

North Los Angeles County Regional Center  
**Vendor Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
February 7, 2019

**Present:** Orli Almog, Deborah Cutter, Mariela Feldman, Cynthia Fernandez, Sharoll Jackson, Staci Jordan, Dana Kalek, Kristin Laurino, Don Lucas, Jenni Moran, Sonia Ojeda, and Nick Vukotic - Committee Members

Jennifer Kaiser, Ruth Janka, Arpi Arabian, Jesse Weller, Sheila Calove, Elisa Hill, Jenny Dao, Stephanie Margaret, Kim Rolfes, Venus Khorasani, Lisa Mayti, Lauren Morton, Sonia Chapman, Allyn Ortiz, Lisa Kimura, and Erin Broughton-Rodriguez

Sharon Weinberg, Rachel Thornally, Tina Castro, Diane Geary, Alona Yorkshire, Terrence Carson, Claire Moynihan, Victoria Berrey, Tania Bartolo, William Powe, Yanira Magana, Kevin Shields, Mary David, Olga Reyes, Breeanne Burns, Ricki Macken Chilvers, Jennifer Zimmerman, Scott Shepard, Linda Cobuzzi, Debra Dinielli, Darrell Bunch, Steve Miller, Cheryl Keene, Jon Francis, Hal Kirklin, Eduardo Lemus, Chelsea Rivera, Alisha Turner, Lisa Fisher, Brian Otchis, Rita Zelaya, Byron Robinson, Fred Rockwood, Leticia Leon, Maria Ortiz, Glynda Givens, Kristie Whalen, Cathy Carpenter, Nikisia Simmons, Erica Beall, Yolanda Bosch, Gabriela Rojo-Sanchez, Teresa Rathsam, Scott Cross, Laurie Cross, Kelly Weber, Monica Bhuyan, Karre Williams, Rebecca Holik, Uju Okeke, Saeda Farah, Christian Depaz, and Melissa Nishimoto - Guests

**Absent:** Suad Bisogno and Bob Erio

---

**I. Call to Order & Introductions**

Sharoll Jackson, VAC chair, called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. and introductions were made.

**II. Public Input**

Terence Carson, from Strategic Technology Solutions, announced that his company provides viable solutions to get service providers into HIPAA compliance and ongoing support to keep them up to date with any changes. His company is holding trainings on a monthly basis; the next one will be held Thursday, February 21<sup>st</sup>. They also provide train-the-trainer and online trainings. For more information on how to get your company in compliance with HIPAA regulations, Terence can be reached at [tcarson@hipaasap.com](mailto:tcarson@hipaasap.com) and his website is [getstarted.hipaasap.com](http://getstarted.hipaasap.com).

**III. Consent Items**

A. Approval of Agenda

Item VIII.A. was added to the agenda. Also, Venus Rodriguez will be giving the report under Item VII. for Evelyn McOmie.

**M/S/C** (J. Moran/M. Feldman) To approve the agenda as amended.

B. Approval of Minutes from the January 3<sup>rd</sup> VAC Meeting

**M/S/C** (J. Moran/M. Feldman) To approve the minutes as presented.

**IV. Executive Director's Report** (Ruth Janka for George Stevens)

A. Governor's Proposed Budget: The governor released the state's preliminary budget for fiscal year 2019-20. The total budget for developmental services is \$7.8 billion. The community services portion of the budget is \$7.4 billion; this is a 7.3% increase over the current fiscal year. The budget includes \$8.1 million for the reorganization of the Department of Developmental Services' (DDS's) headquarters in part for the purpose of increased oversight of both regional centers and providers as well as to enhance program compliance. DDS plans to add 54 new positions to include 7 monitoring teams. These teams will provide local technical support and assistance to regional centers and their boards, as well as monitor compliance with statute, regulation, and contract. The budget also includes funding for:

1. Community crisis homes for children
2. State minimum wage increases
3. Implementation of the uniform holiday schedule
4. 1:25 caseload ratio for consumers with complex needs
5. Enhanced monitoring of specialized homes
6. Compliance with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) final rule
7. Upgrade for DDS information/technology system

For current year, DDS projects a reversion of approximately \$74.4 million due, in large part, to overestimating minimum wage increases. The Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) is asking that these dollars be re-appropriated in FY 2019-20 to be used for purpose intended which is to increase wages.

B. Purchase of Service (POS) Disparity Proposals: Four of the center's service providers had their proposals to reduce POS disparity in services approved by DDS:

Service Provider	Project Title
Autism Society of Los Angeles	Cross-cultural independent facilitator trainings and ongoing support for the self-determination program.
Integrated Community Collaborative	Inter-Agency Coordinating Council community outreach.
Learning Rights Law Center	Training, information, and advocacy project.
PathPoint	Building cultural competency to support the underserved in central and southern California.

NLACRC also had 2 of its POS disparity proposals approved by DDS, the extension of the center’s Family Empowerment Team in Action (FETA) project and the center’s new parent mentor project.

The center will be holding 2 public meetings to present our POS expenditure data:

1. Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 p.m. (San Fernando Valley office)
2. Thursday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 p.m. (Antelope Valley office)

C. Self-Determination Program (SDP) Update: Preparations for the program’s implementation are underway. We have received all of the directives needed from DDS except the one for the home and community-based services (HCBS) settings. DDS is holding train-the-trainer meetings for regional center staff throughout the state. Our staff will be attending the trainings on February 25<sup>th</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup>. The center is also in the process of hiring specialists and a resource developer for the SDP, as well as making preparations to vendor financial management service providers. We are still accepting names of consumers interested in participating in the program but in order to be eligible, they need to attend one of the center’s SDP informational meetings which are held on a monthly basis. Also, the NLACRC/State Council Local Advisory Committee continues to meet on a monthly basis at 1 of the center’s 3 offices; their next meeting will be held Thursday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. here at our Chatsworth office. These meeting are open to the public and the agendas and minutes for them are posted on the center’s website.

D. Legislative Advocacy (reported by Steve Miller, one of the center’s legislative educators): Copies of a legislative update were provided. Highlights included:

1. Legislators know who we are and what are issues are. Two days ago, Assembly Members Jim Frazier and Chris Holden sent a letter to the

senate and assembly budget chairs to support an immediate investment to protect services for Californians with intellectual and developmental disabilities, with an 8% across-the-board increase in provider reimbursement rates with federal matching funds.

2. Grassroots meetings with our local legislators are being held and have been successful in large part due to the participation of the provider community. We are making them well aware of our need for rate reform as we move toward the release of the Burns & Associates rate study being released in March.
  3. Budget hearings are scheduled for March 6<sup>th</sup> and May 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  4. We are planning a town hall meeting in collaboration with Assembly Member Adrin Nazarian to be held sometime in April. **We need to get as many people to this town hall as possible: families, consumers, staff, friends, colleagues, etc. Our goal is to have 1,000 people there!**
  5. Service provider representatives will be participating in the Association of Regional Center Agencies' (ARCA's) annual grassroots visits with legislators at the State Capitol along with NLACRC staff, board members, and consumers. The service providers participating are Sharoll Jackson, Orli Almog, and Rebecca Lienhard.
  6. The center's 31<sup>st</sup> annual Festival Educacional – an annual training for our Spanish-speaking families. This was an amazing event with about 180 participants. The legislative educators put together a survey and offered raffle prizes to those who returned a completed survey; 88 surveys were completed. The information from the surveys will be used to understand how to better serve and help our families who speak only Spanish.
  7. Organized 2 legislative academies, one in English on February 23<sup>rd</sup> and another in Spanish on March 9<sup>th</sup>.
  8. Senator Toni Atkins will be the honored guest at San Diego Regional Center's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.
- E. Behavioral Health Treatment: Dr. Arpi Arabian reported that we are about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way done transitioning consumers with behavioral health needs to a managed care plan. Please contact Dr. Arabian with any questions at [AArabian@nlacrc.org](mailto:AArabian@nlacrc.org).

F. Other Updates:

1. Burns & Associates' Rate Study: Expected on March 1<sup>st</sup>.
2. Bridge Funding: Pending federal approval for matching federal funding.
3. HCBS Proposals: Fifteen proposals have been submitted to DDS and are pending approval.

V. **Deputy Director's Report** (Ruth Janka)

A. New Manager of Transition, Community Placement Plan, and Risk Management: Megan Mitchell, was recently promoted to this new position. Megan has worked at the center for many years as our forensic judicial specialist. She is well known in her field and has an amazing reputation at court with the attorneys and judges. We feel very fortunate to have her on our staff and as part of our management team.

B. Community Coffees: Ruth has been holding community coffees to provide interested community members with an opportunity to meet with her, ask her any questions, or inform her of any issues. These coffee events have been held at various locations in all 3 valleys each month. Unfortunately, attendance has been dropping off. Ruth offered service providers the opportunity to host a community coffee with their consumers and families in attendance; she could show up and have a dialogue with them. We also want to talk with them about our system and how they can take a role in helping to preserve it.

**Action:** Any service providers interested in hosting a community coffee event should contact Ruth's assistant Sandra Rizo at [srizo@nlacrc.org](mailto:srizo@nlacrc.org).

C. Floater Positions: The center is filling new "floater" positions; the staff in these positions will cover uncovered caseloads.

D. Transformation to Competitive Employment Act: On January 31<sup>st</sup>, Representative Bobby Scott, Senator Bob Casey, and Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers introduced the Transformation to Competitive Employment Act. This Act would provide states, service providers, subminimum wage certificate holders, and other agencies with the resources to help workers with disabilities transition into competitive, integrated employment. The Act is legislation designed to "strengthen and enhance the disability employment service delivery systems throughout states" while subminimum wages, which are currently allowed under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, are phased out over a 6-year period. Currently, under Section 14(c), employers that obtain a certificate are permitted to hire individuals with disabilities at less than

minimum wage. The Act would include some grant money to assist states and certificate holders in transforming their organizations. Jenni Moran and other service providers present opposed the Act because those consumers who work at a “productivity-related wage” are working to their capacity and would not be able to work at all if the subminimum wages were phased out. In addition, aging consumers are not able to work as fast as they once did.

**Action:** The VAC will discuss the Transformation to Competitive Employment Act at next month’s VAC and will come up with a position on it to present to the NLACRC Board of Trustees.

## VI. Chief Financial Officer’s Report (Kim Rolfes)

- A. Keolis Transportation: Kim reported that the depressed rates have resulted in many service providers experiencing issues with recruiting and retaining staff and attracting staff with the appropriate skills, education, and training to support and serve consumers. Recently Keolis has been experiencing challenges retaining drivers because their drivers can seek higher wages with other companies, which has impacted transportation services to consumers and programs. Kim asked Brian Otchis, general manager of Keolis, to speak to the group about their driver shortage and the steps they are taking to attract and recruit drivers. Brian addressed the group and provided them with copies of a “draft” letter that Keolis intended to share with consumers and their families and programs. Brian reported that if any service providers had questions, they should contact him directly at (818) 720-6998.
- B. Electronic Visit Verification: As reported in previous VAC meetings, EVV is a telephone and computer-based system that electronically verifies service visits; all states must implement EVV for Medicaid-funded personal care services by January 2020 and home health care services by January 2023. Under the act, an EVV system must verify the following service components:
1. Type of service performed
  2. Individual receiving the service
  3. Date of the service
  4. Location of service delivery
  5. Individual providing the services

DDS and other departments, including the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), will be holding stakeholder meetings to involve consumers and their family members, service providers, and the regional centers in discussing options for EVV implementation. They are hoping to delay the implementation of this until January 2024. For more information you can visit DHCS’s website at [dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Pages/EVVMeetings.aspx](https://dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Pages/EVVMeetings.aspx). Kim reported that

information will be collecting through an online web portal that can be used on any device with internet access or via telephone (landline or mobile). In the future, a mobile phone application will also be considered. One of the providers present asked Kim if there will be funding for purchasing the mobile devices or reimbursing staff for the use of mobile device to provide this information electronically?

**Action:** Kim will contact DDS to get an answer to this question and report back at next month's VAC meeting.

- C. Mileage Reimbursement Rate Increase: The IRS increased their mileage reimbursement rate from 54.5 cents/mile to 58 cents/mile effective January 1, 2019. Our accounting department is in the process of updating our claim forms to reflect the new rate.
- D. NLACRC Financial Report: The center's operations budget for FY 2018-19 is just under \$51.8 million and the purchase of service (POS) budget is just over \$429 million, which brings our total budget to nearly \$481 million (nearly half a billion dollars!) at this point. We are projecting a POS deficit of about \$33.4 million – the highest POS deficit in the state.
- E. FY 2016-17: DDS closed FY 2016-17 yesterday so no more late bills from that fiscal Year may be processed for payment.

## VII. Community Services Report (Venus Rodriguez for Evelyn McOmie)

- A. Requests for Proposals (RFPs): The center is going to be developing a 4-bed deflection home and 2 4-bed homes for consumers with severe behavioral and mental health needs. RFPs for our community resource development plans and community placement plans will be going out shortly and will be posted on our website and sent out via an email blast.
- B. New Employment Specialist: Venus introduced Lauren Morton who has been hired as the center's new employment specialist. She can be reached at [LMorton@nlacrc.org](mailto:LMorton@nlacrc.org).
- C. Gas Company Workshop: The center is bringing a Southern CA Gas Company workshop that will offer information on eligibility, how to apply, and qualifications for the California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) program. Supported and independent living providers are encouraged to attend. The workshop will be held from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Friday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, at the center's Chatsworth office. For more information, please contact Sonja Chapman at [SChapman@nlacrc.org](mailto:SChapman@nlacrc.org).

- D. CMS Final Rule: The center will be providing training and technical assistance to help our providers come into compliance with the CMS final rule. Information about the trainings will be posted on our website and sent out via an email blast.
- E. Continued Education Classes: Our continued education classes calendar will be coming out shortly.
- F. Quarterly Vendor Newsletter: The center's quarterly vendor newsletters go out in February, May, August, and November.
- G. Residential Service Orientation (RSO): The next RSO will be held Monday, February 25<sup>th</sup>; the registration deadline is Wednesday, February 20<sup>th</sup>. For more information or to register, please go to our website.

### VIII. Committee Business

- A. Paid Internship Program/Competitive Integrated Employment: Copies of the FY 2018-19 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter report were provided and reflected the following information:

- 1. Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)

- a. 51 consumers approved for the program
- b. 10 service providers approved for the program
- c. 21 incentive payments made in FY 2017-18
- d. 10 incentive payments made in FY 2018-19

CIE incentive funds are paid to service providers after 30 days, 6 months, and 12 months of continuous employment of a consumer.

- 2. Paid Internship Program (PIP)

- a. 25 consumers approved for the program
- b. 10 service providers approved for the program
- c. 2 incentive payments made in FY 2017-18
- d. 1 incentive payment made in FY 2018-19

PIP incentive payments reimburse service providers or employers up to \$10,400 per year of wages and benefits for each consumer placed in an internship.

In order for a consumer to pursue either of these programs, they must have CIE or PIP identified on their individualized program plan as a goal.



**IX. Agenda Items for the Next Board Meeting**

The following items were identified for the VAC's section of the February 13<sup>th</sup> board meeting agenda:

- A. Minutes of the January 3<sup>rd</sup> VAC Meeting
- B. Minutes of the February 7<sup>th</sup> VAC Meeting

**X. Announcements/Public Input**

- A. Next Meeting: Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup> (full meeting)

**XI. Committee Work** (The committee breaks into their workgroups)

- A. Early Start Services (Dana Kalek)
- B. School Age Services (Mariela Feldman)
- C. Adult Services (Jenni Moran)
- D. Implementation of Legislative Changes (Sharoll Jackson)

**XII. Adjournment**

Sharoll adjourned the meeting at 11:03 a.m. and the VAC workgroups convened.

Submitted by,

*Jennifer Kaiser*

Jennifer Kaiser  
Executive Assistant

[vacmin.Feb7.2019]

