

North Los Angeles County Regional Center  
**Vendor Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

June 4, 2020

**Present:** Orli Almog, Erica Beall, Suad Bisogno, Catherine Carpenter, Bob Erio, Mariela Feldman, Cynthia Fernandez, Sharoll Jackson, Dana Kalek, Ken Lane, Don Lucas, Jenni Moran, Sonia Ojeda, Kevin Shields, and Nick Vukotic - Committee Members

Approximately 150 service providers participated in the call in addition to the VAC members

Gabriela Eshrati, Elisa Hill, Lisa Mayti, Ruth Janka, Kim Rolfes, Jesse Weller, Maria Bosch, Royce Remelius, Arsho Garlanian, Erin Broughton-Rodriguez, Steve Johnson, Emmanuel Gutierrez, Cristina Preuss, Nancy Salyers, and Amy Gandin – NLACRC Staff

**Absent:** All present

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**I. Call to Order**

Sharoll Jackson, VAC chair, called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. She thanked everyone for participating in today's Zoom call and shared the sentiment that all lives matter.

**II. Public Input** - There was no public input.

**III. Consent Items**

A. Approval of Revised Agenda

**M/S/C** (O. Almog/J. Moran) To approve the revised agenda as presented.

B. Approval of Minutes from the May 7<sup>th</sup> VAC Meeting

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

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

A. HEROES Act

A \$3 trillion dollar relief bill passed the house. If passed, it would prevent millions of dollars of cuts in California's developmental disabilities services system.

B. May Revise

1. Proposed Funding Increases Withdrawn
  - a. Performance Incentive Program for regional centers
  - b. Enhanced caseload ratio for children ages 3-5
  - c. Treatment Assessment RT Training to benefit dually-diagnosed individuals
  - d. Provider rate increases for Early Start (Service Code 117), Infant Development (805), and ILS (520)
  
2. Proposed Cuts (Cuts will not happen if the federal government provides additional money to California by July 1<sup>st</sup>)
  - a. Cost-sharing for higher-income families (AFPF based on family income)
  - b. \$300 million (General Fund) in provider rate cuts, and expenditure and utilization reviews
  - c. \$30 million (General Fund) in cuts to regional center operations, increased to \$55 million in the 2021-22 fiscal year
  - d. Uniform Holiday Schedule (a series of mandatory closure days)
  
3. Points of note outside the developmental services system are as follows
  - a. The cutting of Medi-Cal benefits such as podiatry, speech therapy, and others. The removal of adult dental benefits that had been restored since 2014 is also proposed.
  - b. Gov. Newsom spoke about the importance of protecting special education, stating that a January proposal to provide \$645 per pupil will be preserved.
  - c. The minimum wage increases will remain in place.
  - d. A 5% cut to nearly all departments' operations, to start July 1, 2021, through various efficiencies.
  - e. A push to increase telework in state government where possible.
  - f. A 10% cut to state employee pay starting July, 2020, to be done through collective bargaining. This cut will be cancelled if federal funds are provided.
  
4. Proposed Trailer Bill Language
  - a. [Self-Determination Program Legislative Report Extension \(updated: 05/14/2020\)](#)
  - b. [Implement Uniform Holiday Schedule \(updated: 05/14/2020\)](#)
  - c. [Reducing Regional Center Operations \(updated: 05/14/2020\)](#)
  - d. [Maximizing Federal Financial Participation: Remote and Teleservices \(updated: 05/14/2020\)](#)

- e. [Maximizing Federal Financial Participation: Medi-Cal Enrollment \(updated: 05/14/2020\)](#)

C. Governor's Office – Reopening California Stage 2: May 8, 2020

On Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, we entered early Stage 2 of the reopening. Lower risk businesses such as retail (bookstores, florists, sporting goods stores, etc.) are open for curbside pick-up. Does not include offices, seated dining at restaurants, shopping malls, or schools. The state is working with school districts to determine how best and safely to reopen. Counties can choose to continue more restrictive measures in place based on their local conditions. State expects some counties to keep their more robust stay at home orders in place beyond May 8<sup>th</sup>. Counties can move more quickly through Stage 2 if they attest that they meet the state's readiness criteria. Counties must create and submit a readiness plan which the state will make publicly available.

D. Governor's Office –Executive Orders

1. Vote-by-Mail Ballots: Required for all registered voters for the November 3<sup>rd</sup> General Election.
2. Child Care Funding: The administration has created an additional 20,000 limited-term child care slots for lower-income families and launched a new portal to help connect parents with 28,611 local child care options.
3. Expanded California's Farm to Family Program:<sup>1</sup> Farm to Family partners with 41 food banks serving all 58 counties and handles the logistics of packaging the food and communicating with food banks. Distributed 14.5 million pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables in March, 18 million pounds of food in the first 3 weeks of April; targeted to donate 21 million pounds in May.
4. Expanded CalFresh Benefits: Participation in CalFresh increased by 140%; recipients will receive the maximum benefits for the month of May.
5. Expanded Emergency Benefits Transfer (EBT) Program: Families with children eligible for free or reduced price meals are eligible to receive additional support thanks to the Pandemic Emergency Benefits

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<sup>1</sup> California's Farm to Family program is a partnership between the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the California Association of Food Banks to facilitate food donations from farmers and ranchers by supporting food production, processing and distribution of the food supply chain.

Transfer Program (P-EBT). California's Department of Social Services has identified roughly 3.8 million children who could qualify, and each eligible child could receive up to a total of \$365 in P-EBT benefits. Also, EBT recipients can now order online from Amazon and Wal-Mart.

6. Workers Compensation for Workers who Contract COVID-19 While on the Job: The Governor signed an [executive order](#) that creates a time-limited rebuttable presumption that a worker contracted COVID-19 while on the job.

E. Assembly Budget Subcommittee 1 Hearing – May 4, 2020

Nancy Bargmann, the director of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) reviewed all of the actions taken in response to COVID-19 to continue to serve consumers and families. During the question and answer session, she was asked how regional centers were doing. She reported that initially the technology needed to shift to remote work and services was a challenge. Ongoing concerns for our system include eligibility assessments, supporting providers and families, and longer-term service provision.

F. DDS Directives

1. [Extension of Waivers, Modifications and Directives due to COVID-19](#) (May 8, 2020)
2. [Additional Guidance on Payments for Non-Residential Services](#) (May 7, 2020)
3. [Regional Center Messaging to Local Communities during COVID-19 Outbreak](#) (May 1, 2020)
4. [COVID-19 Resources for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#) (May 1, 2020)
5. [Reporting Deaths Related To COVID-19 in SANDIS](#) (April 16, 2020)
6. [Training Resources for Residential Service Providers Hiring Direct Support Professionals](#) (April 16, 2020)
7. [Residential Facility Payments and Rates, Vendor Audits, HCBS Info, RBT Certification, CIE and Parental Fees](#) (April 15, 2020)

G. Surge Capacity

Six community care facilities (2 in the San Fernando Valley and 4 in the Antelope Valley) will provide 24 private rooms to care for individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. Additional surge capacity through use of Motel 6 has been denied by DDS due to NLACRC having adequate capacity and the cost of the contract. (NLACRC was competing with Project Room Key for the capacity which likely drove up the cost.)

H. Legislation

All legislative priorities previously identified are not considered viable at this point due to the current fiscal condition of the state. NLACRC will continue to monitor proposed legislation as we enter the next fiscal year.

I. Bridge Funding

The 2.1% rate increase authorized in the FY 2018-19 state budget for community-based day programs, in-home respite agencies, and community care facilities operating in high cost counties expired April 30, 2020 and thus rates reverted back effective May 1, 2020.

J. HCBS Compliance Concepts Approved

Nine NLACRC service providers selected; final approval requires development of a contract agreement to implement the project. Contract may not exceed total amount approved by DDS and must be finalized by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Concepts include funding staff to increase participation in competitive and integrated employment, increased individualized participation in the community, and staff train-the-trainer certification in person-centered planning.

V. **Community Services Director's Report** (Evelyn McOmie)

A. Announcements:

1. Day Program Evaluations: Are due September 30<sup>th</sup>; reminders will be sent out later this month.
2. SB 81 Rate Increase Letters: 389 are done and 21 are pending.
  - 79% 389 Completed with Accounting
  - 4% 21 Not yet sent to provider (pending DDS)

- 1%      5      Recently Returned from Provider
- 15%     75     Sent to Provider yet to sign
- 100%   490   Total

3. DDS Security & Privacy Training: Will be held August 24<sup>th</sup>; invites will be sent.
4. Special Incident Training for Providers: Will be coming shortly email announcement will go out.
5. CIE & PIP: please continue to provide Lauren Morton with your updates.
6. Special Incident Training for Providers:
7. CIE & PIP: Please continue to provide Lauren Morton with your updates.
8. Update on Health and Safety Waiver Exemption Submissions

For those service providers who are facing financial hardships due to inadequate rates, they can submit a health and safety waiver through the center to DDS requesting a higher rate. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, 85 health and safety waivers were submitted with the following results: 62 requests were approved, 20 were denied, and 3 were withdrawn.

**V. Deputy Director/Chief Financial Officer's Report (Kim Rolfes)**

A. Fun Fact

Kim reported that the top 3 statewide FY 2018-19 purchase of service (POS) expenditures were: 1) residential facility service adults-staff-operated (17%); 2) supported living services (14%); and 3) specialized residential facility-DSS licensed (10%).

B. Absence Billing

Kim reported that on May 7<sup>th</sup>, DDS issued additional guidance regarding absence billing. The guidance by DDS established that service providers maintain records of the calculation used to determine the number of average absences. Additionally, the guidance established that DDS expected service

providers to reduce their April 2020 absence billing commensurate with any reduction in service provider payroll due to employee layoffs and furlough days. Further, the guidance established that DDS expected service providers to reduce their May 2020 absence billing by any available payroll loan forgiveness or reimbursement programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), Economic Injury Disaster Loan Emergency Advance Program, or any other similar federal or state programs the service provider qualifies. Kim reported that NLACRC is aware that service providers have raised concerns regarding the practical implementation of the DDS guidance on absence billing and NLACRC understands that DDS intends to provide further guidance as it relates to the issues brought forward by service providers. However, Kim reported that it was unknown at this time when the additional guidance would be provided by DDS around the various issues and concerns brought forward. Kim reported that given the issues raised, service providers may consider 2 options on how to proceed with absence billing:

1. While we wait for additional guidance from DDS, service providers may continue to bill for absences as performed in the past, but this could result in an overpayment that service providers would need to reimburse NLACRC.
2. Service providers may implement the DDS guidance on absence billing immediately.

Kim reported that is imperative that all service providers document and maintain records regarding their absence billing.

**Action:** As soon as Kim receives guidance from DDS on absence billing, NLACRC will hold a Zoom meeting with service providers to share it with them.

C. Rollover

The e-billing system will be down on June 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, so we can produce authorizations for FY 2020-21.

D. Data Protection

The amount of phishing attacks has increased exponentially since the COVID-19 outbreak. There have been 16 times more phishing attacks made from January to March. Please reinforce data protection with your staff.

E. NLACRC's Financial Report

The center's operations budget for FY 2019-20 is \$55,978,293 and the purchase of service (POS) budget is \$499,080,326 for a total budget of \$555,058,619. We are projecting a deficit in our POS budget of \$4,814,970 (an increase of almost \$2 million since last month's report). Our POS deficit has doubled in the last month as a direct result of increased services needed by consumers and families due to the stay at home order.

F. Statewide Regional Center Budgets

Sixteen of the 21 regional centers are projecting a potential POS deficit for this fiscal year (including NLACRC), while the other 5 centers are projecting POS surpluses; NLACRC is pretty much in the middle of the pack. Statewide, the regional center system is projecting a POS deficit of just over \$79 million.

G. NLACRC's Audited Financial Statement & Tax Return

NLACRC's FY 2018-19 audited financial statements and year 2018 tax returns have been approved by our board and posted on our website.

H. Upcoming Audits:

1. DDS Medicaid Waiver Audit: August 2020
2. Windes Financial Audit: October 2020

I. Additional Check Runs

The center is providing additional POS check runs for service providers due to the COVID-19 situation on June 18<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.

J. 2.1% Bridge Funding

The 2.1% bridge funding sunset on April 30<sup>th</sup>.

**VI. Chief of Program Services Report (Jesse Weller)**

A. Self-Determination Program (SDP)

We currently have 168 eligible participants and 9 active participants out of 168 consumers selected for SDP. We have recruited 3 SDP specialists (2 assigned



to the San Fernando Valley office, one in Santa Clarita, and are in recruitment for a specialist in the Antelope Valley office) and a SDP supervisor is located in the San Fernando Valley office. Informational meetings, orientations, and local advisory committee meetings are held virtually on a monthly basis. SDP Implementation funds just over \$100,000 have been made available to support the implementation of the SDP; the local advisory committee will be reviewing the options for the use of these funds and making a recommendation to the center.

B. AB 2083

This bill is having various counties partner with their local agencies to support foster youth. The AB 2083 LA County group meets weekly and is working to develop a memorandum of understanding to identify the roles and responsibilities of each group.

C. Family Support Groups

The Family Focus Resource Center continues to help us facilitate support groups including Cultivar y Crecer, Parents of Adult Consumers, and the Filipino Support Group. Cafecito, Aprendiendo, and Grupo de Hombres virtually through Zoom.

D. Intakes

The center is still fully operational although most staff are off site and working virtually. We are still accepting new applications for services.

E. Residential Placements

At this time, all residential placements must be approved by DDS.

F. CalFresh

The Family Focus Resource Centers continue to work with consumers and families through the application process so they can receive CalFresh benefits.

G. Retirement

Sheila Calove, one of our consumer services director, has retired after 20 years with the center. We wish her well in her next journey. Until her position is filled, you can contact Gabby Eshrati for assistance.

### **VIII. Progress Reports from Service Provider “Return to Work” Groups**

The center has scheduled meetings with service providers, by service type, to collaborate on plans to resume service delivery in the community:

#### **A. Early Start**

Chair: Dana Kalek

Staff Supports: Elisa Hill, Cathy Robinson-Learn, and Arsho Garlanian

The Early Start workgroup had over 60 Early Start providers participated in the initial Zoom meeting. This work group is obtaining feedback/data from parents, service providers and service coordinators regarding ongoing tele-therapy services. They have also collected research regarding tele-therapy. They are discussing a plan for returning to face to face services and what is needed to prepare. They discussed the IFSP verbiage requested to be included on all IFSPs regarding measures that service providers may take regarding health and safety as well as service delivery, which is pending. In each meeting, service providers report what they have been doing in order to begin the face to face service delivery in home or in clinic. They review potential solutions to barriers, such as maintaining staff employment, liability issues regarding exposure, consistency among vendors regarding minimum requirements for health and safety, and providing therapy through a mask. Parent testimonials have been collected regarding the positive aspects of tele-therapy. Next Zoom meeting: Tuesday, July 16<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m.

#### **B. Site-Based Day Programs/Community-Based Programs**

Chair: Bob Erio

Staff Supports: Steve Johnson, Sheila Gavriloof, Royce Remelius, and Venus Rodriguez-Khorasani

The initial meeting was held May 28<sup>th</sup>; the next meeting will be held June 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m.

#### **C. Independent and Supported Living Services**

Chair: Kevin Shields (Build Rehabilitation); Co-Chair: Andrea Devers (PCS)

Staff Supports: Maria Bosch, Geri Sue Cox, Marine Topushyan, Lisa Mayti, Royce Remelius, and Sonya Chapman

The first work group meeting is scheduled to be held June 11<sup>th</sup>; the second meeting is scheduled for June 25<sup>th</sup>. Established communication means for group to send ideas to the chair and co-chair.

D. Individualized Services

Chair: Dr. Bruce Gale

Staff Supports: Chantelle Crown, Liz Campos, and Arsho Garlanian

Dr. Gale shared his survey with everyone; it is short and can be completed within 10 minutes. The purpose of the survey is to collect data for review and interpretation to determine the implications and actual needs re: the areas listed below and to guide/support future planning for moving forward. To have data to support to the narrative.

1. Vendors: type of services provided; most important needs at this time based on the services they are providing.
2. Telehealth Services: advocating; short and long term solutions, guidelines, and timelines.
3. Standards for working with individual consumers based on the guidelines and directives from DDS/State/Federal and other guidelines in reference to COVID-19 and return to work safety.
4. Some additional things vendors highlighted as important and would like to address through the support of this workgroup, as applicable/appropriate:
  - Stricter requirements for serving consumers that are more vulnerable in congregate settings such as assisted living, nursing homes and group homes.
  - How will possible budget cuts affect a provider's ability to return to the field or continue providing services?
  - What is the liability for the vendors if a consumer is infected due to staff having been exposed to the coronavirus?
  - Maybe this group can also request LA County or City of LA to provide PPEs at cost similar to AV.
  - How do we address the issue of employees who do not have child care to come back to work?
  - What is the estimate for small offices or large offices for PPE supplies on a weekly basis (masks, gloves, sanitizer, wipes, spray)?

E. Residential Services

Chairs: Tatiana Winter and Wilda White

Staff Supports: Steve Johnson, Gabby Eshrati, Sheila Gavriloof, and Venus Rodriguez-Khorasani

Wilda White reported that the group is looking at effective ways to communicate with consumers, families, and other stakeholders to transition consumers into employment and day programs; training will be needed. We need to have consistent communication with DDS, CDC, and regional center so all residential facilities have uniform information; right now, residential providers are doing whatever they can.

**Action:** After discussion the VAC would like to have the site-based day programs and community-based programs split into 2 separate groups. Suad Bisogno volunteered to serve as the chair of the community-based program group.

**IX. Legislative Educators' Report** (Michelle Heid/Raquel Armendariz)

Copies of their written report were sent out. The report included:

- A. A legislative update
- B. A state budget update
- C. Highlights of the Governor's May Revise
- D. The legislature's version of the budget released on June 3<sup>rd</sup>
- E. The need for everyone to advocate to protect services and supports by contacting our federal representatives.
- F. The legislative calendar
- G. DDS's COVID-19 related directives
- H. Pending bills (due to the current health crisis, most bills have stalled)
- I. Guidance on support for people with disabilities while hospitalized
- J. 25<sup>th</sup> congressional district special election
- K. Federal bills issued in response to COVID-19
- L. Upcoming events

**X. Committee Business**

- A. Election of Sharoll Jackson to serve as FY 2020-21 VAC Chair

Sharoll Jackson was the only VAC member nominated to serve as chair at last month's VAC meeting.

**M/S/C** (J. Moran/B. Erio) To re-elect Sharoll Jackson to serve as VAC chair for another year.

B. Update on Employment Committee (Suad Bisogno)

The committee has invited a representative from the Department of Rehabilitation to begin participating in their meetings. If you would like to join the Employment Committee, please contact Suad at Suad@irioc.org

C. Update on Developmental Services Task Force Meetings (Erica Beall)

Erica reported that these task force meetings are currently on hold.

**XI. Reports from the VAC Priority Issue Work Groups**

- A. Early Start Services (Dana Kalek)
- B. School Age Services (Mariela Feldman) – *No Report*
- C. Adult Services (Jenni Moran) – *No Report*
- D. Implementation of Legislative Changes (Sharoll Jackson)

Right now these break out groups are on hold; providers are participating in the return to work groups instead (see Item VIII. Above).

**XII. Report on Board Committee Meetings**

- A. Administrative Affairs (Kevin Shields)
- B. Board of Trustees (Sharoll Jackson)
- C. Consumer Services (Orli Almog)
- D. Government & Community Relations (Orli Almog)
- E. Nominating (Cathy Carpenter)
- F. Strategic Planning (Erica Beall/Nick Vukotic)

The VAC representatives listed gave reports on the meetings they attended. For further information please go to NLACRC's website where all of the approved meeting minutes are posted under the "Governance/ Board of Trustees/Approved Meeting Minutes" tab.

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

The following items were identified for the VAC's section of the June 10<sup>th</sup> board meeting agenda:

- A. Minutes of the May 7<sup>th</sup> VAC Meeting
- B. Minutes of the June 4<sup>th</sup> VAC Meeting
- C. Sharoll Jackson Re-Elected as FY 2020-21 VAC Chair

#### **XIV. Announcements/Public Input**

- A. Next Meeting: Thursday, August 6<sup>th</sup>, at 9:30 a.m. (no July meeting)

#### **XV. Adjournment**

Sharoll adjourned the meeting at 12:09 p.m.

Submitted by,

*Jennifer Kaiser*

Jennifer Kaiser  
Executive Assistant

[vacmin.jun4.2020]

