

North Los Angeles County Regional Center
Vendor Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

October 5, 2023

Present: Suad Bisogno, Daniel Ortiz, Bahai Macurshin, Alex Kopilevich, Cathy Carpenter, Masood Babaeian, Cal Enriquez, Dana Kalek, Erica Beall, Jodie Agnew-Navarro, Jacqueline, Octavia, Sharon – **Committee Members**

Ruth Janka, Liliana Windover, Vini Montague, Evelyn McOmie, Gabby Eshrati, Kimberly Visoki, Myra Alvarado, Migali, Fernanda, Kimberly Johnson – **Staff Members**

Michelle Heid (Legucator), Dolly Sharma (Minutes Services) - **Guests**

Absent:

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Suad Bisogno, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

II. Public Input

No public input.

III. Consent Items

A. Approval of Agenda

Michelle Heid requested to move the Legislative Report after the Executive Director's Report, as she would have a conflicting event later in the meeting.

M/S/C (Octavia/Sharon) To approve the agenda as amended.

B. Approval of Minutes from the September 7, 2023 Meeting

The second sentence under Internal DOR Referral Criteria had an illegible word. The committee suggested deleting it.

Ruth Janka noted that the Incentive Program was for a \$625 stipend.

M/S/C (Sharon /A. Kopilevich) To approve the Minutes as amended

IV. Executive Director's Report – Ruth Janka

Ruth Janka presented the NLACRC Human Resources New Hires Report:

Ruth Janka reported that the equity bill AB1147 provides amendments to the Lanterman Act was ordered to be inactive by their Senator. In January 2024, this bill will reactivate, as it is a 2-year bill. Senate Bill 138 was signed into law which would make changes to Regional Center services around crisis and safety. They will now have a 15-day eligibility window to take action.

Ruth Janka stated that in the State Department update, the Direct Service Professional (DSP) training stipend launched. State-wide, there were just over 8,300 DSPs registered to

participate. The state is seeking that the DSPs net \$500 per training for up to 2 courses. For that reason, the stipend was increased to accommodate the taxes associated. NLACRC provides technical support for the DSP training program. There were technical difficulties with people logging in. They had about 150 support tickets to help people access it. DDS also sent out a memo about who is required to have a background check and financial management service payments from Regional Centers. NLACRC is required to make weekly payments to the FMSs to ensure they have the cash flow necessary to make their payments. This practice will be carried out through December 21, 2024.

ARCA did not meet in September, but the next meeting will be in 2 weeks. The State council was doing well with their Strategic Plan and the chair was invited to speak at the White House. For NLACRC's Strategic Plan, the consultant was conducting an Individual and Family Satisfaction Survey through surveys and telephonic interviews. Ruth Janka asked members to support participation in the survey. Data collection will close on October 23, 2023.

Ruth Janka introduced Kimberly Visokey, the new Executive Administrative Assistant to the Board. She announced that this would be Lily's last meeting, as she was retiring. The new Executive Administrative Assistant that will replace Lily will be presented at a later time. Interviews had begun for Deputy Director.

DDS was implementing the Parental Paid Program, which had been paused during the pandemic. This requires that parents with children in 24-hour care pay a fee. Families will get those notices, but NLACRC has few people in out-of-home care.

Daniel Ortiz asked about the email he received about a committee for Self Determination. Gabby Eshrati stated that it was the Local Volunteer Advisory Committee. That process had closed, and they were in the process of interviewing people.

V. **Legislative Report** – Michelle Heid

Michelle Heid presented the Legislative Report:

On September 14, the House worked until midnight to pass hundreds of measures. The Governor has until October 14 to sign, veto, or let the laws pass without his signature. The Governor typically only has an 8-16% veto rate. Vetoes can go back to the Legislature but historically they are not overridden. Action on some of the measures had already begun. Senate Bill 138 could make changes to the NLACRC system and ARCA. The Legislature will fully reconvene for the second year of the 2-year session on January 3, 2024. Other bills in process of interest were listed in the report, including Bill 248 for individuals with intellectual and development disabilities called the Dignity for All Act. This bill was still on the Governor's desk, but a signature is expected before the October 14 deadline.

California Budget and Policy Center Advocacy tips as well as DDS directives were included in the report. Michelle Heid noted that the directive for telehealth for services, including behavior services, will end December 21, 2023. DDS indicated there may be advocacy to assist the extension of the directive. For agencies providing those services, she suggested writing a letter and providing the information to make an educated decision about extending the

directive. Remote day program ILS services will also end at the end of the year.

The DS Task Force, which provides guidance to health and human services, had not met during 2023. Information was included in the report, and they hope to see those groups meet in the future. Stakeholder events continued and summaries were included for the Quality and Incentives Workgroup Meeting, the Performance Measures Workgroup. A report on the Employment Stakeholder group will be presented the following month, as the group was meeting that same day. Work Force Initiatives and the Training Stipend discussed was also in the report.

Information on the State Council and developmental disabilities was included in the report. There was a lot of information on Self Advocacy. There were online meetings and training that may be of interest to the people they support. The local Office of State Council held training courses throughout the year. The ARCA Webinar series was available, with a new series on housing coming up. The Lanterman Act was constantly updated, and the 2023 version was available online. The Early Start Inter-Agency Council would meet on October 19 and 20. The Office of Administrative Hearings Advisory Committee will meet on October 16. The Caregiver Workforce Training was available and could also provide financial incentives for direct support professionals. California would eliminate the asset test for Medicaid, as reported at the last meeting, now with additional information. There was free 12-week health education provided by the Health Matters Program. MediCal managed care plans were being updated. Lists and webinars were included in the report, but Kaiser was not impacted by this change. The California State Non-Profit Security Grant program workshop was listed in the report along with local legislative events, including meet and greets or webinars.

VI. **Chief Financial Officer's Report – Vini Montague**

Vini Montague presented the Chief Financial Officer's Report:

Vini Montague stated that DSP stipends are required to be paid within 30 days, so they were being processed to service providers on a weekly basis. FY2021-2022 was closed. Billing needs to be submitted by February 6, 2024. An Accounts Payable Supervisor position was open, and recruiting had begun with the hopes to fill the position soon.

Erica Beall suggested providing the DSP incentive payment during the pay period they do the training, even though NLACRC is reimbursed at a later date, to avoid any legal issues. Gabby Eshrati stated there were system industry issues that may prevent that but she suggested they could speak with vendors to make sure there were no issues.

Vini Montague reported that the Projected Annual E-Preliminary was \$662,189,214. July Expenditures were \$55,919,773. YTD Expenditures were \$57,659,848. Projected Annual Expenditures were \$662,189,214. There was no annual surplus or deficit projected as they had not yet calculated the first Purchase of Services Expenditures Projection. The first report would be due in December, after which they would know if there was a surplus or deficit. NLACRC received their first contract amendment which will be reflected in the next financial statement.

VII. **Chief Consumer & Community Services Officer Report** – Gabby Eshrati

Gabby Eshrati introduced staff members Myra Alvarado, Consumer Services Manager, Migali, School Age Supervisor, and Fernanda, Adult Unit Supervisor.

Gabby Eshrati presented the Chief Consumer & Community Services Officer Report:

Gabby Eshrati requested participation at the next Consumer Advisory Committee meeting. The Board Liaison was Jose Rodriguez. The CAC committee requested that the word be spread to all vendors to participate in their November 1, 2023, meeting from 3 to 4 pm. A flyer was available on the website. The Lead CSC trainer model was prepared to provide additional support and training to their new staff.

VIII. **Community Services Director's Report** – Arshalous Garlanian

Kimberly Johnson, Resource Development Supervisor, presented the Community Services Director's Report on behalf of Arshalous Garlanian:

Kimberly Johnson thanked everyone who participated in the Vendor Fair. Regarding the Prevention and Wellness Measure 2023-2024, this will offer specialized providers more information to work off of. More information will come. Upcoming webinars were listed on the DDS website and registration would open soon. There had been issues with DSPs and staff indicating the correct vendor number and Regional Center which will be important to ensure DSPs receive their stipend. NLACRC continues to work on HCVS compliance through providing assistance and training sessions:

- Person-Centered Thinking training will be held from November 28 to December 1 virtually.
- This training will also be offered in-person from January 22 to January 23
- Universal Lifestyles training will be offered on October 23 and 24 in Antelope Valley
- Universal Lifestyles training will be offered on October 26 and 27 in San Fernando Valley
- HCVS online training is ongoing

There were several ongoing Requests for Vendorizations (RFVs) including Coordinated Family Support (Code 076), Self-Directed Support Services with the Self Determination Program (Code 099), and Social Recreation Services including art therapy, dance therapy, music therapy, and other programs. These RFVs will remain open until those service needs are met.

Tailored Day Services were being accepted for people wanting to provide different schedules for the day program. Anyone with an interest could reach out to Resource Development at NLACRC.org. DDS continues to work with personal care and home care providers about Electronic Visit Verification. Upcoming info sessions and office hours would be held on October 5 from 11 am to 12 pm, as well as October 10 and October 27.

Kimberly Johnson said in accordance with the DDS 2023-2024 Community Placement Plan and Community Resource Development Plan, NLACRC has made conservative efforts throughout the year to gather stakeholder input regarding needed services including surveys to case

management, teams, and general stakeholders. If anyone would like to provide information or suggestions to the upcoming CPP CRDP Plan that will be submitted to DDS, they requested sending an email or sending the anonymous Community and Stakeholder Survey on their website.

Community Care Licensing continues to update their website. Updates were made to their Adult and Senior Care Programming as well as Children's Residential Care Programming. Upcoming, they will provide Fourth quarter webinars including:

- Tips and Tools to support Regulatory Compliance – October 24
- Developing an effective plan of correction – November 7
- Exceptions and Waivers – December 5

NLACRC continues to meet with providers who provide PIP and CIE services. Kimberly Johnson reminded people to submit their outstanding PIP workbook claims and CIE requests. Quality Incentive Programs for employment are ongoing. Providers can email the department for more information.

Kimberly Johnson reminded everyone to submit insurances changes or changes to their address, entity or name to Resource Development at NLACRC.org. The Next Vendor Support Forum will be held on November 16 from 10 to 12. For any questions or additional topics, please submit them by November 10. A new component was created for new vendors to help them get their vendorization started. Suad Bisogno suggested that everyone add this item to their calendars.

Suad Bisogno asked for clarification that the stipend was \$625, as it was sometimes marked \$645. Vini Montague stated that \$625 was correct. Suad Bisogno stated that the employees would receive \$500 per training of that amount.

Suad Bisogno asked if the Person-Centered Thinking training provided incentives. Kimberly Johnson stated there was not currently funding incentives, but they were considering adding it using the HCVS Funding.

Suad Bisogno stated that Open Future Learnings was a great way to access training videos. It has been used to conduct smaller staff meetings for best Person-Centered Practices.

IX. **Committee Business**

- A. Committee Priorities - Suad Bisogno
Cal Enriquez presented the updated School Age Group Goals and Priorities.

M/S/C (C. Enriquez/Octavia) to approve the Committee Priorities to the Board.

- B. Back to Basics - Suad Bisogno

Suad Bisogno reported they were still working on a tool or guide. Between this meeting and the next, clarity in the message will be established with a focus on service coordination. She suggested meeting with Erica Beall before the next VAC meeting and invited any committee members to join the meeting.

Action Item: Back to Basics will be brought back to the VAC committee at the next meeting.

- C. Proposed Service Provider Visit Verification for In House Services - Ruth Janka
Ruth Janka stated the Board had suggested visit verification by service providers that otherwise aren't required to do so under federal rules. Certain service types must participate in electronic verification. It was recommended to add this verification requirement to personal care and home health to increase accountability. To implement this recommended change, an amendment to the Vendor Program design was needed. The Board assigned this task to the VAC.

It was noted that at one location, employees providing adaptive skills services sign in on their phone through an app that provides GPS coordinates where the clients can sign along with an on-site sign in sheet. The cost is \$1,600/month but it reduces fraud as one worker was found making fraudulent claims using this system and was let go. While it was expensive, other vendors had other options they could use to increase accountability internally.

It was noted that another location used another app that clocked the individual in and out based on their GPS coordinates. Signatures were gathered only at the end of services.

Ruth Janka stated the ultimate goal was accountability and ensuring that providers deliver the services in accordance with their schedules. Issues don't arise often, but this will help them catch issues early when they arise. There may be a cost implication associated with this requirement, but rate implementations were improving the circumstances. There could be other alternatives, and they may not all be electronic, but it could replace the costs for a manual system.

Jacqueline suggested that ERSP could be sufficient for scheduling, as it would track GPS at the beginning and end of a shift. Phones in the home could be registered to signal when the provider arrived and left. Suad Bisogno stated that if they were following guidelines from EVV, they should set the same standard.

It was noted that people can be tricky with remote access. At another location, they used signatures and a binder with information, which would work even in homes where internet access was not available.

Erica Beall stated there was a list of case management software systems for EVV services, including ERSP. While this step would be good for accountability, it removes choice from providers on how to maintain accountability and could prove to be and

could pose an administrative or financial burden to providers.

Ruth Jank agreed there would be a cost impact and a human resources impact which they can consider how to mitigate. She suggested a template for providers using physical and/or electronic verification to make it more accessible.

Jacqueline asked if an addendum was needed. Ruth Janka stated it was not needed for EVV, as it was already required, and a program design change would be needed for non-EVV since it was not a statutory requirement but would serve as a Regional Center policy.

Kimberly Johnson asked what would happen if a vendor was in compliance with DDS but not in compliance with this proposed Regional Center policy. Ruth Janka stated that DDS only holds providers responsible to state compliance. Sanctions for a vendor are only based on health and safety. A standard for services was already in place, and issues typically arose with record keeping, staffing, etc. Visit validation was not present in the audit but would serve as a layer for vendors to track timekeeping and scheduling. If a provider couldn't implement visit validation, there wouldn't be a fiscal impact to the provider.

Erica Beall noted that they could create an administrative hearing process and bend the direct service definition to include something. While it was sensible, it was not funded. Most providers already provided visit verification, and this could add an acknowledgement of that community of practice.

Jodie Agnew-Navarro stated this could impact small providers that cannot afford to pay for a verification system. Alex Kopilevich stated tracking was important and suggested that smaller vendors use paper tracking.

Suad Bisogno summarized that this would be a program design change with no reinforcement as it is beyond the scope of Title 17. Ruth Janka stated that they could consider consequences like a moratorium on referrals. She suggested that technical assistance should be provided before the policy is reinforced. Legally speaking, whether their policy is upheld or not would depend on the judge since it exceeds the statute. Items could be added to the audit to verify if vendors have a plan in place.

Ruth Janka summarized that while many providers already conduct visit verification, they could create a guide or tools that are universal. Points to consider included the fact that this would be an unfunded mandate, financial or administrative challenges associated, and bandwidth and implementation issues.

Action Item: Suad Bisogno will share feedback on the proposed verification with the Board.

- D. System/Industry Issues
DSP Stipend Reimbursement

Erica Beall noted that it was mentioned the vendors were reimbursed when NLACRC was reimbursed. She suggested reviewing what the law states on payments, even if they are reimbursed at a later date. Ruth Janka explained that the DSP completes the course, then the completion will trigger a notice that they are eligible for payment. That then gets transmitted to DDS.

Vini Montague stated the report states that DSPs should get paid in the same period that they complete the course, which is on a weekly cycle. The Regional Center receives a message when vendors complete training, so the Regional Center verifies with the vendor that they work with. The payment is then processed the following pay period or the week after.

Erica Beall stated they don't want to tie up paying employees based on when reimbursement is received, but by when the pay period is. Jacqueline clarified that the Regional Center has 30 days to provide payment to the vendor and then the vendor has 90 days to pay the DSP.

Erica Beall suggested checking California Law to make sure they were in compliance. Suad Bisogno stated that it was a great opportunity for staff, so it was unlikely that they would sue. Ruth Janka stated that it may be treated differently than other payments as well, since it was a stipend.

Daniel Ortiz asked if it was added as a bonus rather than payment. Erica Beall stated it depends on interpretation. Vini Montague suggested consulting with their attorney and developing a policy. Bahai Macurshin stated the clause for stipends stated they were not counted as regular wages and no taxes should be withheld, so they may not want to run on cycle with payroll. Erica Beall stated that whether DSPs view the training as on the clock or off the clock could change how they see it.

It was asked if there were safeguards from preventing DSPs from taking the training multiple times. Vini Montague stated service providers know but the Regional Center does not, especially if the DSP has a common name. Suad Bisogno stated that could be a question for DDS but both DDS and the Regional Center would do their due diligence to make sure funding was not replicated.

Jacquelin asked if the stipend was \$625 minus taxes or if it was \$500 directly. Vini Montague stated that DDS expected the stipend to be taxes and included an administrative payment so the amount received was \$625 but vendors would receive around \$500. She suggested not giving that amount as a definite total, but the goal was to get close to that net.

Suad Bisogno asked about potential changes in practice for CSCs sending annual reports

based on conversations she had heard. Vini Montague stated annual reports were standard. Ruth Janka stated she was not informed of any changes but could follow up, as that would alter how they function.

Bahai Macurshin stated annual reports were not received automatically, but once she reached out about it, the report would be sent. Suad Bisogno stated it was required for providers to have the documentation in their possession. Ruth Janka stated that when the person served or the provider request the information, it will be sent upon request.

Action Item: Ruth Janka will verify that the Annual Reports are automatic.

XI. **Committee Work Group Reports**

A. Early Start Services - Dana Kalek

Dana Kalek stated Early Start Services met several weeks ago. They discussed the Family-Focus Resource Center which received a DDS grant allowing parents to use the space for free for their early start service needs. In July, there were 520 referrals. In August, there were 386 referrals. Bill AB805 permits insurances to fund behavioral-based treatment for autism and was on the Governor's desk. This bill had been in the works for 10 years. Early Start Training reimbursement continues, but the deadline was approaching. Cristina Preuss attended the meeting and discussed outreach efforts from her team. Screenings will increase for babies and younger children. The next meeting will be in November.

B. School Age Services -Cal Enriquez

Cal Enriquez stated they typically meet the first Tuesday of every month, but they rescheduled to the following Tuesday in order to attend the Vendor Fairs in Lancaster and San Fernando. A full report from the committee will be prepared for the next VAC meeting.

C. Adult Services – Suad Bisogno & Erica Beall

Suad Bisogno stated the group had not met but the next meeting would be on November 6 at 11 am.

XII. **Board Committee Reports**

A. Administrative Affairs – Andrea Devers

Ruth Janka spoke on behalf of Andrea Devers. She stated the committee reviewed insurance coverage and approved authorization at NLACRC to ensure workers compensation. Contracts were approved. Vini Montague had reviewed the financial reports. The human resources report was also reviewed, in which positions filled and vacancies were included in the report. NLACRC continues to bring on new staff and work with its partnerships. Creating a mobile library unit with the CSUN vehicle was discussed but deemed not plausible, so Cristina Preuss had met with the LA Office of Education to partner with their mobile library unit effort. Vini Montague provided an update on the DDS Audit, which was nearing its end, for compliance with statutory, regulatory, and contractual agreements. There was still no timeline on when they would

receive the preliminary draft report. The independent audit was also ongoing and was expected to be completed in February 2024.

- B. Consumer Services - Erica Beall
Jacqueline reported that Claudia Cares shared an update on the IPP process. Gabby Eshrati shared about SDP updates. The Resource Fair was held on September 23 and turnout was reported to be very good. Budgets and IPPs were also discussed.
- C. Government & Community Relations – Jodie Agnew-Navarro
Jodie Agnew-Navarro stated there was not a meeting this month.
- D. Nominating - Suad Bisogno
Suad Bisogno reported there were approved and filled vacancies for the Board. Tools to interview applicants were being revamped for future use.
- E. Strategic Planning - Daniel Ortiz
Ruth Janka stated there was not a meeting this month.

XIII. Review of Meeting Action Items

- A. Back to Basics will be brought back to the VAC committee at the next meeting.
- B. Suad Bisogno will share feedback on the proposed verification with the Board.
- C. Ruth Janka will verify that the Annual Reports are automatic.

XIV. Agenda Items for the Next Board Meeting

- A. Minutes of the October 5th Meeting

XV. Announcements/Public Input

- A. Next Meeting: Thursday, November 2, 2023, at 9:30 a.m.
- B. Committee Attendance

XVI. Adjournment

Suad adjourned the meeting at 11:29 a.m.

XVII. Committee Work Group Information:

- A. Early Start Services (Dana Kalek)
For meeting schedule and information
Contact: Dana Kalek - dkalek@cdikids.org
Next workgroup meeting: November 16, 2023 at 9:00 am (via Zoom).
- B. School Age Services (Cal Enriquez)
For meeting schedule and information
Contact: Cal Enriquez – cenriquez@accreditednursing.com
Next workgroup meeting: October 10, 2023, at 9:30 am (via Zoom).
- C. Adult Services (Suad Bisogno & Erica Beall)
For meeting schedule and information

Contact: Suad Bisogno - Suad@irioc.org
Next workgroup meeting: November 6, 2023 at 11:00 am (via Zoom).

Submitted by:

(*) *Kimberly Visokey*

Executive Administrative Assistant

() The majority of these minutes are taken from the Minutes Service submission and reviewed/ edited as presented herein by NLACRC staff.*