

**NORTH LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGIONAL CENTER (NLACRC)
9200 OAKDALE AVENUE, SUITE 100
CHATSWORTH, CA 91311**

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
VIRTUAL MEETING – NLACRC CHATSWORTH VALLEY OFFICE/ZOOM
AUGUST 13, 2025 7:00 P.M.**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Sharmila Brunjes (President), Juan Hernandez (Vice President), Curtis Wang (Secretary), Anna Hurst (Treasurer), Alex Kopilevich (VAC Chair), Leticia Garcia (ARCA Rep), George Alvarado, Cathy Blin, Nicholas Abrahms, Jason Taketa, Jacquie Colton, Jeremy Sunderland, Laura Monge, Jennifer Koster, Blanca Chavez

ABSENT:

STAFF:

Angela Pao-Johnson - Executive Director, Evelyn McOmie – Deputy Director, Vini Montague – Chief Financial Officer, Betsy Monahan – Human Resources Director, Megan Mitchell, Chris Whitlock, John Van de Riet, Arezo Abedi, Lindsay Granger, Silvia Renteria-Haro,

GUESTS:

Xochitl Gonzalez – DDS, Brian Winfield – DDS, Marianita, Richard Dier

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND CALL TO ORDER

The officers of the Board of Trustees introduced themselves.

There being a quorum present, and adequate and proper notice of the meeting having been given, the meeting was called to order at 6:11 p.m.

The Sharmila Brunjes, Board of Trustees President, shared the mission and vision of the NLACRC and reminded attendees of the Board of Trustees Civility Code.

2. IMPACT STORY FROM INDIVIDUAL SERVED

Angela Pao-Johnson shared an impact story from individual served Edie Delgadillo.

3. BOARD MEMBER ATTENDANCE/QUORUM

Board members were confirmed in attendance in-person or on Zoom.

4. AGENDA – APPROVAL

A correction was made to the agenda, changing the length of time for item 14 from 1 minute to 3 minutes.

On a motion made by Jennifer Koster, seconded by George Alvarado, it was resolved to approve the agenda with the correction. Motion carried.

5. PUBLIC INPUT & COMMENTS—RESERVED FOR AGENDA ITEMS

6. CONSENT/ACTION ITEMS

There was discussion for Consent Items D, E, and F. Anna Hurst noted for Items E and F that during a special meeting of the Executive Finance Committee on July 31st, and this was a public meeting with the intention of delivering specific information to DDS.

Anna Hurst provided context on the ED evaluation process, noting that following the board member transition in January, the evaluation process was reviewed to ensure neutrality. Historically, evaluations were conducted through an external lawyer using a fully paper-based process, which resulted in higher billed hours. A new contractor, Enright & Ocheltree, was identified to manage a digital-based process, reducing hours while maintaining impartiality in reviewing survey feedback on ED performance. This approach was previously approved by the Executive Council and is presented here for ratification. Items D, E, and F were previously voted on by the Executive Finance Committee and now require board ratification.

On a motion made by Curtis Wang, seconded by George Alvarado, it was resolved to approve consent items A, B, and C and to ratify consent items D, E, and F. Motion Carried.

7. CLOSED SESSION

On a motion made by Nicholas Abrahms, seconded by Jennifer Koster, closed session was entered at 6:17 p.m. Motion carried.

Closed session was entered to discuss employment issues and real estate. No votes were taken.

On a motion made by Jennifer Koster, seconded by George Alvarado, the Board of Trustees exited closed session at 7:01 p.m. Motion carried.

8. ACTION ITEMS

8.1 Approval of ARCA Academy Invoice

Vini Montague, CFO, presented the details of the ARCA Academy. The invoice, included in the meeting packet, represents a voluntary donation to the California Community Collaborative for Developmental Services, the non-profit entity that conducts the Audit Academy. The requested contribution is \$5,000 and was already included in the board budget approved by the Executive Committee at the special meeting. The board was asked to approve the voluntary contribution.

On a motion made by Jennifer Koster, seconded by George Alvarado, it was resolved to approve the ARCA Academy Invoice. Motion Carried.

8.2 Approval of Updated Delegate Conservatorship Policy

Deputy Director, Evelyn McOmie presented the updated draft of the delegate conservatorship policy, originally developed in November–December of the previous year. Feedback from the DDS resulted in two new bullet points: the first outlines steps to take if community living

specialists identify a conflict of interest, and the second specifies the frequency with which staff must review the policy. Additional updates clarified the role of community living specialists for completeness. The board was asked to approve the updated draft. Curtis Wang motioned to approve, Jennifer Poster seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor and no abstentions or oppositions.

On a motion made by Curtis Wang and seconded by Jennifer Koter, it was resolved to approve the updated delegate conservatorship policy. Motion carried.

8.3 Approval of Conflict Resolution Plan for Leyda Medina (CSC)

Human Resources Director Betsy Monahan presented a proposed conflict of interest resolution plan for CSC Leyda Medina, who has a family member employed as a caregiver for Choice Home Care, a vendor in the agency's catchment area. The plan was designed to mitigate any potential conflict regarding this provider. The board was asked to approve the plan so it could be added to the agency's transparency page and submitted to the Office of Community Operations at DDS. A correction was made to the agenda item correcting the spelling of Leday Medina. Alex made the motion to approve, George seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor and no abstentions or oppositions.

On a motion made by Alex Kopilevich, seconded by George Alvarado, it was resolved to approve the conflict resolution plan for Leyda Medina. Motion carried.

ACTION: The conflict resolution plan will be sent to DDS and uploaded to the transparency page.

8.4 Approval of Committee Assignments for Fiscal Year 2025-26

Sharmila Brunjes, President, proposed tabling the discussion on committee assignments to give trustees additional time to consider which committees they wish to join, including the three available voting positions on the Executive Finance Committee (formerly the Administrative Affairs Committee), which are elected by the full board. Trustees were reminded that they could indicate interest immediately, or via email to Sharmila Brunjes or Lindsay Granger, Board Support, over the coming month. The motion to table the item was seconded by Jennifer, and with no discussion, the item was officially tabled for the September meeting.

On a motion made by Sharmila Brunjes, seconded by Jennifer Koster, it was resolved to table the approval of committee assignments for Fiscal Year 2025-26 until the September 10th board meeting. Motion carried.

8.5 Approval of OnBoard Software Platform

Sharmila Brunjes presented the proposed adoption of the Onboard software platform to update the board management system, improve communication, document access, and meeting coordination. The board had tested both Onboard and Boardable platforms, with Onboard preferred for ease of use. Onboard's annual fee ranges from \$9,000 for the essential package to \$21,000, and a three-year contract was proposed starting with the \$9,000 package. This platform would replace the current SharePoint system and provide a centralized hub for board communications, document management, and meeting notifications, minimizing email usage and improving compliance with the Public Records Act. Trustees discussed the number of users needed, confirming the platform could accommodate the board and senior staff within the 45-user limit. The board was asked to approve moving forward with Onboard.

On a motion made by George Alvarado, seconded by Curtis Wang, it was resolved to move forward with Onboard. Motion carried.

ACTION: The contract will be drafted and reviewed by staff and implemented by Board Support.

9. BOARD BUSINESS

9.1 Board of Trustees Deadlines for Fiscal Year 2025-26

Sharmila Brunjes introduced the Board of Trustees' fiscal year deadlines, previously referred to as the "critical calendar," which is designed to help trustees track important due dates.

9.2 Update on Board Retreat

Sharmila Brunjes then provided an update on the upcoming board retreat, scheduled for September 6th at the Chatsworth office. The retreat will be an all-day, in-person event focused on setting goals for the Executive Director for the current fiscal year, her second year in the role. Trustees were encouraged to begin considering potential goals, which will be discussed collaboratively at the retreat with input from Angela Pao-Johnson on feasibility. Sharmila Brunjes noted that the retreat will also serve as an opportunity for trustees to strengthen their skills as board members. Additionally, trustees were reminded that the retreat work group meets on Thursdays around 10:30 or 11:00 a.m.

9.3 RFP for Strategic Plan Consultant

Vini Montague noted that this is a duplicate of board business item E. This will be deferred to be discussed with board business item E.

9.4 Review of Monthly Whistleblower Log

Human Resources Director Betsy Monahan presented the whistleblower log covering the period of June 16 through July 15. A total of 13 reports were logged: 4 from anonymous individuals, 4 from community members, 3 from NLACRC employees, and 2 from family members. Of these, 4 cases were closed during the reporting period, with allegations deemed unsubstantiated overall but with sufficient evidence in each case to substantiate at least one allegation, leading to corrective action before closure. Nine cases remain open. The monthly report for July through August will be submitted to DDS on August 15, and an update will be provided to the Executive Finance Committee.

9.5 Seeking Volunteers for the RFP Panel

The Board discussed the request for proposals (RFP) for a strategic plan consultant, which is currently posted on the NLACRC website following the sunset of the previous five-year strategic plan earlier this year. Angela Pao-Johnson explained that the prior plan was phased out due to misalignment with contractual language and its goals but emphasized that a new strategic plan is critical moving forward. To support this process, a selection panel is being formed to review consultant proposals. Sharmila Brunjes confirmed she will serve on the panel along with two executive leadership team members and invited one additional Board Trustee to volunteer. Trustees interested in serving were asked to submit their names to Lindsay, with current volunteers including Jeremy, George, and Evelyn. If more than one trustee expresses interest, the selection will be made by drawing names at random on Wednesday, August 20.

ACTION: Board Support will make a note of Jeremy Sunderland, George Alvarado, and Evelyn McOmie expressing interest in joining the RFP Panel.

10. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Angela Pao-Johnson reported on recent highlights, including the Legislative Breakfast, which was a strong success with panels on transportation, Medicaid barriers, housing, and early intervention. The Jenny Retzinger Award was presented to former Board Member and vendor CEO Suad Bisogno, and the event was emceed by long-time advocate Marty Omato. Board members were encouraged to support the NLACRC podcast, which features legislators and community-focused topics such as employment.

Updates were provided on the Self-Determination Program, noting that DDS is engaging stakeholders to improve guidance on budgets, employee IDs for minors, rate reform impacts, and large budget increases, while also assessing program cost-effectiveness. Caseload ratios have shown marked improvement across all categories, though statutory requirements have not yet been met. DDS has reduced Special Contract Language requirements from seven to four sections, with criteria to exit including sustained caseload ratio compliance, high IPP satisfaction survey results, quarterly meetings, and whistleblower reporting.

The strong progress with recruitment was reported, with 156 new hires in FY 2024–25 (an 84% increase over the prior year). Lead Trainer positions and Self-Determination Program Lead Coordinators have been filled to support onboarding and case management. Quality improvement efforts were highlighted, including a one-click survey for real-time service feedback, a successful resource fair with 60 organizations and 400 staff in attendance (97% satisfaction), and ongoing efforts to streamline social recreation reimbursement.

The report concluded by staff and the Board of Trustees for significant progress, noting DDS reduced NLACRC's special contract requirements from nine and a half pages to one and a half.

11. SELF-DETERMINATION PROGRAM (SDP) REPORT

Juan Hernandez, SDP Liaison, confirmed he will attend the August 23rd meeting and asked about Self-Determination Program (SDP) updates. Sylvia Renteria-Haro, Consumer Director for branch offices and the SDP, reported that as of August 1st there are 593 program participants, with 13 new transitions in August and a total of 118 transitions since January 2025. Sylvia Renteria-Haro noted there are no new directives from DDS but emphasized that the department is collecting input to ensure program sustainability. DDS will host a community webinar on August 15th to gather feedback on budgets. The link will be shared in the chat and possibly posted on the website. Sylvia Renteria-Haro concluded by asking if there were any questions.

12. PUBLIC INPUT & COMMENTS

Richard Dier provided feedback, expressing appreciation for the positive tone of the meeting and thanking participants for contributing to that atmosphere. He shared that he is pleased Juan Hernandez will serve as liaison to the Self-Determination Committee and looks forward to collaborating with him to ensure information is shared effectively, particularly as the board undertakes a close review of self-determination issues. He emphasized the committee's role in educating board members on these matters.

Additionally, he raised a concern regarding the new onboard software, noting he will be monitoring its use to ensure it does not limit access to information or exclude public

participants beyond the 45 members. He concluded by thanking the board and expressing anticipation of working with Juan in a new setting.

Jon Francis provided perspective on the previously mentioned dollar figures comparing self-determination and the traditional system. He emphasized that large changes in individual budgets are not abuse, but rather reflect decades of underfunding, misalignment with actual needs, and barriers in accessing traditional services. He noted these changes often arise from new diagnoses, life transitions, housing needs, crises, or the inability of generic services to meet unique needs.

Francis stressed the importance of understanding the context behind these figures to avoid misinterpretation. He expressed appreciation for the board's efforts in fostering a positive and inclusive environment and highlighted that his comments represent the concerns and experiences of individuals impacted by services, particularly regarding their stability and reliability.

George Alvarado spoke as a member of the public and shared updates on his projects. He described working on an e-bike club and creating a video in collaboration with the Regional Center to guide consumers on how Community Services Employees (CSEs) can communicate effectively about their services. The video is not yet ready for release. He also shared that he has a QR code to support his e-bike initiative. The board thanked George for sharing his work and contributions as a consumer of NLACRC services.

Jekora spoke about the Self-Determination Program (SDP), emphasizing the need for clearer communication regarding processes, timeframes, and services, particularly during the transition from the traditional model to SDP to prevent any lapse in services. Jekora stressed that services should remain person-centered and not default to pre-established vendor programs. She also raised concerns regarding social recreation services, noting delays in funding and reimbursement, sometimes exceeding a year. She suggested improving the clarity and efficiency of the communication and coordination between consumers, families, and the Miji Financial Management Services (FMS) to ensure timely access to activities and reimbursements.

The board acknowledged her feedback and reminded attendees of an upcoming DDS webinar on August 15th about SDP, aimed at improving the program's processes and efficiency. The board also reaffirmed their commitment to transparency, noting that all board business is conducted publicly.

13. ITEMS 11-21

The Board received the following committee reports for information:

- Association of Regional Center Agencies presented by Lety Garcia.
Lety Garcia provided an update from the last ARCA meeting held at the end of June. She highlighted a presentation by South Central LA Regional Center on their award-winning Specialized Services Unit, which serves individuals with developmental disabilities involved in the judicial system, offering tailored interventions and support. Lety Garcia noted that the unit can assist families in urgent situations, such as arrests, typically within a week, and expressed interest in leveraging this program for local consumers.

It was reported that DSP University funding was approved in the governor's budget to provide additional training for service personnel. DDS has launched a newly designed website for easier access to information. However, funding cuts have led to the cancellation of implicit bias training for regional centers. DDS is reviewing

restrictive policies for social recreation to ensure access, and early start caseloads have surpassed pre-COVID levels. A new DDS Chief Deputy of Community Services, Lee Yang, will oversee self-determination, employment for people with special needs, and service equity. The self-determination program budget for 2026 increased to \$230 million.

Lety Garcia also announced the ARCA Academy leadership training for staff and board members on November 15–16 at Alta California Regional Center in Sacramento, with details on reservations forthcoming. She emphasized that all board members are budgeted to attend and expressed enthusiasm about ARCA's initiatives in the current service landscape.

- Executive Finance Committee presented by Sharmila Brunjes and Anna Hurst.
A special Executive Finance Committee meeting was held on July 31 to address urgent board and DDS matters. During the meeting, the committee approved and submitted a draft Board Budget for FY 2025–26. Due to recent changes in the special contract language, the board will no longer require DDS approval for every expense or 90-day spending authorizations. This marks significant progress in governance, and appreciation was expressed for Juan Hernandez's leadership. Treasurer Anna Hurst presented the draft budget, which was developed based on prior year expenses and aligned with established fiscal policies. It was clarified that the budget is separate from consumer funds and does not impact the fulfillment of consumer needs. The budget includes funding for the board retreat, ARCA activities, and a governance consultant to replace DDS technical advisors and support continued board growth. Legal expenses were reduced by approximately \$150,000, though funds remain allocated for policy review and the Executive Director evaluation process. Unused funds will not be reallocated but returned to NLACRC's operational fund, keeping expenses consistent with prior years. The budget is intended as a guiding framework and may be adjusted as needed throughout the year.
The board expressed appreciation to staff for their support during the governance transition and acknowledged Aaron's significant contributions and dedication.
- Consumer Advisory Committee presented by Juan Hernandez.
- Nominating Committee presented by Curtis Wang.
- Vendor Advisory Committee presented by Alex Kopilevich.

As reports were presented, no observations or comments were noted.

14. ANNOUNCEMENTS / INFORMATION

15. NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for September 10, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

16. ADJOURNMENT

Sharmila Brunjes adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.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.