

North Los Angeles County Regional Center  
**Government & Community Relations Committee Meeting Minutes**

March 15, 2023

**Present:** Andrew Ramirez, Nicholas Abrahms, Rocio Sigala, Brian Gatus, Cathy Blin, Jordan Feinstock, George Alvarado, Sylvia Brooks-Griffin, Sharmila Brunjes, Andrea Devers – Committee Members

Robert Dhondrup, Lizeth Chavez, Liliana Windover, Ruth Janka, Gabriela Eshrati, Evelyn McOmie, Evan Ingber, Cristina Preuss – Staff Members

Michelle Heid – Legucator, Leticia Garcia, Ana Quiles, David Coe - Board Members, Anthony - Coach for George Alvarado, Jasmine Barrios- Minutes Services, Adriana, Guests

**Absent:**

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**I. Call to Order & Introductions**

Jordan Feinstock, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Jordan introduced himself as the current Committee Chair, the former Chair and Vice-Chair of the NLA Self-Determination Local Volunteer Advisory Committee, and a current Board of Trustees Member.

The Committee Members and NLA staff introduced themselves.

**II. Public Input**

No public input

**III. Consent Items**

A. Approval of Agenda

**M/S/C** (A. Ramirez/S. Brooks-Griffin) To approve the agenda as presented.

B. Approval of Minutes from the January 18th Meeting.

**M/S/C** (N. Abrahms/A. Ramirez/S. Brooks-Griffin) To approve the January 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes as presented. The motion was approved with one abstention from S. Brooks-Griffin

**IV. Legucator Report – Michelle Heid**

A. February Report

Michelle reviewed the report as presented in the packet. Highlights include:

Legislative Update

After the holiday season, the Legislature reconvened the 2023-24 session on Wednesday, January 4th. On January 5th, Senate President pro Tempore Atkins announced the committee chairs and membership for the 2023-24 Session. Assembly Speaker Rendon

announced his Leadership and Committee Chair and Vice Chair Appointments in December but released the full committee membership on January 18th. Of particular interest to our community are the following committee chairs: Senate Budget: Senator Nancy Skinner (D), Chair Budget Sub 3 on Health and Human Services: Senator Caroline Menjivar (D), Chair, Human Services: Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil (D), Chair, Assembly Budget: Assembly Member Phil Ting (D), Chair, Budget Sub 1 on Health and Human Services: Assembly Member Dr. Joaquin Arambula, Chair, Human Services: Assembly Member Corey Jackson, Chair

### Legislative Bills

February 17th, 2023, marked the bill introduction deadline for the 2023-24 session. All bills have been introduced and are moving through the legislative process, which begins with committee assignments and initial hearings in those houses. In addition, a few bills have been explicitly introduced related to regional center services, individuals with developmental disabilities (see below), and others related to special education, among other topics relevant to the disability community.

### AB 649 (Wilson) Developmental Services

Existing law prohibits regional centers from purchasing any service that would otherwise be available from Medi-Cal, Medicare, and private insurance, among other sources, when a consumer or a consumer's family meets the criteria of this coverage but chooses not to pursue that coverage. Existing law also prohibits regional centers from purchasing medical or dental services for a consumer three years of age or older unless the regional center is provided with documentation of a Medi-Cal, private insurance, or a health care service plan denial, Page 3 of 13 Engaging and Empowering the Disability Community 14 and the regional center determines that an appeal by the consumer or the consumer's family of the denial does not have merit. This bill would delete both of those prohibitions on regional center purchases. Sponsored by: Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA).

### The Legislative Analyst's Office - 2023-24 Budget Proposal

The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) published a report addressing the Governor's 2023-24 Budget Proposal related to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Recent years have seen a variety of policy initiatives for the DDS system, and the LAO found the Governor's proposals for new spending initiatives to be generally reasonable. Those include enhancing the Safety Net for individuals with relatively severe needs and establishing an Autism Services Branch within DDS. The Governor also proposed delaying the Preschool Inclusion Grants by two years (\$20 million over two years, allocated in the 2022-23 budget) as part of a savings solution to a projected multi-year budget deficit projection.

### Fun Fact

While the bill introduction deadline has come and gone, and all bills introduced in the current session are in print, the "gut-and-amend" strategy allows for a bill that has already passed one house to be gutted and then amended with a completely different idea. This can occur at any time during the legislative session but often occurs in the last days, where

a bill, possibly with limited support, is gutted for an idea brought forth by a specific interest.

#### DDS Directives related to COVID-19

On October 17th, 2022, Governor Newsom announced that the State of Emergency would end on February 28th, 2023. Therefore, all waivers, modifications, or directives related to the public health emergency will expire and not be extended beyond February 28th, 2023. Several Directives were, however, extended to June 30th, 2023, in Trailer Bill Language, SB 188, effective June 30th, 2022.

#### DS Task Force

The DS Task Force provides guidance on delivering services to Californians with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Forty-two individuals serve on the full DS Task Force, while an additional 115 serve on the 5 Task Force Workgroups (Community Resources, Oversight, Accountability and Transparency, Safety Net, Service Access & Equity, and System & Fiscal Reform). Meeting information and recordings of the meetings are available at the website above. Full Task Force Meeting. The Task Force met on January 19th, where DDS presented an overview of the DDS 202324 Governor's Budget. Upcoming DS Task Force Meetings • No dates published as of February 27th, 2023.

#### Little Hoover Commission

The Little Hoover Commission is an independent California state oversight agency currently studying California's Department of Developmental Services. Hearings and roundtable discussions were held in late 2022, and a report is expected to be issued.

#### ARCA Recommendations for Little Hoover Commission

ARCA submitted a letter to the Commission with their ideas, covering topics ranging from ending family fees, eliminating the requirement for families' appeal denials from general resources to letting social recreation be easier to use, and updating regional center funding calculations. ARCA's recommendations in the following areas provide a roadmap to enhancing service access and equity. The letter goes on to provide specifics on:

- Systemic barriers - challenges in navigating the system, including accessing generic services, a statute to use the least-costly vendor, median rates, and family fees

- System capacity - overall funding, high caseloads, inadequate service provider network, and data needs
- Racial, ethnic, and linguistic equity initiatives - equity data, equity grants, individualized services, and flexibilities in social recreation
- Opportunities for Greater Consistency across regional centers in the areas of family support, website transparency, vendorization process, and intake

#### ARCA Webinar Series

The Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) has a series of webinars on topics relevant to the disability community in CA. These webinars can all be viewed at the website above and include topics such as employment, regional centers and how services start, social recreation, understanding the HCBS final rule, and emergency preparedness. In addition to the webinars, resources on the topics are often provided.

### Disability Rights California's Voting Hotline

A quarter of all Californians have a disability, and it is estimated that close to four million are eligible to vote. That represents a large and influential group of voters deeply impacted by lawmakers and policies that depend on how many people vote for them. Therefore, it is critical for all Californians that voters with disabilities have full and equal access to the polls. However, if you have a disability, that might mean you encounter barriers to voting or difficulty finding instructions about casting your vote.

### California Disability Advocacy Conference

The Arc of California, Easterseals, and United Cerebral Palsy will present the 16th Annual California Disability Advocacy Conference titled "Discovering the Next Frontier: Charting Your Path Forward." The online conference will explore new opportunities for inclusion, independence, employment, and advocacy. Sessions will be held via Zoom from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., April 25th through 27th, followed by a Local Advocacy Day on Friday, April 28th, 2023. "Join the disability community from across the state as we learn together how to advocate and make a change in our lives, our communities, and the world." The conference was previously named the Developmental Disabilities Public Policy Conference. The new name more accurately reflects the vast array of topics covered at the conference. Early Bird ticket sales begin March 1st. In addition, scholarships are available by application to allow people with developmental disabilities, their family members, and/or their direct support staff to attend the conference at a reduced price of \$5.

## V. Committee Business Action Items

### A. Upcoming NLACRC Grassroots and Legislative Activities update – Robert Dhondrup

The department has completed its first Legislative 101 training; the follow-up 102 training will be focused on a comprehensive look at 125 bills that could impact the community. There were 12 guests at the initial 101 training, and the training will be done in a video module for others to view. Three new legislators are in the catchment area, and priorities include modernizing the Core Staffing Formula. Zoom interviews for all legislators are being scheduled, and two have been confirmed so far. The Legislative visits will consist of 20 minutes of prep and 30 minutes with the legislator. Each attendee will have about 3-4 minutes to share their story or ask questions. Involved individuals were asked to think about what they would like to share before the legislative meetings.

### B. ARCA Grassroots update – Robert Dhondrup

ARCA's Grassroots target date will be March 29, 2023. ARCA requests constituents to represent the community, and Senator Portantino will meet at 11:30 a.m.

### C. Discussion of Framework for Strategy Implementation of Board's Disability Community Organization, Service Provider, and Elected Representative Visit Policy – Ruth Janka

Ruth reviewed this policy as presented in the packet. This policy provides guidelines for how to coordinate visits. It also requires all Board Members to participate in at least one disability community organization, legislative, and services provider event. Upon completion of the event, a Board Member should provide feedback on the visit at the following Board Meeting. Ruth would like to update the Critical Calendar to add the presentation for this policy to take place at the beginning of the FY to inform Board

Members of the expectations. Ana Quiles recommended that this policy be included in the New Board Member Orientation information. Board Support will be available to assist Board Members with attending various events and will develop a method for tracking compliance. A critical draft calendar to reflect the presence of the policy at the beginning of the FY. The Board Responsibilities Policy will also be revised to include this policy in addition, tracking for participation and notifications to Board Members of opportunities. All of these changes will be presented to the Board at the next meeting for a vote.

Concerns were raised about the additional commitments required for Committee Members assigned to the Government and Community Relations Committee.

**M/S/A** (A. Quiles/A. Ramirez) To approve an updated policy to include the requirements for the Government and Community Relations Committee to be presented to the Board. The motion passed with two oppositions from J. Feinstock and Sh. Brunjes

D. Discussion to Commence Hybrid Meetings – Jordan Feinstock

Jordan proposed hybrid meetings for the Committee. After discussion, it was noted that for hybrid meetings to be held, 60% of the Committee would be required to attend in person. In addition, concerns were raised regarding the length of the meetings, causing a long commute for members.

Committee meetings will continue to be held virtually for the remainder of the FY22-23.

E. Strategic Plan Focus Review for Committee – Jordan Feinstock

The areas identified as Training, Education, Awareness, Service Access, and Equity were highlighted in the Strategic Plan. Liz will send out the document to the Committee for review. Feedback can be sent to Board Support with a cc to Evelyn Mc.Omie and Andrew Ramirez to be cross-referenced with the work the Consumer Services Committee has completed. Feedback from the Committee is requested by March 24, 2023.

F. Social Media – Robert Dhondrup

Robert gave an update on the Social Media Executive Summary presented in the packet. The Executive summary covers both January and February 2023. Robert mentioned that social media monitoring would be tailored to include community engagement. In addition, Digital Media will be a focus moving forward. A 1-page dashboard will also be included in future iterations of the summary.

G. Legislative Update

1. FY21-22 Legislative Bills– Ruth Janka

These bills were included for a reference regarding letters of support NLA presented for the previous legislative session. Unfortunately, none of last year's bills are active for this legislative cycle.

2. FY22-23 Legislative Bills – Ruth Janka

A list of 125 bills with active links will be sent to the Committee for review. For example, AB312 regarding affordable housing would create a directory of affordable housing. In addition, AB423, AB445, AB447, AB545, AB1157, AB1588, SB37, and

SB299 were highlighted as bills that the Committee may be interested in taking a position on as they all would affect the disability community. The community is being asked to review the list and send feedback to Board Support to continue progressing on the Committee's "off" month. Feedback would include identifying the bills that are important for NLA to support.

Michelle clarified that the packet contains ARCA's legislative priorities that they will present at the upcoming ARCA Grassroots event on March 29<sup>th</sup>. Leticia Garcia requested the identification of bills that will be addressed at NLA's upcoming Legislative Event. One item identified would be the Core Staffing Formula update bill.

After discussion, Ana Quiles recommended revising the Critical Calendar to review legislative bills and determine priorities earlier in the year. Although it was determined that Board Support would send out the bill list to the Committee, Board Support will create a survey for the Committee to vote for their top 5 legislative priorities to be discussed at the NLA Grassroots Outreach event. The deadline for feedback from the Committee is March 27<sup>th</sup>. The final list will be sent to the Committee on March 31<sup>st</sup> for visits the following week.

**M/S/C** (A. Quiles/S. Brunjes) To approve using a Doodle Survey by Board Support to identify the top 5 legislative priorities/bills for discussion at the upcoming NLA Grassroots event.

D. Local Grassroots Marketing and Outreach – Cristina Preuss

Ruth shared that Dr. Michael Fernandez is no longer with NLA and that until his role has been filled, Cristina Preuss will be presenting the information.

1. School Districts/SELPA Outreach Update– Cristina Preuss

Cristina shared the information as reviewed in the packet. Highlights include: Valley College, Santa Clarita Preschool Fair, AV College, and Palmdale School District received information about referrals, intake, and assessment.

2. Language Access and Cultural Competency Plan – Status Update– Christina Preuss

Cristina reviewed the information presented in the packet. Highlights include: Translation of the Specialist's flyers has been developed internally and is available in English, Spanish, Farsi, and Tagalog We are working with Propio to get a quote for the following documents to be translated into Tagalog, Farsi, and Armenian: Consumer and Family Guide, Common Services Brochures, General information Brochure.

G. Board Audit Questions – Robert Dhondrup and Evan Ingber

1. Status Update: Center's training and information plan alignment with the center's mission, vision, and values statement

The Board requested the Training Plan be included in the packet. The Mission, Vision, and Values training module is completed in-person for all new hires. However, the module will be sent to the Committee via email. In addition, concerns were raised regarding the addition of instructions on how individuals can

be their own coordinators. Evan will create training for this to be included in the new parent orientations.

## **VI. Review of Meeting Action Items (Item Owner and Due Date)**

- A. Committee Action Log was reviewed
- B. Review the Board Member Responsibility policy and align it with the Committee's disability organization visit policy. (Ruth Janka)
- C. Update the GCR Critical Calendar to include the review of the elected representative visit policy to July (Liz Chavez)
- D. Notify the Board of opportunities to attend a service provider or CBO event (Liz Chavez)
- E. Email the Strategic Plan Implementation Metrics via Board Support. Board Members are to provide feedback by March 24. (Liz Chavez and Committee)
- F. Email bill list links and doodle survey for Committee to determine top 5 legislative priorities. Committee is to submit responses by March 27. (Liz Chavez and Committee)
- G. Add FY 22-23 Legislative priorities to the packet for Grassroots Visits (Robert Dhondrop)
- H. To include information on how individuals can become their own service coordinator in the New Consumer Orientation materials (Ruth Janka and Evan Ingber)

## **VII. Board Meeting Agenda Items**

- A. Minutes of the March 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting

## **VIII. Announcements / Information / Public Input**

A. Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p.m.

B. Committee Attendance

Public Input

George Alvarado shared recent positive reviews that customers have written about his job on Yelp; the Committee congratulated George on his accomplishments.

Ana thanked the Committee for their continued work and patience on these challenging subjects and acknowledged their efforts.

Robert Dhondrop shared a video that the social media team has been working on regarding NLA marketing related to digital media.

## **IX. Adjournment**

Jordan Feinstock adjourned the meeting at 9:32 p.m.

Submitted by:

(\*) *Lizeth Chavez*

Executive Administrative Assistant

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