

The Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act, known as the Lanterman Act, was proposed by California Assemblyman Frank D. Lanterman in 1973 and passed in 1977. It laid the foundation of services for people in California experiencing developmental disabilities. It established the role of the 21 California Regional Centers. The Lanterman Act stipulates that people who manage developmental disabilities have the same legal rights and responsibilities guaranteed to all people and that they have the right to services and supports that enable them to live as independent and typical lives as possible.

1.3 What are Regional Centers?

The Regional Centers are private, non-profit organizations that contract with the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to fund and administer services to people with developmental disabilities. People who want to use Supported Living Services need to first be clients of a Regional Center. The Regional Center links each consumer with a service coordinator, who provides case management for the consumer and assists the person in finding and arranging services.

1.4 What services does a Supported Living agency provide? What services doesn't a Supported Living agency provide?

The services for each person are individually tailored to provide for his/her support needs. However, (Chapter 3 - Community Services, SubChapter 19 - Supported Living Service Article 2 - General Provisions) Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations describes the following services that SLS can include:

- Assessing consumers' needs
- Helping to find, modify, and maintain a home
- Supporting and training in social, behavioral, and daily living skills
- Helping to develop employment goals
- Providing 24-hour emergency response systems
- Recruiting, hiring, and training individuals to provide direct support
- Facilitating circles of support to develop unpaid and natural supports in the community
- Advocating for consumers and facilitating self-advocacy

1.5 What is Title 17?

Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations is the part of the regulations that contains the definition and description of Supported Living Services.

1.6 How is SLS funded?

A portion of the funding for SLS in California originates with the State of California General Fund. It is disbursed to the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and is disseminated to Supported Living agencies through Regional Centers. Additional funding from government programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medi-Cal and other sources can pay for a portion of consumers' living and medical expenses. A portion of the labor costs for many individuals using SLS is paid through hours provided by In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS). If a person with developmental disabilities is, for some reason, ineligible for services under a Regional Center or if a person chooses to use SLS separate from the Regional Center system, SLS can be funded through private pay.

1.7 What are Independent Living Services (ILS)?

Independent Living Services are provided to adults with developmental disabilities and offer functional skills training necessary to secure a self-sustaining, independent living situation in the community. They focus on functional skills training for adults who generally have acquired basic self-help skills or who, because of their physical disabilities, do not possess basic self-help abilities, but employ and supervise aides to assist them in meeting their personal needs. ILS is also a time-limited service; the intent is to train the person in certain basic skills, and then fade out the services.

1.8 What is the difference between ILS and SLS?

Independent Living Services (ILS) are typically used by adults who have some self-help skills but need help with some tasks. A person who uses ILS typically spends a great deal of time on his/her own without support.

1.9 Do I need to have ILS before I can receive SLS?

No, you do not need to have ILS (Independent Living Services) before you receive SLS. Also, CLO never requires or expects you to make a transition from SLS to ILS. There are no services you have to receive as a prerequisite for SLS.

1.10 Are Supported Living Arrangements licensed by the state?

Some people are concerned that SLS is not monitored through Community Care Licensing, and they fear the quality of the services would not be sufficiently monitored. However, SLS is not licensed because licensing applies to "facilities" or group settings. SLS is basically provided in the person's home and in the community. Regional Centers perform Quality Assurance monitoring, and many SLS agencies participate in peer reviews as well as self reviews. With Supported Living through CLO, quality standards are in place and services focus on the person, so Quality Assurance is monitored continuously, and services and supports are adjusted in an individualized way.

Supported Living and Me

2.1 Who is eligible for Supported Living Services?

An individual with a developmental disability ("consumer") who is 18 years of age or older, is a client of a Regional Center, and expresses, either directly or through an advocate, the desire to live in his/her own home. The first step toward receiving SLS is to indicate in the Individual Program Plan (see FAQ 3.10 -What is an IPP?) that an individual wants to live in his/her own home and receive SLS. An individual interested in SLS should contact his/her Regional Center service coordinator.

If an individual wishes to receive SLS independent from the Regional Center system, on a private pay basis, he/she should contact CLO.

2.2 Why does an individual have to be 18 to be eligible for SLS?

Eighteen is the age at which an individual can enter into a legally binding contract, such as a lease or a mortgage (See 3.2 "Whose name is on the lease... ?").

2.3 Can a person be "too disabled" to use Supported Living Services?

Absolutely not. By definition, Supported Living Services are designed to accommodate each individual's needs, regardless of the nature of developmental disability. In fact, the SLS regulations within Title 17 state that SLS agencies will provide a consumer "...with support available as often and for as long as it is needed."

2.4 How do I earn Supported Living Services?

SLS is not something you need to earn; it is not a reward for "good" behavior. There is no requirement to "be ready" for SLS by having certain skills.

2.5 What behavior would make me lose SLS?

CLO will not withdraw or threaten to withdraw SLS based solely on a person's "bad" behavior.

2.6 If SLS is all about individual choices, what happens if I make a "bad" choice?

In Supported Living through CLO, we honor a person's right to choose his/her personal lifestyle. We do not "punish" a person for making a certain choice. Ideally, SLS serves as a safety net to protect a person when he/she makes a choice that threatens his/her health or safety. If a person's health or safety is not threatened, we help him/her make an informed choice, illustrating what natural consequences will occur if a certain choice is made.

2.7 Will I be supported on nights, weekends, and holidays?

Yes. CLO provides Supported Living Services to people around the clock, every day, if that is what they need.

2.8 Who chooses the people who support me in SLS?

CLO seeks potential support staff based on each person's needs, personality, and lifestyle choices. However, you have the ultimate choice of who supports you. You participate in evaluating your support staff, and you have the power to hire and fire your support staff members. CLO staff members assist consumers throughout the interview and selection process.

2.9 What happens if my needs change while I am receiving Supported Living Services? If I need increased support, will I lose SLS?

By definition, Supported Living Services must be flexible and changeable based on a consumer's changing needs. In fact, CLO expects a person's needs to change and evolve as he/she grows, learns, and matures. If a person's changing needs mean CLO needs to provide increasing levels and types of support, we provide whatever support is needed. A consumer cannot be "too disabled" to receive SLS. Similarly, if a person gains new skills, CLO staff members adjust their manner of support accordingly.

2.10 Will I be as safe living with SLS as I would be in a group home or larger institution? Doesn't going out in the community make me vulnerable?

You will probably be safer living in a well-planned SLS arrangement. Supported Living Services are frequently delivered to one person at a time. Staff members are more able to focus their attention on individual needs rather than having to divide attention among members of a group. CLO employees are required to be highly trained and practiced in emergency procedures.

2.11 Will living in my own home, not surrounded by other consumers, make me lonely and disconnected?

On the contrary. To begin with, some consumers choose to have housemates, with or without disabilities. Encouraging community involvement, supporting a person's choices on how to be involved in the community, and widening each person's circle of support are vital parts of CLO's mission. It is our experience that people we support are far more connected and assertively involved in their communities than people living in congregate settings are able to be.

2.12 How will the quality of my support be monitored and maintained if I use SLS?

With SLS through CLO, Community Support Facilitators constantly, informally evaluate the quality of service. CLO also has formal evaluation tools in place, which take into account the consumer's satisfaction with his/her services. When a consumer is looking for an SLS agency, he/she should investigate the processes in place for evaluation of service.

Planning Supported Living Services

3.1 How does a person using SLS find a home?

Providing support in finding a home and funding to pay for rent or a mortgage is one of the first and most important services CLO provides people we support. CLO Co-CEOs Kathi Campbell and Joan Schmidt and their staff have extensive experience in finding affordable housing.

3.2 Whose name is on the lease or title/deed of the home in which a consumer using SLS lives?

The consumer's name. With SLS, the consumer chooses and controls his/her home.

3.3 Who assigns my housemates when I use SLS?

No one. Whether or not a consumer has housemates and who they are is a consumer's choice. A person's circle of support can assist him/her in finding housemates if he/she chooses.

3.4 What if I live with my family or in a group home where the cost was less than the cost for SLS?

If you are 18 or older, a client of a Regional Center and have a desire for SLS, you are eligible. Each person's situation is evaluated individually and negotiated with the Regional Center.

3.5 What if I do not communicate using words - how do you know what my choices are?

CLO relies on input from people who are closest to a consumer in his/her circle of support regarding choices, likes, dislikes, etc. As our staff members become more experienced supporting a person, they learn many non-verbal ways that he/she can communicate. Some

of the people who do not use words can use forms of communication called Augmentative Alternative Communication (ACC).

3.6 What is Augmentative and Alternative Communication?

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is an umbrella term for the various methods that assist people to communicate who are not able to speak or write. People who use AAC may have any number of different disabilities, both physical and developmental. AAC methods include devices with or without electronics that use the alphabet, symbols or pictures that a person selects in order to communicate. Some aids include speech generating devices (SGD) or Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs). One form of ACC used by several people CLO supports is Facilitated Communication (FC).

3.7 What is Facilitated Communication?

Many people who do not speak using words do so because of movement challenges, not lack of intelligence. Through Facilitated Communication (FC), a facilitator uses counter-pressure on a person's wrist, arm, or shoulder to help him/her control hand motion enough to type the thoughts that are not spoken. Although some people find FC controversial, many family members of people with disabilities, including CLO Co-CEOs Joan Schmidt and Kathi Campbell, have found that FC frees many people from the devastating isolation that lack of verbal communication creates. Many find that through FC, a person who was thought to have extremely low intelligence has a much higher level of intelligence than ever imagined and has a whole lifetime of stories to tell and feelings to share.

3.8 What is Person Centered Planning?

Person Centered Planning is a method of futures planning that places individuals being supported at the center of decision-making regarding their service provision. PCP enables people to direct their own services and supports, rather than attempting to fit them within pre-existing service systems. Commonly used methods to develop a person-centered plan include PATH (pdf) (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope), MAPS (Making Action Plans), PFP (Personal Futures Planning), and ELP (Essential Lifestyles Planning).

3.9 What is a "circle of support"?

A circle of support is made up of the people to whom a person feels the closest. They can include family, friends, and paid and unpaid people who provide support at home, at the place where a person spends his/her days, and in the community. All or some of the people in a person's circle of support are typically included in creating a plan using Person Centered Planning.

3.10 What is an IPP?

IPP stands for Individual Program Plan. An IPP is a contract made with a Regional Center to help a consumer live successfully in the community. Each consumer will have a planning team that includes the consumer, the Regional Center service coordinator, and the consumer's circle of support (see FAQ 3.9 - What is a circle of support?). The planning team uses Person Centered Planning to develop an IPP, taking into consideration a person's goals, objectives, and the services and supports needed to attain them.

3.11 What is an ISP?

An ISP (Individual Support Plan) is a plan that outlines the ways by which an SLS agency assists an individual to attain his/her personal goals, as defined in the person's IPP. An ISP helps an agency be accountable, on a daily basis, for helping a consumer to pursue his/her goals.