

**NORTH LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGIONAL CENTER (NLACRC)
9200 OAKDALE AVENUE, SUITE 100
CHATSWORTH, CALIFORNIA**

**MINUTES OF THE VENDOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
HYBRID – CHATSWORTH OFFICE / TELECONFERENCE
APRIL 10, 2025, 9:30 A.M.**

MEMBERS:

Alex Kopilevich, Jaklen Keshishyan, Jodie Agnew-Navarro, Octavia Watkins, Masood Babaeian, Paul Borda, Andrea Devers, Ute Escorcia, Ricki Macken Chilvers, Vahe Mkrtchian, Jen Pippard, Sharon Weinberg

STAFF:

Angela Pao-Johnson, Vini Montague, Silvia Renteria-Haro, Venus Rodriguez-Khorasani, Betsy Monahan, Evelyn McOmie, Belinda Abatesi, Chris Whitlock, Arezo Abedi, Lindsay Granger, Arezo Abedi

GUESTS:

Mark Wolfe – DDS Tech Advisor, Sasha Chernik- Minute Solutions

ABSENT:

Cal Enriquez

1. CALL TO ORDER

There being a quorum present, and adequate and proper notice of the meeting having been given, the meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. Alex Kopilevich presided as Chair.

2. COMMITTEE MEMBER ATTENDANCE

Members were asked to identify themselves when speaking or making a motion.

3. SHARE IMPACT STORY FROM INDIVIDUAL SERVED

Angela Pao-Johnson shared a story about two NLACRC consumers who were Project SEARCH interns and had been hired as housekeeping attendants at Kaiser Permanente Woodland Hills.

4. PUBLIC INPUT

Mr. Sosa shared that there are three openings at their group home facilities.

5. CONSENT ITEMS

On a motion made by Sharon Weinberg, seconded by Masood Babaeian, it was resolved to approve the minutes of the Vendor Advisory Committee meeting held on March 13, 2025, as presented. Motion carried.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6.1 2025-2026 Fiscal Year VAC Committee Chair and Alternate Chair

The current Vendor Advisory Committee Chair is Alex Kopilevich, and the Alternate Chair is Jaklen Keshishyan. Alex Kopilevich indicated that he would be happy to continue to serve as the Chair until the end of his Vendor Advisory Committee term in 2026.

The Chair is required to serve on another committee. The time commitment is 10 to 15 hours per month.

Any Vendor Advisory Committee member who is interested in nominating themselves to be the Chair or Alternate Chair should email Board Support and provide a statement about why they want the position and their qualifications by April 27, 2025.

7. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

7.1 NLACRC Local Delegation Team

Belinda Abatesi presented an update on the local delegation teams. There are currently two delegation teams that will be meeting with two different assembly members the week of April 14-18, 2025. The delegation teams will speak to legislators about NLACRC's current priorities and advocate for the community.

Jen Pippard:

Inquired what participation in a local delegation team entails.

Belinda Abatesi:

Explained that the hours are determined based on the legislators' schedules. Meetings should be at most one hour. Each delegation team is comprised of NLACRC staff, a family member, a Board member, an individual served, and a service provider. The talking points will vary based on the legislator and what they advocate for. NLACRC staff try to match service providers with legislators based on their expertise and whether they are constituents of that legislator.

Octavia Watkins:

Inquired when delegation team members will receive the talking points for next week's meetings.

Belinda Abatesi:

Responded that the information would be sent to the delegation teams by April 11, 2025.

Jaklen Keshishyan

Inquired about participation in the delegation teams and whether service providers must be members of the VAC to participate.

Belinda Abatesi:

Responded that she will connect Jaklen Keshishyan with an NLACRC staff member to advise on participation in the delegation teams.

There was an inquiry on what information is collected from service providers on the delegation team application form.

Belinda Abatesi:

Explained that the form currently only asks for the service provider's phone number, email, and address, which are used to look up which constituent they belong to. However, the team is planning to add questions about the applicant's area of expertise and why they want to participate.

ACTION – Belinda Abatesi will connect Jaklen Keshishyan with the right NLACRC staff member to advise on participation in a delegation team.

7.2 Service Provider Vendor Training Updates

Alex Kopilevich presented service provider vendor training updates. A VAC subcommittee should be formed to work on service provider vendor training. The goal of the membership program is to assist new vendors who are being onboarded. The plan is to compile a list of vendors who want to participate and their areas of expertise, as well as to have the information readily available to provide to new vendors to guide them. The team will finalize a meeting with Board Support to put the program in place, and they hope to have it running by the start of the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

7.3 Self-Determination Update

Silvia Renteria-Haro presented the self-determination update. The next team meeting will be held virtually on April 17, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

Octavia Watkins:

Inquired if independent vendors need to become vendorized to provide self-determination support.

Silvia Renteria-Haro:

Responded that generally, yes, service providers who will be supporting consumers through the transition need to be vendorized. She also described another program option through NLACRC that does not require vendorization.

8. REPORT OUTS

8.1 Deputy Director Officer's Report

Evelyn McOmie presented the Deputy Director Officer's report.

There is a fully staffed management team for the transition department. A few supervisors were present at the meeting and available for introductions.

The adult unit in San Fernando has reached the 70s in caseloads. School-aged units are still in the 10s. Two new units have been opened, with positive prospects being hired for the school-aged teams. The plan is to have the two units fully staffed by May, 2025.

The team is planning to open additional positions in Santa Clarita. The adult unit in Santa Clarita also has caseload numbers in the 80s.

An additional school-age transition unit has been opened in Antelope Valley.

Service providers were reminded POSs (Purchases of Service) are dictated by the needs of the individual, and the service coordinators should complete the POSs, not the vendors.

Several leads were present at the meeting to meet with service providers. Of the 15 leads, 12 were hired to train new service coordinators.

There was an inquiry regarding caseload numbers for early start and leads for early start. Evelyn McOmie noted the early start caseload numbers are in the 40s-60s across all three valleys and confirmed that there are leads for all the departments. Also, there was an inquiry

on when the service providers' suggestions and emails will receive faster responses based on the planned new system. Evelyn McOmie noted that it is premature to roll out the plan. All the recommendations from the vendor forum were taken under advisement. Categories will be created for prioritization, and definitions will be made for what falls into each category. A more detailed update will be provided in May, 2025. The Community Services team will partner with the service providers and consider their input.

8.2 Chief Financial Officer's Report

Evelyn McOmie presented the Chief Financial Officer's report on behalf of Vini Montague. Service providers will need to inform their regional centers if they use generative AI. More information will be provided. NLACRC hired a controller on March 24, 2025, via internal promotion.

Alex Kopilevich:

Noted that POSs that have been received in the mail recently are not visible in the online portal.

ACTION – Board Support will report portal missing document issues to IT.

8.3 Community Services Director's Report

Venus Rodriguez-Khorasani presented the Community Services Director's report on behalf of Arshalous Garlanian to the committee, highlighting he important points.

8.4 Legislative Report

Belinda Abatesi presented the Legislative Report, highlighting important points.

Jodie Agnew-Navarro:

Noted there are a few rallies to protest the Medicaid changes and event information was provided.

ACTION – Jodie Agnew-Navarro will email a list of events protesting Medicaid cuts to Board Support.

ACTION – Board Support will distribute the list of events protesting Medicaid cuts to service providers.

8.5 Executive Director's Report

Angela Pao-Johnson presented the Executive Director's report, highlighting important points.

There was an inquiry on whether the 37% of at-risk Medicaid funding is DDS or federal funding? Angela Pao-Johnson explained that the federal funds are at risk, and they make up 37% of the total funding. The rest of the funding is from the state. Additionally, there was an inquiry regarding if the federal funding is conditional on anything and whether there are actions service providers can take to retain more funding? Angela Pao-Johnson explained that the algorithm for how the cuts will be made is unknown at the moment.

9. OPEN DISCUSSION TOPICS

9.1 Attendance Commitment by Consumers

Many service providers are interested in the topic of increasing consumer participation. Service providers lose money due to not receiving funding but need to pay staff when there are short-term cancellations and no-shows by consumers.

Alex Kopilevich noted that he has spoken to DDS representatives, who suggested introducing raffles for families to participate. Other service providers in attendance noted that they have found it helpful to have continuous conversations with families about consistency and explain how it affects both their progress and the program. Some service providers have a client services liaison who contacts high cancellation-risk families in advance of appointments.

Jodie Agnew-Navarro noted that in the early start meeting, participation issues due to ICE enforcement concerns were discussed. Other attendees noted that they had not noticed increased participation issues due to immigration status concerns. A service provider noted that they provided their staff with language to use if there is a confrontation with ICE.

Service providers inquired if it is possible to have more contractual recourse for short-term cancellations, so there is another escalation level for issues. Service providers cannot charge cancellation fees due to the lack of funding for the programs. There is a section in the program design that can be used for business processes and policies for these situations. If the program design is approved by NLACRC, the regional center will back up the vendor in case of a breach. It is important to fully review the service provider rules with the families served.

10. COMMITTEE WORK GROUP INFORMATION

10.1 Early Start Services

Jodie Agnew-Navarro reported that the Early Start Services Committee work group met in March, 2025. There were issues with the platform being used, so she was not able to attend the meeting. The Early Start team discussed ICE enforcement activities and how it is enforcing families. There were discussions about rate reform.

10.2 School Age Services

Paul Borda reported that the School Age Services Committee work group met on April 8, 2025. The first main topic was self-determination, with continued questions about how it works and how vendors can get involved to support the program. The Committee engaged with Robin on this topic. The second main topic was rate reform, with many questions about timing and processes. The next School Age Services Committee meeting will be on May 13, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

10.3 Adult Services

Octavia Watkins reported that the Adult Service Committee work group met in March, 2025. The next meeting will be on May 19, 2025. The main topic to be discussed at the next meeting is housing and access for consumers. The Adult Services Committee is planning to engage one to two agencies to attend and speak to the group about how best to support clients with housing.

11. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

11.1 Administrative Affairs

Jaklen Keshishyan reported that the Administrative Affairs Committee did not meet since the last Vendor Advisory Committee meeting. The next Administrative Affairs Committee meeting will be on April 17, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

11.2 Consumer Services

Sharon Weinberg reported that the Consumer Services Committee has not met since the last Vendor Advisory Committee meeting. The next Consumer Services Committee meeting will be on April 16, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

11.3 Government and Community Relations

Jodie Agnew-Navarro reported that the Government and Community Relations Committee have not met since the last Vendor Advisory Committee meeting. The next Government and Community Relations Committee meeting will be on May 21, 2025.

11.4 Nominating

Alex Kopilevich reported that the Nominating Committee met on April 2, 2025. The Nominating Committee meets every month to ensure that all positions are filled. Four of the five applications that were reported at the last Vendor Advisory Committee meeting have been processed. The remaining one had issues. An additional applicant applied after the last Vendor Advisory Committee meeting, and they have also been processed. The next Nominating Committee meeting will be on May 7, 2025.

11.5 Strategic Planning

Octavia Watkins reported that the Strategic Planning Committee did not meet since the last Vendor Advisory Committee meeting. The next Strategic Planning Committee meeting will be on May 5, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

12. BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

ACTION – Board Support will inquire with the Nominating Committee and the Board about how to proceed with nominations for the VAC Chair and Alternate Chair.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC INPUT

Kimberly, Maxim Healthcare:

Inquired if it will be possible for vendors to meet new service coordinators outside of the vendor fair to help with training and bridge the gap between service providers and coordinators.

Evelyn McOmie:

Explained that the training department sends out new service coordinators to vendors to observe and learn. The sign-up list for vendors is opened every November at VAC meetings, and the training and development schedule for the year is created based on the sign-ups.

Paul Borda:

Noted this item can be discussed at the next School-Age Committee meeting.

Ricki Macken Chilvers:

Inquired if vendor fairs and site visits are the only ways for vendors to meet new service coordinators.

Evelyn McOmie:

Confirmed that it is correct and noted that having additional options to meet service coordinators would give some vendors an unfair advantage. NLACRC is working hard to ensure all vendors get equitable access to the service coordinators.

Ricki Macken Chilvers:

Inquired what percentage of service coordinators travel to the vendor fair locations because her representative vendor only serves Santa Clarita, but the vendor fairs are in Antelope Valley and San Fernando Valley.

Evelyn McOmie:

Encouraged all vendors to sign up for the vendor fairs because all service coordinators are required to attend at least one vendor fair.

Jodie Agnew-Navarro:

Expressed appreciation for the way NLACRC is working to ensure things are equitable.

Jodie Agnew-Navarro:

Reminded the attendees that the Anaheim rally for Medicaid is on April 22, 2025, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and the Bakersfield rally is on April 24, 2025, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. She noted that the consumers receive a lot of funding other than through NLACRC service providers. Therefore, the federal Medicaid cuts will affect consumers and families on many fronts, not just the regional center services.

14. NEXT MEETING

The dates of the next Vendor Advisory Committee are May 8, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. at the Santa Clarita Valley office and June 12, 2025, at the Antelope Valley office.

15. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made and carried, it was agreed that there was no further business to transact; the meeting closed at 11:26 a.m.

DISCLAIMER

The above document should be used as a summary of the motions passed and issues discussed at the meeting. This document shall not be considered a verbatim copy of every word spoken at the meeting.

Director

Director

Date

Date