

ARCA Standard – Notices of Action (NOAs)

Focus Area and Scope of this Standard

- This standard establishes consistent regional center practices for developing and issuing appropriate Notices of Action (NOAs) and Good Faith Belief Letters (GFBLs) that clearly communicate decisions regarding eligibility and services in a manner that supports understanding and upholds the due process rights of individuals and families.
- This standard applies to all regional center staff responsible for determining or communicating ineligibility for and denial, change, reduction, or termination of services under the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act and California Early Intervention Services Act.
- This standard does not apply to complaint processes governed by other specific procedures, such as Whistleblower complaints, or Individual Rights ([WIC §4731](#)) complaints.

Definitions of Words Used in this Standard

- Notice of Action (NOA): A written notice that informs an applicant for services or individual served, or their authorized representative, of a decision or proposed action regarding ineligibility for services or denial, change, reduction, or termination of services, as required under Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) §§4701–4710.
- Aid Paid Pending: The continuation of existing authorized services during the appeal process when an individual submits a timely appeal, ensuring no interruption of services takes place while a final decision is pending.
- Mutual Consent: An agreement between the individual (or representative) and the regional center that acknowledges understanding and acceptance of a proposed change, denial, or termination of a service.
- Good Faith Belief Letter (GFBL): A written notice sent within five (5) business days when the regional center believes the individual has agreed to a proposed action and there is mutual consent. It explains the facts supporting that belief, includes appeal information, must be provided in the individual’s preferred language, and should include plain language whenever practical.
- Plain Language: Communication that is clear, straightforward, and avoids complicated technical, legal or clinical words and jargon, ensuring that individuals and families can easily understand their rights and the regional center’s decisions.

Background/Why this is Important

- Notices of Action and Good Faith Belief Letters are critical to protecting the due process rights of individuals served by regional centers. The NOA and GFBL inform the person of what decision was made, why it was made, and how they can respond or appeal.
- This standard helps regional centers ensure that individuals understand:

- What action the regional center plans to take.
- Why that action is being taken.
- What the individual's rights are if they disagree.
- How to request help or legal representation during the appeal process.

Standard

- At times, regional centers may determine that requested eligibility or services, whether new or continuing, are not supported by existing law, regulations, or approved policies. These decisions must be clearly communicated to the individual and/or their appropriate representative to promote understanding of the decision and their option to express disagreement with the decision, and, if desired, to pursue an appeal.
- Service coordinators are encouraged to maintain regular communication with individuals and their families to ensure they are informed and supported throughout service discussions. Consistent and timely follow-up promotes transparency and helps prevent misunderstandings before a Notice of Action is required.
- Issuing a NOA is not the first step in the dispute resolution process. Regional centers are expected to engage in active, transparent dialogue with individuals and their families throughout service planning and when differences arise. Staff shall clearly explain what can be offered to meet the identified need, why certain requests may not be allowed, and how the individual can exercise their rights if they disagree.
- For eligibility decisions, a NOA must always be sent within five (5) business days of a finding of ineligibility. For service decisions, a Notice of Action (NOA) is required only when the individual or their family disagrees with the regional center's decision. When a Notice of Action is required, it must be sent within five (5) business days of the decision being made. When the individual or their family agrees with the regional center's service decision, the Regional Center must send a GFBL within five (5) business days. Each regional center shall send a Notice of Action (NOA) when:
 - A person is found ineligible for regional center services.
 - A service is denied, reduced, changed, or terminated without mutual consent.
 - An agreed-upon service in the IPP is altered without mutual consent.
- NOAs and GFBLs shall be written using plain, person-centered language that is respectful, neutral tone and avoids technical jargon or adversarial phrasing.
- When written in plain and culturally appropriate language, NOAs and GFBLs empower individuals and families to make informed decisions and ensure that communication barriers do not prevent access to appeal rights.
- The NOA shall be written in the individual's preferred language, and contain all required elements, including:
 - The decision and action the regional center intend to take
 - The reason(s) for the decision.
 - The facts, specific law, or policy supporting the decision (a copy of the cited law and/or policy should be included for ease of access that is highlighted to indicate which portion(s) of the law and/or policy informed the decision).

- The effective date of the proposed action
- A copy of appeal rights under [WIC §4710](#)
- The Appeal Request Form (DS 1821)
- Contact information for assistance or advocacy resources, including the Office of the Ombudsperson
- The NOA must be sent at least 30 days before the proposed action takes effect in the method preferred by the individual as indicated in their Individual Program Plan (IPP), in accordance with [Welfare and Institutions Code §4710\(a\)](#). When the regional center decides to deny the initiation of a requested service without mutual consent, the NOA must be sent within five (5) business days of that decision, as required by Welfare and Institutions Code §4710(b).

Related Legal Requirements

- [Welfare and Institutions Code §§4701–4715](#) – Due process, fair hearings, and notice requirements.
- [Welfare and Institutions Code §4502\(b\)](#) – Rights of individuals with developmental disabilities.
- [Title 17, California Code of Regulations §§50900–50964](#) – Hearing procedures, notice, and aid paid pending

Indicators of Performance

- Limited or infrequent concerns raised through the Welfare and Institutions Code section 4731 complaint process or future grievance process related to NOA or GFBL timeliness, content, clarity, language access, or compliance with legal requirements.
- Few formal complaints that directly suggest NOAs or GFBLs were unclear or difficult to understand.
- Procedures and templates that include all required elements of NOAs and GFBLs and that encourage staff to use plain language when writing them.

Range

- Minimum Expectation: NOAs and GFBLs meet all legal requirements for content and issuance.
- Average Expectation: NOAs and GFBLs are accurate, timely, and written in the individual’s preferred language.
- High Performance: NOAs and GFBLs demonstrate exceptional clarity and accessibility to support due process protections.

Resources Available

- DDS Lanterman Act Eligibility and Service Appeals Information Packet
- DDS Complaints and Appeals Process (May 2025 Presentation)
- Office of the Ombudsperson: ombudsperson@dds.ca.gov.
- Regional Center Collaboration: ARCA's Appeals Representatives Discipline Group is a resource for regional centers to share examples of NOA's and conduct peer reviews.
- RCs will ensure their service coordinators have access to necessary supervisory and/or legal consultation to support them in this area.

Example

- Following an updated assessment of the individual's needs, a regional center plans to reduce in-home respite hours from 40 to 30 per month. The family states that they do not agree with this decrease in service. A NOA is sent. The NOA clearly states:
 - The decision and effective date.
 - The reason: Based on updated assessment information indicating respite needs have decreased and the specific changes in need.
 - The law and specific policy, if applicable, supporting the decision (WIC §4512(b)).
 - Appeal instructions in English and Spanish, with contact information for assistance.
 - A respectful, plain-language tone that invites questions and ensures understanding

Date Adopted by ARCA Board of Directors: June 26, 2026