

North Los Angeles County Regional Center
Vendor Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

March 2, 2023

Present: Suad Bisogno, Alex Kopilevich, Andrea Devers, Lisa Williamsen, Bob Erio, Daniel Ortiz, Dana Kalek, Cal Enriquez, Nick Vukotic, Don Lucas, Erica Beall, Cathy Carpenter – **Committee Members**

Ruth Janka, Liliana Windover, Vini Montague, Evelyn McOmie, Venus Rodriguez-Khorsani, Lizeth Chavez – **Staff Members**

Michelle Heid - Legucator, Dolly Sharma -Minutes Services, Shelly Hash - Interpreter, and approximately 98 Service Providers- **Guests**

Absent: Jodie Agnew Navarro, Rosalyn Daggs

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Suad Bisogno, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

II. Public Input

Suad shared that no feedback was received from the Committee regarding Self-Determination questions. Therefore, Suad plans to have a Q&A Session with a Self-Determination Specialist at the next Committee meeting to help address these questions. It was also noted that a Social Hour would be held for providers to learn more about Certified Employee Support Credential on March 16th at 12 p.m.

Naomi (no last name given) had questions about remote services and ABA; the agenda will address the topics.

Michele Linares, a speech pathologist from the California Speech and Hearing Association, shared information about the Anaheim Convention being held at the end of March. Recruiter and vendor tables are still available; more information can be found on cache.org.

Victoria Berrey, from Family Focus Resource Center, shared that a new series is being held, Coffee and Conversation, where parents and FFRC meet inside Regional Center offices. The inaugural event was held on February 16th in Antelope Valley.

The Free to Be Me Festival, an event specifically for the disabled community, will be held Saturday, March 11th, in Santa Clarita Valley.

III. Consent Items

A. Approval of Agenda

M/S/C (L. Williamsen/D. Kalek) To approve the agenda as presented.

B. Approval of Minutes from the February 2, 2023 Meeting

M/S/C (L. Williamsen/A. Kopilevich) To approve the Minutes as presented.

III. **Legislative Report** – Michelle Heid

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

State of Emergency

In October, Governor Newsom announced that the COVID-19 State of Emergency would end on February 28th, and on January 30th, President Biden announced the federal Public Health Emergency would end on May 11th. It is unclear at this time what, if any, impact the ending of the State of Emergency in California will have. Still, there may be impacts to access to health services via telehealth or changes to directives issued through the Department of Developmental Services, as we have seen as the winding down from the public health emergency has been ongoing.

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, 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 bill was referred to the Committee on Human Services with no hearings scheduled as of 2/27/2023.

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. It 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.

Legislative Calendar

January 4th, 2023 – Legislature reconvenes following winter holiday season
February 17th, 2023 – Last day for bills to be introduced
March 30th, 2023 – Spring Recess begins upon adjournment
April 10th, 2023 – Legislature reconvenes from Spring Recess
June 2nd, 2023 – Last day for each house to pass bills introduced in that house
June 15th, 2023 – Budget Bill must be passed by midnight
July 14th, 2023 – Last day for policy committees to meet and report bills
Summer Recess begins upon adjournment, provided Budget Bill has been passed

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.

Little Hoover Commission

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

Disability Rights California's Voting Hotline Is a "Lifeline" for Voters with Disabilities

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 full conference at a reduced price of \$5.

V. **Executive Director's Report** – Ruth Janka

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

Recent Legislative Update

A recent legislative development is that Assemblyman Arambula has agreed to champion the modernization of the Regional Centers' Core Staffing Formula. ARCA has secured this support in collaboration with SEIU and the Lanterman Coalition on this project. It will help to increase access to services by recruiting staff to facilitate community needs.

State of Emergency due to COVID Lifted

The Governor ended the State of Emergency due to COVID effective February 28, 2023; thus, DDS' directives also expired as of this date. While many areas of operation previously

waived to allow regional centers to prioritize our response to COVID have been restored, the provision of remote service delivery across service types, where applicable, was allowed due to the DDS directive. Of note, the only services that may continue to be delivered remotely are those allowed by either regulation or DDS. As a result:

- Independent living skills training, adult day programs, and “lookalike” day programs will continue to provide traditional services through remote service delivery through December 31, 2023
- Adaptive Skills Training, if coordinated to meet needs similarly to a day program, may be allowed for remote service delivery if this service will effectively meet the program planning needs of a consumer and is agreed upon by the IPP team.
- Payments for temporary absences in residential facilities due to COVID end effective February 28, 2023
- Remote program planning meetings for consumers in the Early Start and Lanterman programs may continue until June 30, 2023. Important to note that consumers and families may have an in-person meeting; remote meetings are conducted if that is the preference of the individual or family.
- Remote early intervention services may continue as regulation was amended to include this service delivery option.
- Vendor Audits, as required by NLACRC’s contract with DDS, will resume in accordance with the contract.
- Family Cost Participation Program and Annual Family Program Fee assessments, reassessments, and existing assessments will resume on July 1, 2023 (per SB188).

Purchase of Service Data Expenditure Meeting

Meetings will occur on March 16th and March 21st to review the expenditure data as of June 30, 2022. Recommendations will be solicited from the community on increasing service access and equity as NLA is required to conduct several audits for DDS. Vini Montague indicated that audit notice letters would be distributed to vendors regarding requirements for FY2022-23.

Continued Masking Requirements

Los Angeles County’s Health Officer Order (LACDPH) aligns with the California Department of Public Health’s Guidance for Face Coverings (CDPH), which requires indoor masking in specific high-risk settings, including healthcare settings. CDPH’s most recent Guidance for Face Coverings states, “CDPH will continue to monitor the science and current CDC recommendations to ensure we continue protecting our most vulnerable populations and the workforce that delivers critical services in these settings.” The current State Health Officer Orders remain in place and are not tied to the State’s Public Health Emergency declaration. Should any policies get updated in the State Health Officer Order, then LACDPH will review the updated State order and assess the local situation to be reflected in LACDPH Health Officer Orders. The Board of Supervisors has not yet stated when Los Angeles County’s Emergency Declaration will expire. NLA will continue to follow the local public health guidelines for masking and suggested that providers update their COVID Prevention Plans if a change in their masking requirements for office staff is implemented. Community Care Licensed facilities were recommended to follow the community care licensing guidelines.

Certified Person-Centered Planning Trainers Status Update

The center has selected a Person-Centered Planning consultant, Helen Sanderson and Associates, to certify staff in person-centered planning. NLACRC has seven staff (six Consumer Services Supervisors representing all three offices and the Training Supervisor) signed up to participate. Orientation will occur on February 28 and the first class is on March 7. The course will be completed and certifications issued by May 7, 2023; submission of certifications to DDS by June 1, 2023, will result in NLACRC securing \$100,000 in incentive funding.

DDS Direct Service Professional Training Stipend and Incentive Program Pilot Status Update

Finalization of content from DDS is still pending. Upon receipt, NLACRC will pilot the program for 30 days, and then the program will be available statewide for six months. Refresher: The department's DSP Training Stipend and Incentive Program will provide DSPs with up to two (2) \$500 stipends for participating in up to two training. To be eligible, the DSP must be employed by a regional center vendor or who provides services to Self Determination Program participants and spend at least 50% of their time providing direct services to consumers.

Grassroots Visits

NLA is assembling legislative advocacy teams to visit with local legislators. Committee members interested in participating in a legislative visit should contact Liz at the Board Support email

Coordinated Family Support Services

Evelyn McOmie shared that NLA submitted the Plan for Coordinated Family Support Services to DDS. Internal training has been initiated, and staff has been attending the training for staff from DDS. Trainings are posted on the website, and the Community Services Department is campaigning with individuals. Vendor Session Trainings will be held from March through June on how individuals can go through the vendorization process.

VI. Chief Financial Officer's Report – Vini Montague

Vini reviewed this information as presented in the packet.

D1 Allocation: \$882,180,063

Expenditures for the Month: \$5,638,555

YTD Expenses: \$34,880,363

Projected annual expenditures: \$80,290,040

Expected POS Surplus: \$49,317,357 (5.59%)

Vini also shared that FY2021-22 is now closed, and NLA can no longer accept billing for that FY.

The rate increases not implemented for providers in February. NLACRC will be contacted (5 Vendors). The payments were processed and will include retroactive amounts.

Letters will be sent soon for vendors who must do a Vendor Audit for FY 2022.

Regarding Services Code 055, there was discussion about collapsing specific rates into other service codes, but no guidance was given from DDS, and as such, no changes have been made.

VII. Chief Consumer & Community Services Officer Report – Evelyn McOmie

Evelyn shared that Case Management Department will build seven additional units in NLA's catchment area, including two additional Adult Units in San Fernando, 1 Transition and 1 School age unit in Santa Clarita, and 1 Adult and 1 School Age unit in Antelope Valley. In addition, the Center now has a full Community Services unit in the Center's Antelope Valley office, including 2 QA Staff members, 2 Research Developers, 1 Contract/Compliance Specialist, and 1 HCBS Specialist.

**VIII. Community Services Director's Report – Evelyn McOmie
Service Code 605**

Evelyn shared that 605s that were developed to look like a day program and considered a "605 Lookalike" will continue receiving remote services as part of IPP planning. However, adaptive skills services developed as 1:1 services for in-home training will not be considered eligible for remote services. Vendors are encouraged to contact Community Services Department for questions or to determine what type of training is currently in place for affected vendors.

HCBS Compliance

As of this meeting, there is a 99% compliance rate for documentation requested for HCBS Final Rule. The funding for compliance with the HCBS rule was discussed with stakeholders to develop resources for vendors to support service planning and delivery. The plan was submitted to DDS on February 28, 2023. DDS clarified that NLA could not use the funding to hire a staff member to support HCBS efforts as proposed by the Committee.

Service Provider Training

NLA will host the 2023 Service Provider Training that will be sent out via the News You Can Use email blast. In addition, NLA will host symposiums and webinars related to the HCBS Final Rule, Person-Centered Thinking and practices, and Enhanced Quality of Life, among others. NLA is funding these trainings, and those who attend will receive certification.

Participant Directed Services

CliffsNotes of participant directive services were posted on NLA's website. Training is also available on our website, designed by Dr. Jesse Weller, former NLA Deputy Director. This training was conducted with all staff and materials remain available to distribute to interested individuals, families, and service providers. This outlines the steps for all five categories of Participant Directed Services.

Resource Development

Winter 2023 open proposals are accepting submissions until March 5th, 2023.

RFP for Transportation

An RFP for additional transportation services was put out with January 29, 2023, deadline. One promising candidate can serve the San Fernando Valley area, and a decision will be made by Friday, March 3, 2023. The RFP will remain open until further notice to continue to receive applications.

Tailored Day Services

NLA requests that Tailored Day Service Addendums be submitted to the Research Development team.

Vendor Records Maintenance

Please report any organizational, address, or staffing changes to Contracts and Compliance. One hundred sixty-nine vendors still need to complete their CS1891 updates. These are required regardless if there have been changes or not. Information can be found in the Vendor Portal.

IX. Committee Business

- A. DSP University Levels 1, 2 & 3 Rate Models Status - Suad Bisogno
No update currently.
- B. In-Person Committee Meetings - Suad Bisogno
The Board decided to allow each Committee to determine hosting hybrid meetings or continue with virtual meetings for the remainder of the FY. To have hybrid meetings, at least 60% of the Committee will need to attend the meeting in person. It was determined that the Committee would revisit this item before the June 2023 Meeting.
- C. Dual Authorizations for Respite/Personal Assistance -Ruth Janka
Ruth confirmed that dual authorizations would be approved, but the amounts would be for different parent conversion and agency amounts. Some workers are employed by two separate agencies but serve the same family, an employee working for two separate agencies and serving the same family does not violate labor laws.
- D. Transportation Fees - Suad Bisogno
Providers are encouraged to seek 880 Vendorizations if they have challenges transporting individuals to/from services. In addition, Community Services is working on a tool for providers to assist in supporting participant-directed services for Transportation in both English and Spanish.
- E. NLACRC Grass Roots Week Update - Robert Dhondrup
Robert shared that the Committee is being encouraged to join a team to visit with local legislators about the challenges that they are facing and promote collaboration with legislators on finding solutions. Refresher Legislative training will be planned on the background of regional centers. Family Focus Resource Center will prevent Do's and Don'ts for meeting with legislators and how to best approach conversation. Other upcoming training topics will include, Storytelling 101 and Social Media Activism 101. These activities will help participants identify their local legislators, how

to use hashtags, etc. This training will commence on March 11th from 3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. The next Legislative Visit is being planned for April 3-April 7th, 2023.

It was announced that an RFP would be posted on March 6, 2023, to recruit for The Family Focus Resource Center Library operator position, which will also be emailed.

F. VAC Member Recruitment Status – Suad Bisogno
The Nominating Committee will meet on March 6, 2023, to determine interview dates for applicants in consideration of a position on the VAC.

G. Strategic Plan Focus Area Review for Committee - Suad Bisogno
At the last Board Meeting, the Committee was tasked to review the Strategic Plan and to determine what areas can be a priority for the Committee. Suad identified topics related to housing, and the Committee is being asked to review the plan and submit feedback.

NLACRC will post an RFP seeking a consultant to design and assist in executing an Individual/Family Satisfaction Survey.

H. Open Issues for Discussion
Erica Beall shared that there is available housing in Glendale for those interested.

- I. Committee Work Group Reports
- A. Early Start Services - Dana Kalek
The group met in January and discussed referrals and, intake processes, COVID policies.
 - B. School Age Services -Cal Enriquez
The group discussed goals and outcomes for mental health resources for consumers.
 - C. Adult Services - Suad Bisogno & Erica Beall
This group will be meeting on March 6th

XI. Board Committee Reports

A. Administrative Affairs - Bob Erio
The Committee discussed contract lengths and the benefits of each. It was determined that the current process is contract length determination was sufficient. Union Negotiations were ratified with over 70% approval. As part of the negotiations, an 8% bonus for all staff was approved, which will continue to help the recruitment and retention concerns. The recent Job Fair was successful, and more fairs are being planned for continued recruitment efforts.

B. Consumer Services -Erica Beall
There were 11 people added to Self Determination; more clarification on how independent facilitators can be vendored is being requested from DDS. Employment for individuals served increased by nine people. A new intake data form by Valley and age group is being developed. The Transportation shortage was discussed, and the Intake roadmap is also being developed.

- C. Government & Community Relations -Andrea Devers
This Committee did not meet in February, but Andrea noted the importance of grassroots efforts concerning legislative advocacy.
- D. Nominating -Suad Bisogno
As mentioned, this Committee will meet on Monday, March 6th, 2023.
- E. Strategic Planning - Daniel Ortiz
This Committee discussed the RFP for the Satisfaction Survey, and that the RFP was posted.

XII. Review of Meeting Action Items

- A. Vendor Advisory Committee Action Log

XIII. Agenda Items for the Next Board Meeting

- A. Minutes of the March 2nd Meeting

XIV. Announcements/Public Input

- A. Next Meeting: Thursday, April 6, 2023, at 9:30 a.m.
- B. Committee Attendance
- C. Committee Member Roster
- D. The Jynny Retzinger Award Nomination submission is open until March 31st, 2023. Submissions can be sent to boardsupport@nlacrc.org. There are currently four submissions.

XV. Adjournment

Suad adjourned the meeting at 11:08 a.m.

XVI. Committee Work Group Information:

- A. Early Start Services (Dana Kalek)
Contact: Dana Kalek - dkalek@cdikids.org
Next workgroup meeting: March 16, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.
- B. School Age Services (Cal Enriquez)
Contact: Cal Enriquez – cenriquez@accreditednursing.com
Next workgroup meeting: March 7, 2023, at 9:30 a.m.
- C. Adult Services (Suad Bisogno & Erica Beall)
Contact: Suad Bisogno - Suad@irioc.org
Next workgroup meeting: March 6, 2023, at 11:00 a.m.