



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR BUDGET-RELATED ADVOCACY

These guiding principles are intended to support the California State Administration and Legislature in approaching Medicaid-related budget adjustments with a focus on equity, transparency, and the preservation of essential services. Drawn from SCDD's core values and the California Health and Human Services Agency's Guiding Principles, these principles create a framework for ethical decision-making that emphasizes the need to center the voices of people with developmental disabilities and their families, upholds California's longstanding commitment to community inclusion, and asserts the rights and well-being of individuals who rely on these services to fully participate in their communities. By grounding budget decisions in these principles, policymakers can navigate fiscal constraints while safeguarding the dignity, health, and opportunity of all Californians.

Promote Community Living

The core values for community living are in law and include independence, productivity, integration, inclusion, self-determination, protection, advocacy, and quality of life. Budget decisions must actively advance and uphold these values, ensuring that every action taken strengthens opportunities for full participation, equity, and dignity in community life.

Focus on Community Priorities

State budget and policy decisions should reflect the real needs and values of Californians with developmental disabilities and their families. Community priorities must be central in this process. SCDD has heard clearly from individuals with developmental disabilities, family members, and community partners about what matters most to them. These priorities include protecting and enhancing civil rights, guaranteeing access to education and employment, promoting access to quality supports in the community, ensuring safety in the community, and improving housing and community living. As policymakers work to navigate fiscal challenges and design responsive systems, grounding decisions in the lived experiences and expressed priorities of the disability community can help ensure equitable and effective outcomes.

Focus on Equity

Efforts to adjust budgets must confront systemic inequities, including but not limited to those related to race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and economic status. Equity must be centered at every stage. Barriers must be removed so



that every Californian has a fair chance to meet their needs and achieve their goals. A person's background, income level, or aspect of identity should not determine their health, safety, or life outcomes.

Actively Listen, Learn, and Understand

State agencies and departments must engage directly with individuals, families, and communities to better understand their needs and priorities. Agencies must proactively seek input by holding town halls, convening workgroups, and engaging advisory committees and other stakeholder bodies. Listening deeply and building collaboration into program design strengthens relationships and outcomes, advances self-determination, and ensures policies and services reflect the needs and priorities of the communities they serve.

Use Data to Drive Action and Mitigate Harm

Robust use of data is essential to identify community needs, measure program impact, and highlight opportunities for improvement. Agencies must integrate, interpret, and share data responsibly to produce actionable insights that drive informed decision-making. Data must also be used to monitor unintended consequences and mitigate potential harm, ensuring policies advance equity, improve outcomes, and support the well-being of all Californians.

See the Whole Person

Policymakers must recognize the full range of needs, preferences, and values of individuals and families. Cultural, economic, and social factors must be considered, and programs aligned or integrated across departments and with community partners to meet these needs. Person-centered approaches must replace siloed systems to honor dignity, support autonomy, and help people thrive.

Cultivate a Culture Of Innovation

Innovation must be pursued with intentionality, collaboration, and responsiveness to diverse and emerging needs. Agencies should design flexible, resilient systems by partnering across departments, engaging counties, collaborating with community-based organizations, and consulting with tribes. Creative solutions must be applied effectively to ensure programs meet the needs of all Californians.