ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL CENTER AGENCIES
CLINICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEFINING "SUBSTANTIAL DISABILITY" FOR THE CALIFORNIA REGIONAL CENTERS

When determining Regional Center eligibility, consider the following guidelines when formulating an opinion as to whether or not an individual has a "substantial disability" across multiple settings in at least 3 or more areas of major life activities. The impairments described below must be caused by the eligible condition. Age and cultural norms should be considered for all areas, as well as legal guidelines set forth in Welfare and Institutions Code Section 4512, and California Code of Regulations Title 17, Sections 54000 and 54001.

SELF-CARE

Guidelines for selecting **Self-Care** as an area of substantial disability:

The individual has significant limitations in the ability to acquire and perform basic self-care skills.

Consider:

- Personal hygiene (e.g., toileting, washing and bathing, brushing teeth)
- Grooming (e.g., dressing, undressing, hair and nail care)
- Feeding (e.g., chewing and swallowing, eating, drinking, use of utensils)

RECEPTIVE AND EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

Guidelines for selecting **Receptive and Expressive Language** as an area of substantial disability:

The individual has significant limitations in both the comprehension and expression of verbal and/or nonverbal communication resulting in functional impairments.

Note: There must be impairment in receptive and expressive language to consider Receptive and Expressive Language to be an area of substantial disability.

Consider:

- Standardized measures of receptive and expressive language
- Receptive language includes:
  - Significant difficulty understanding a simple conversation
  - Needing information to be rephrased to a simpler level in order to enhance understanding
  - Significant difficulty following directions (not due to general noncompliance)
  - Significant difficulty understanding and interpreting nonverbal communication (e.g., gestures, facial expressions)

- Expressive language includes:
  - Significant difficulty communicating information
  - Significant difficulty participating in basic conversations (e.g., following rules for conversation and storytelling, tangential speech, fixation on specific topics)
  - Atypical speech patterns (e.g., jargon, idiosyncratic language, echolalia) significantly impair the individual's ability to communicate

LEARNING

Guidelines for selecting **Learning** as an area of substantial disability:

The individual must be substantially impaired in the ability to acquire and apply knowledge or skills to new situations even with special intervention.

Consider:

- General intellectual ability
- Academic achievement levels
- Retention (e.g., short and/or long-term memory)
- Reasoning (e.g., ability to grasp concepts, to perceive "cause and effect" relationships, ability to generalize information and skills from one situation to another)

MOBILITY

Guidelines for selecting **Mobility** as an area of substantial disability:

The individual has significant limitations with independent ambulation.

Note: Mobility does not refer to the ability to operate motor vehicles or use public transportation.

Consider:

- Needing crutches, walker, or wheelchair for mobility
- Gait abnormalities and/or coordination problems significantly interfere with mobility (e.g., unable to walk long distances due to fatigue from the significant effort involved in ambulating; difficulty negotiating stairs or uneven ground)

SELF-DIRECTION

Guidelines for selecting **Self-Direction** as an area of substantial disability:

The individual has significant impairment in the ability to make and apply personal and social judgments and decisions.

Consider:

- Emotional development (e.g., routinely has significant difficulty coping with fears, anxieties or frustrations; severe maladaptive behaviors, such as self-injurious behavior)
- Interpersonal relations (e.g., has significant difficulties establishing and maintaining relationships with family or peers; social immaturity; marked difficulty protecting self from exploitation)
- Personal judgement (e.g., significant difficulty in making appropriate choices, maintaining daily schedules, following medically prescribed treatments and diet)

CAPACITY FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

Guidelines for selecting **Capacity for Independent Living** as an area of substantial disability:

The individual is unable to perform age-appropriate independent living skills without the assistance of another person.

Consider:

- Significant difficulty performing age-appropriate, simple household tasks
- Significant difficulty managing multiple-step domestic activities (e.g., grocery shopping, meal planning and preparation, laundry, care and selection of clothing, home repair and maintenance)
- Does not have age-appropriate capacity to be left unsupervised (e.g., lack of safety awareness)
- Significant difficulty with money management (e.g., using bank accounts, making small purchases independently) and budgeting
- Significant difficulty taking the basic steps necessary to obtain appropriate health care (e.g., obtaining medication refills, obtaining medical attention when needed)

ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Guidelines for selecting **Economic Self-Sufficiency** as an area of substantial disability:

The individual lacks the capacity to participate in vocational training or to obtain and maintain employment without significant support.

Approved by the ARCA Board of Directors in August 15, 2013.