

**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
SEPTEMBER 11, 2025, 9:30 A.M.**

MEMBERS:

Alex Kopilevich, Jaklen Keshishyan, Jodie Agnew-Navarro, Octavia Watkins, Masood Babaeian, Paul Borda, Andrea Devers, Ute Escorcia, Vahe Mkrtchian, Jen Pippard, Sharon Weinberg, Cal Enriquez, Jason Gillis, Tal Segalovich, David Ebrami, Ricki Macken-Chilvers, Desiree Misrachi

STAFF:

Angela Pao-Johnson, Evelyn McOmie, Vini Montague, Arshalous Garlanian, Silvia Renteria-Haro, Robin Monroe, Belinda Abatesi, Lindsay Granger, Arezo Abedi

GUESTS:

ABSENT:

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 9:32 a.m. Alex Kopilevich presided as Vendor Advisory Committee Chair.

2. COMMITTEE MEMBER ATTENDANCE

Members were asked to identify themselves when speaking or making a motion. Committee members introduced themselves since this was the first meeting of the year.

3. SHARE IMPACT STORY FROM INDIVIDUAL SERVED

Executive Director Angela Pao-Johnson shared an impact story from Erick Campos.

4. PUBLIC INPUT

Bruce Gale began by commenting on recent DDS service code changes and the challenges they have created for vendors—particularly the impact on his staff and payroll operations.

Angela Pao-Johnson noted that DDS has issued approximately 280 directives within the past 18 months, many of which stem from legislation that DDS must interpret and implement. Angela Pao-Johnson explained that legislators often act in response to public concerns and emphasized the importance of the disability community presenting a unified voice. Angela Pao-Johnson encouraged identifying three to five key priorities that most affect the community and communicating these clearly and consistently to legislators using accessible, straightforward language.

Alex Kopilevich agreed with Angela Pao-Johnson's points, acknowledging that while advocacy is essential, it can be difficult for providers to balance legislative engagement with the core focus on clinical programs and direct services. Alex Kopilevich supported greater collaboration among agencies to align advocacy efforts and develop shared priorities.

Bruce Gale added that Bruce Gale has extensive experience in data collection and policy analysis, referencing previous work gathering data from hundreds of vendors and over a thousand psychologists that helped influence telehealth and licensing reforms. Bruce Gale offered Bruce Gale's expertise and the assistance of Bruce Gale's statistician to support data-driven advocacy efforts.

Alex Kopilevich thanked Bruce Gale for the offer and confirmed that Alex Kopilevich would follow up to coordinate next steps.

Jodie Agnew-Navarro from CHIME recommended that the group contact the California Policy Center on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and reach out to Teresa Anderson regarding a potential collaboration. Jodie Agnew-Navarro noted that the organization recently conducted an in-depth statewide study on the workforce crisis in Self-Determination Programs (SDPs) and regularly undertakes new research initiatives that result in position statements.

Jodie Agnew-Navarro suggested that this topic would be a valuable follow-up for the Policy Center, given their broad network and partnerships with organizations such as CALTASH to engage providers across the state.

Angela Pao-Johnson thanked Jodie Agnew-Navarro for the recommendation and confirmed that the suggestion would be noted for follow-up. Angela Pao-Johnson then invited one final public comment before closing the discussion.

5. CONSENT ITEMS

On a motion made by Sharon Weinberg, seconded by Jaklen Keshishyan, it was resolved to approve the minutes of the Vendor Advisory Committee meeting held on August 14, 2025, as presented. Motion carried.

On a motion made by David Ebrami, seconded by Masood Babaeian, it was resolved to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

6. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.1 Update on Vendor Mentorship Program

Paul Borda provided an update on the Vendor Mentorship Program, noting that he met with Venus Rodriguez-Khorasani and Arshalous Garlanian the previous week to begin developing a project charter outlining the program's purpose, goals, and structure. The group made progress in defining the rationale for forming the subgroup and identifying the intended outcomes.

Paul Borda shared that he will revise and finalize the draft charter based on their discussion and present it to the team for review and approval. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for September 25 to discuss the finalized charter and determine next steps, including meeting schedules, potential working group opportunities, and communication plans.

Paul Borda noted that while some foundational work remains, the project is moving forward and making steady progress. The group expressed appreciation for the update and invited any questions regarding the program.

6.2 Self-Determination Update

As of August 1, the Self-Determination Program has 593 participants, with 13 transitions this month, totaling 118 since January. A local volunteer meeting is scheduled for August 21, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM, and information is available on the regional center website. DDS is seeking community input on upcoming changes to individual budgets aimed at making the program sustainable, with a meeting scheduled tomorrow from 2:00 to 3:00 PM. Feedback from regional centers, vendors, families, and consumers will inform the rollout of changes, anticipated by August 2026.

7. REPORT OUTS

7.1 Deputy Director Officer's Report

Evelyn McOmie, Deputy Director, provided comprehensive operational updates on the statewide vendorization rollout, SANDIS IPP system, Self-Determination Program (SDP) sessions, Adaptive Skills Training (AST) clarification, and caseload progress.

Statewide Standardized Vendorization

Evelyn McOmie reported that the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) statewide vendorization standardization process will take effect on January 1, 2026. To prepare, North Los Angeles County Regional Center (NLACRC) will begin a soft launch of the new process this month. This pilot phase will allow NLACRC to mirror DDS procedures, establish internal workflows, and identify support needs before full implementation.

Under the new model, all vendorization applications must be completed within a 45-day timeline from start to finish. As a result, NLACRC will gradually phase out its previous model of extensive individualized technical assistance. Instead, applicant conferences will be offered to allow potential vendors to ask questions and receive guidance within the new structure.

Arshalous Garlanian, who serves on the DDS statewide committee, will provide additional detail on implementation timelines in her report. Vendorizations submitted by Friday, September 12 or earlier will continue under the current process, while those received beginning Monday, September 15 will follow the new 45-day structure. Evelyn McOmie emphasized that this soft launch will help the Regional Center establish a consistent rhythm and ensure readiness for full statewide rollout in January.

SANDIS IPP Update

Evelyn McOmie confirmed that the SANDIS IPP system is now fully deployed. While minor technical issues have occurred with the signature form, NLACRC has implemented a temporary solution to prevent any service interruptions.

A DDS survey has been added to the end of the IPP process to collect statewide data on participant experiences. Evelyn McOmie encouraged vendors to remind individuals and families served—both through NLACRC and other regional centers—to complete the short, five-question survey. The responses help DDS assess the quality and consistency of IPP experiences across all 21 regional centers.

SDP Technical Support Sessions

Evelyn McOmie announced that NLACRC's SDP experts, Silvia Renteria-Haro and Robin Monroe, will host four technical assistance sessions for vendors to address rate reform, service definitions, and billing requirements.

Scheduled dates:

- September 29, 3:00 p.m.
- October 21, 1:00 p.m.
- November 19, 9:00 a.m.
- December 4, 3:00 p.m.

A handout listing these dates will be shared with the entire vendor community. These sessions are designed to clarify expectations for vendors and provide a forum for questions ahead of statewide implementation.

Clarification on Adaptive Skills Training (AST)

Evelyn McOmie clarified that Adaptive Skills Training (AST) must align with rate reform classifications under both traditional and Self-Determination Program (SDP) services. AST services funded at a bachelor's level must be delivered by a bachelor's-level provider, and services funded at a master's level must be delivered by a master's-level provider. Substituting lower qualifications for higher reimbursement rates is not permitted.

Evelyn McOmie explained that some individuals have requested master's-level rates without the intent to employ staff with a master's degree, which is noncompliant. All service determinations must follow the Individual Program Plan (IPP), which remains the legally binding document defining services and funding levels.

During discussion, Alex Kopilevich asked whether the 10B and 10M experience requirements outlined in DDS guidelines also apply under SDP. Evelyn McOmie confirmed they do and emphasized that flexibility and creativity in SDP belong to the individual participant—not to vendors. Participants manage their own budgets and make service choices, while vendors must adhere to established service definitions. Evelyn McOmie further noted that SDP budgets will be subject to auditing, requiring compliance consistent with traditional service delivery.

Caseload and Purchase of Service (POS) Update

Evelyn McOmie reported that NLACRC currently serves 40,404 individuals across 582 caseloads, with 18 caseloads vacant, marking a significant improvement from 81 vacant caseloads earlier in the year. Only 998 individuals remain without an assigned Service Coordinator (CSC)—a substantial reduction from 5,600.

Supervisors and CSCs are now trained to approve POS authorizations, with NLACRC approving an average of 6,000 new POS authorizations per month, including 6,278 in August. These efficiencies have accelerated service delivery and reduced delays. Evelyn McOmie thanked vendors for their collaboration and patience as new staff are trained and systems stabilize.

Code of Conduct Reminder

Evelyn McOmie concluded by reminding attendees of NLACRC's Code of Conduct, which promotes professionalism, respect, and accountability among all stakeholders. The Code is

posted in each office, shared with families, and available for distribution upon request. Vendors were encouraged to share it with families and colleagues whenever possible.

Evelyn McOmie emphasized that while occasional stress or frustration may occur, persistent unprofessional behavior is not acceptable. Copies of the Code of Conduct were distributed during the meeting, and Lindsay Granger shared a digital version in the chat for online attendees.

7.2 Chief Financial Officer's Report

Chief Financial Officer Vini Montague presented the financial report. For FY 2025, NLACRC received the A2 allocation of \$1.5 billion and projects total annual expenditures of \$1.17 to almost \$1.18 billion, resulting in a projected Purchase of Services (POS) deficit of \$38.6 million. DDS has been notified, and additional allocations are expected to address the projection. For FY 2026, NLACRC received a preliminary allocation of almost \$1.1 billion; the first projection will be completed in December, at which time a surplus/deficit outlook will be reported.

In staffing, Robert Gan, Accounting Supervisor, returned from extended leave. Justice Agonoy, Controller, maintained operations during the absence. A new Accounting Specialist has been hired to fill a recent retirements and is in training. Updated contact assignments will be posted on the website; temporary coverage is in place.

Regarding year-end, FY 2023–2024 is closing. The final date to submit invoices is February 6, 2026. NLACRC will post a notice on the website reminding service providers to submit any outstanding invoices by that deadline.

7.3 Community Services Director's Report

Community Services Director Arshalous Garlanian announced the DSP Collaborative Kickoff Webinar on September 23. Local regional centers are launching an online jobs platform where service providers can post openings and Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) can apply. Arshalous Garlanian encouraged registration, and flyers were provided. Additional outreach activities will be conducted over the coming months to promote the platform and expand awareness across the community.

Arshalous Garlanian provided an overview of the standardized vendorization soft launch beginning September 15, which aligns NLACRC's process with the DDS statewide model set to go live in January 2026. The soft launch will use NLACRC's current submission email, resourcedevelopment@nlacrc.org, until DDS activates the centralized portal. The new process will initially apply to new vendor applications, while existing vendors do not need to create a portal profile yet. The Resource Development team will complete current in-progress vendorizations ahead of the January transition.

Arshalous Garlanian described the four steps of the new process. First, providers will create a profile. DDS plans to merge the Service Provider Directory with the vendorization portal so that existing vendor information will automatically transfer in the future. Second, in the requirements phase, applicants will submit documentation showing they meet minimum qualifications, including a letter of support. NLACRC will issue eligibility determinations within fifteen days, either approving the applicant to move forward or finding them ineligible. Third, NLACRC will send a vendor packet and program design outline. While staff will continue reviewing and providing feedback, extensive technical assistance and iterative program design support will no longer be feasible under the standardized model. Providers will have

thirty days to submit their materials, and NLACRC will have thirty days to review and return feedback. Finally, once submissions are complete, NLACRC will issue an approval or denial.

Applications will continue to be routed by regional center location based on the provider's office address. Requirements and expectations will differ from the previous vendorization process, so providers are encouraged to review updated guidance before applying. Arshalous Garlanian emphasized the importance of clearly identifying the service type before beginning an application.

During discussion, Sharon Weinberg expressed concern that the removal of technical support and the shift to a statewide standardized process might discourage new vendor participation and weaken the regional center's ability to tailor programs to local community needs. Arshalous Garlanian acknowledged these concerns, noting that the change stems from state legislation and that regional centers have advocated to DDS to retain local control wherever possible.

Arshalous Garlanian then discussed updates to rate reform, noting that DDS has moved the hold-harmless rate end date from June 30, 2026, to February 28, 2026. The change will take effect March 1, 2026, and advocacy will be important for affected providers. DDS is also reviewing cost components for Specialized Residential Facilities (SRFs) to ensure rate models accurately reflect operating costs.

A new DDS directive was released for excess mileage reimbursement for Early Start Specialized Therapeutic Services and Respite. The directive allows providers to claim additional reimbursement for mileage beyond rate-model assumptions, effective for billing beginning November 1. DDS will provide a worksheet outlining how to apply, and NLACRC will share this information once available.

Regarding service code exemptions, Arshalous Garlanian reported that of approximately 380 exception requests statewide, 45 remain pending. Approved programs include Project SEARCH, employment, one-to-one services, social recreation, college-to-career, and medical management programs. Some programs received partial approvals for specific service components. NLACRC's Resource Development team is working directly with providers to transition or crosswalk services into updated codes as appropriate.

Arshalous Garlanian also provided a comprehensive update on the Quality Incentive Program (QIP). DDS will collect data from QIP-eligible providers this fall to inform program measures. Participation will allow providers to earn the QIP rate add-on for services from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. Eligibility will be determined based on service codes and fiscal year 2024–2025 POS authorizations. Existing providers must register in the Service Provider Directory by September 30, 2025. Starting with fiscal year 2026–2027, providers must meet applicable requirements for Electronic Visit Verification (EVV), Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) compliance, and annual fiscal review or audit to remain QIP-compliant.

Arshalous Garlanian noted that twenty-two vendors have not yet enrolled in EVV, and NLACRC's Quality Assurance department continues to review HCBS settings for compliance. Providers are encouraged to complete independent audits by February 26. The next DDS QIP workgroup meeting is scheduled for September 15. The Employment Access and Employment Capacity One-Time Incentive submission deadline is also September 15. DDS is closing out the final six one-time QIP incentives, which include Employment Capacity Provider Directory Wave 2 and Early Intervention. NLACRC has met the DDS 90-day processing requirement for prior incentives and confirmed that notifications are visible in e-billing.

Arshalous Garlanian announced that NLACRC will host a free Dementia Immersion Experience training on October 2 and 3 at the regional center. The training provides continuing

education units (CEUs) and is designed for providers who work with aging adults. DDS is also seeking provider feedback on the Life Outcomes Improvement System, which will eventually replace the existing SANDIS system. The new platform aims to streamline communication between individuals, families, service providers, and regional centers. The system is not yet built, and DDS is asking providers to participate in virtual sessions or submit input online about their needs and feature requests.

Sharon Weinberg inquired about the link for the P&I Management and Record Keeping class, and Arshalous Garlanian confirmed that the link is forthcoming.

Alex Kopilevich asked whether audit notification letters are still being sent, explaining that many providers have not received notices in recent years even though audits are required. Vini Montague confirmed that fiscal year 2024 letters should have already been distributed and that fiscal year 2025 letters will go out in early 2026. Vini Montague agreed to follow up to ensure all notifications are sent in a timely manner. Alex Kopilevich and Sharon Weinberg emphasized that the audit process is costly and time-consuming since it requires an independent CPA, underscoring the importance of early communication.

Arshalous Garlanian reminded attendees that NLACRC has created a Communication Strategies for Service Providers resource to improve internal communication and routing of provider inquiries. The guide was developed from community feedback gathered during prior vendor forums. Hard copies were available at the meeting, and Arshalous Garlanian confirmed an electronic version will be shared with providers.

Jaklen Keshishyan, MPH, raised a question regarding discrepancies in e-billing for the service provider directory one-time lump sum payment, noting that the dollar amounts displayed were incorrect for some vendors with multiple vendor numbers. Arshalous Garlanian stated that she would gather additional information and provide a detailed breakdown through Board Support once DDS issues clarification.

7.4 Legislative Report

Belinda Abatesi, Public Information Legislative Specialist, provided updates on federal, state, and community-level legislative and advocacy activities.

At the federal level, Belinda Abatesi reported ongoing discussions under Speaker Mike Johnson regarding a potential new reconciliation bill following the “One Big Beautiful Bill.” The proposed bill may include additional tax changes, with over 200 tax-related proposals already under consideration. Because reconciliation bills often include spending cuts to offset tax provisions, Medicaid and Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) funding could be affected. Belinda Abatesi emphasized that no formal bill has been introduced yet but encouraged everyone to remain informed and ready to respond as developments progress.

Belinda Abatesi highlighted The Future Is Now, a six-week free online course beginning September 17 for adults with developmental disabilities and their families. The course focuses on future planning, supported decision-making, and family empowerment and runs weekly from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. She encouraged attendees to share the opportunity with families.

In DDS program updates, Belinda Abatesi noted that the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is hosting in-person and virtual LOAS listening sessions to gather input from individuals and families on priorities for the new Life Outcomes Assessment System. Upcoming Quality Incentive Program (QIP) workgroup meetings are scheduled for September 15 and December 15, both from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. The Early Start Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) will meet on October 16–17 at Alta California Regional Center, with a virtual option available.

Belinda Abatesi shared several community events taking place in September and October. Disability Rights California will host “Habitability and the Right to Safe Living Conditions” on September 16 at 1:00 p.m., focusing on best practices for addressing unsafe housing and providing one-on-one tenant consultations. Assemblymember Nick Schultz will hold a virtual town hall on September 18 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. to discuss the impacts of H.R. 1 on California and engage directly with constituents. Assemblywoman Pilar Schiavo will host a Day of Service on September 27 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Pepperdine University, supporting local nonprofits and encouraging civic engagement. Assemblywoman Pilar Schiavo will also host a Senior Resource Fair on October 9 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Santa Clarita Senior Center, featuring interactive sessions, resources, and Q&A opportunities for seniors and families.

At the state legislative level, Belinda Abatesi reminded attendees that September 12 is the final day for each legislative house to pass bills, and October 12 is the deadline for the Governor to sign or veto passed legislation.

In the Vendors in Action section, Belinda Abatesi emphasized the importance of advocacy and collaboration between service providers and lawmakers to shape effective policy. She outlined several tools and initiatives for vendor participation, including the ARCA Voter Voice campaign, a new online platform allowing users to write letters to legislators, participate in phone banking, join rallies, and stay updated on policy issues. She also discussed the Arc of California’s Advocacy in Action training series, which teaches legislative processes, budget advocacy, and effective storytelling to influence policymakers. Additionally, the Contact Congress campaign allows individuals to easily send messages to federal representatives urging the protection of disability services and funding.

Belinda Abatesi encouraged everyday advocacy by inviting legislators to visit vendor programs, attending local town halls, sharing family and provider stories, and subscribing to ARCA’s legislative alerts and newsletters. She emphasized that consistent engagement ensures the disability community’s needs remain a priority at both the state and federal levels.

Belinda Abatesi concluded with legislative bill updates, noting that August 29 was the deadline for fiscal committees to report bills to the floor. Several bills were advanced or held in committee. She highlighted AB 1172, a bill sponsored by ARCA, which allows adult day programs to administer inhalable emergency anti-seizure medication—an important safety measure for individuals served.

Belinda Abatesi confirmed that ongoing tracking and updates will be shared as additional legislative outcomes are finalized. Attendees commended the clarity and interactivity of the presentation.

Following the report, Angela Pao-Johnson, Executive Director, commended Belinda Abatesi’s presentation and reinforced the importance of taking actionable advocacy steps. Angela Pao-Johnson emphasized that legislators care deeply about the personal impact and real stories from individuals and families served. She shared an example of direct service providers who encouraged adult consumers to collectively write letters to legislators about their experiences, even taking photos and sending messages together as part of advocacy activities. Angela Pao-Johnson noted that such efforts are empowering for participants and create a powerful collective voice when the community speaks directly to policymakers. She encouraged vendors to integrate these advocacy practices within their programs to help amplify the voices of those served.

7.5 Executive Director’s Report

Angela Pao-Johnson, Executive Director, provided an overview of agency highlights, operational updates, and statewide initiatives.

Angela Pao-Johnson began by commending progress at the Antelope Valley office, noting that as of July 2025, 89% of open positions have been filled, up from 69% in August 2024—a 20% improvement that reflects strengthened recruitment and retention efforts.

Angela Pao-Johnson shared updates on the “Regional Center on Wheels” initiative, led by the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) team. The initiative involves staff visiting community sites—including health clinics and early start centers—to meet families directly, share information about regional center services, and engage in personalized outreach. Visits will continue through October 8 and are designed to strengthen connections with underserved families and communities.

Angela Pao-Johnson provided DDS and legislative updates, referencing Assembly Bill 2423, which requires the Department of Developmental Services to review and update service rates every two years beginning July 2025. However, she clarified that the law does not require the state to fund increases identified by the review, meaning the rate adjustments may not automatically take effect. She also discussed Assembly Bill 1147, which mandates updates to the Public Records Act and significant revisions to the grievance and complaint process. DDS is exploring ways to consolidate multiple complaint channels—including 4731 and citizen complaints—into one or two streamlined processes. Future grievance submissions may be sent directly to DDS for review and assignment to regional centers. Implementation is expected next year.

Angela Pao-Johnson reiterated the importance of the new Individual Program Plan (IPP) satisfaction surveys, which aim to assess participant experiences with the IPP process. She noted that survey participation remains low, at 1.68%, below the desired 15% response rate, and encouraged vendors and families to complete the short six-question survey to help improve service quality. Current data shows overall satisfaction at approximately 70%, indicating room for continued progress.

Angela Pao-Johnson highlighted innovative collaboration among regional centers, particularly Tri-Counties Regional Center’s HCBS video series, produced in partnership with Public Pixels. The series promotes awareness of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) rights through engaging, accessible media. The videos feature consumers as voice actors, some of whom have since been hired full-time following successful internships. The initiative also includes coloring books and educational materials, available in English and Spanish, that explain HCBS principles in a family-friendly format. Over 1.3 million coloring books will be distributed statewide through a shared resource platform developed in collaboration with multiple regional centers, including NLACRC. Angela Pao-Johnson encouraged vendors to share these materials widely with consumers and families.

Angela Pao-Johnson also reported that NLACRC is developing a consolidated digital repository to organize educational videos and training resources, avoiding duplication and strengthening consistency across regional center materials.

On staffing and recruitment, NLACRC has filled 901 positions to date. Two new-hire orientation sessions are held monthly, with seven employees onboarded during the most recent session on August 8 and four more scheduled for the next on August 22. A supplemental recruitment firm has also been engaged to enhance hiring capacity and maintain adequate staffing levels.

Angela Pao-Johnson noted that NLACRC now serves 40,404 individuals, continuing to grow steadily each month.

Regarding social recreation (Social Rec) services, NLACRC's financial management service provider, Miji, has processed 454 total referrals, including 315 new vendors. In July alone, 745 authorizations were processed. Processing time averages four weeks for complete packets, and families are encouraged to use direct deposit for faster reimbursement. Outreach events are being held across the service area to educate families about the Social Rec process, eligibility, and benefits.

Angela Pao-Johnson also highlighted recent and upcoming community engagement events, including the Youth and Family Festival hosted by Assemblywoman Pilar Schiavo at the Canyon Country Community Center. The event brought together agencies such as the Child and Family Center and Department of Public and Social Services to provide resources and information to families in an accessible, community-based setting.

Angela Pao-Johnson concluded by encouraging continued community participation at upcoming family expos and outreach events, emphasizing NLACRC's ongoing efforts to enhance visibility, strengthen family connections, and support informed advocacy throughout the region.

Following the report, Alex Kopilevich and other committee members praised the high-quality HCBS videos and recognized Mark Wolfe's production team, which recently received an Anthem Webby Award for the project. Angela Pao-Johnson thanked attendees and staff for their collaboration and engagement.

8. OPEN DISCUSSION TOPICS

8.1 Discuss Vendor Survey Results

Alex Kopilevich reported that 25 vendor responses were received. The survey initially collected names, then was switched to anonymous after concerns were raised. Angela Pao-Johnson clarified that responses were anonymous unless respondents opted in for follow-up.

Angela Pao-Johnson summarized themes across departments: improve responsiveness to meet the 72-business-hour target for calls and emails; add clarity on "who to contact" for specific issues; and continue the legislative updates that many found useful. Angela Pao-Johnson noted NLACRC is reviewing all comments, has begun format changes based on feedback, and asked for constructive input given the size of the organization and the time needed to implement changes.

Alex Kopilevich suggested proactively inviting new vendors to Vendor Advisory Committee meetings to help them learn processes and contacts. Arshalous Garlanian shared that a one-page resource with key contacts and links exists. Alex Kopilevich added that the vendor mentorship program led by Paul Borda should further support onboarding and navigation.

Ricki Macken-Chilvers appreciated the survey but was disappointed by the low response rate given the size of the vendor community. Ricki Macken-Chilvers encouraged repeating the survey within a year, after visible changes, to rebuild confidence and increase participation.

Angela Pao-Johnson confirmed he reviews one-click email surveys to recognize high performers and identify areas needing improvement across providers and teams.

Angela Pao-Johnson provided a brief update on the vendor portal. The current portal has limited functionality. NLACRC is evaluating the SANDIS Service Provider Portal used by some regional centers, with cybersecurity and adoption questions under review. Mail processes are still in use, and Alex Kopilevich noted recent improvements in turnaround times.

Octavia Watkins encouraged focusing on the quality of the responses received to guide targeted improvements. Paul Borda shared that the survey felt long and repetitive across departments and suggested tracking abandonment and simplifying sections. Angela Pao-Johnson observed average completion times near two hours, likely due to respondents returning to it throughout the day.

Sharon Weinberg requested an “N/A” option and skip logic for departments where a vendor has little or no interaction. Angela Pao-Johnson agreed that optional or skippable questions could increase response rates. Jason Gillis noted that required responses—such as for finance—made it difficult when vendors lacked relevant experience; flexibility could improve participation.

8.2 System Industry News

Alex Kopilevich opened discussion on Item B regarding requirements for the Self-Determination Program (SDP) versus the traditional service model. Alex Kopilevich noted that most related questions were addressed earlier in the meeting by Evelyn McOmie and the team. No additional questions or comments were raised, and the committee proceeded to the next agenda item.

8.3 NLACRC Empower Expo 2025

Alex Kopilevich introduced Item C regarding the upcoming Empower Expo events for 2025. Evelyn McOmie confirmed that the expos will be held on September 27, 2025, in the Antelope Valley, and on October 12, 2025, at CSUN in the San Fernando Valley. Flyers have been distributed to promote both events.

Alex Kopilevich encouraged vendors to share the information widely with their staff and families to maximize community participation. Evelyn McOmie highlighted that each event will include a dance for individuals served and encouraged residential providers to bring participants, noting that many consumers have expressed excitement for the return of these social events after several years.

Angela Pao-Johnson added that Senator Munchavar, a CSUN alumna, will be attending the CSUN Family Expo and hosting a breakout session where community members can speak with her directly about their concerns and ideas.

9. COMMITTEE WORK GROUP INFORMATION

9.1 Early Start Services

Alex Kopilevich introduced Item 10 regarding Committee Workgroup information and final reports.

Jodie Agnew-Navarro from CHIME reported that the Early Start Services Workgroup did not meet this month, as meetings are held every other month. The next scheduled meeting will take place on September 18 at 9:30 a.m.

Jodie Agnew-Navarro invited anyone interested in receiving updates or joining the email list to provide their contact information in the meeting chat to be added to the distribution list.

9.2 School Age Services

Alex Kopilevich introduced the School Services update on behalf of Cal, who was unable to attend.

Paul Borda reported that the School Services Committee met earlier in the week and meets regularly on the second Tuesday of each month. Two key topics were discussed during the recent meeting:

First, the committee reviewed the bachelor's degree requirement associated with behavioral health and related service codes. Paul Borda and other vendors expressed interest in discussing whether the requirement remains necessary, noting concerns that it may not fully align with service delivery needs. Evelyn McOmie clarified that these requirements stem from DDS rate reform regulations and are not subject to modification by the regional center. She explained that rate reform ties staff qualifications directly to funding levels, and regional centers must adhere to those established parameters. Arshalous Garlanian added that DDS has issued directives specifying the educational requirements by service code (including 612, 615, and 616), and providers must comply accordingly.

Jason Gillis noted that meaningful changes of this nature require legislative advocacy, pointing to the recent success of rural provider efforts that resulted in new mileage reimbursement allowances. Evelyn McOmie agreed, emphasizing that while such advocacy can be effective, it takes time and coordination.

The second topic addressed the Vendor Portal. Paul Borda confirmed that authorizations continue to be posted to the portal for vendors who already have access. However, Arshalous Garlanian stated that the regional center is no longer providing technical assistance for access issues, and vendors without portal access should not attempt to enroll. Alex Kopilevich and Paul Borda noted that mailed authorizations should be considered the most current and accurate source of information, as some items have not been posted online.

Paul Borda concluded by thanking the regional center team for their clarifications and reaffirmed the committee's commitment to continued dialogue on vendor support and compliance issues.

9.3 Adult Services

Alex Kopilevich introduced the Adult Services update, presented by Octavia Watkins.

Octavia Watkins reported that the last Adult Services Committee meeting was held in July, with a follow-up discussion provided in August. The meeting featured Griselda DeGadillo from Managed Care Solutions, who presented on Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA), and Belinda Abatesi, who provided a legislative update and discussed the state's Master Plan for Aging.

Octavia Watkins announced that the next committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 15 at 11:00 a.m. (correcting a previous agenda error that listed September 17). The upcoming session will feature Maria Sandoval from CalABLE, who will present on California savings plans for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Octavia Watkins will provide a follow-up report on the September meeting at the next Vendor Advisory Committee session.

10. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

10.1 Community Relations Committee

Alex Kopilevich introduced the Community Relations Committee report, presented by Sharon Weinberg.

Sharon Weinberg encouraged attendees to review the calendar of events and committee reports for full details, explaining that several key topics were covered, including the semi-annual Purchase of Service (POS) data broken down by ethnicity, location, service type, and age range; updates on the Self-Determination Program (SDP) implementation and social media outreach, highlighting engagement growth on Facebook and Instagram; and a review of 4731 reports and social recreation activities.

The committee also discussed business priorities, emphasizing the need to make future committee goals more specific and outcome-based rather than broad or general in nature.

10.2 Nominating Committee

Alex Kopilevich provided the Nominating Committee report, noting that the committee typically meets every other month on the first Tuesday. A special meeting has been scheduled for September 17 at 5:30 p.m. to discuss board composition, upcoming service terms, and committee assignments. Alex Kopilevich encouraged participation from interested members.

10.3 Executive Finance Committee

Jaklen Keshishyan reported that the Executive Finance Committee met on August 28 at 5:00 p.m. The committee reviewed and approved the Board Master Calendar for fiscal year 2025–2026, discussed Purchase of Service (POS) startup contract amendments, and reviewed real estate negotiations in preparation for the San Fernando Valley office lease expiration in early 2027. The committee also reviewed the Center’s insurance coverages for fiscal year 2025–2026. Betsy presented the Human Resources report, and Evelyn McOmie provided the financial report. The next committee meeting is scheduled for September 25, 2025.

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC INPUT

During public input, vendor Dolly addressed the committee to express appreciation and provide updates from the Antelope Valley. Dolly stated an interest in becoming more involved again and thanked the Regional Center for continued communication and resources such as the vendor portal. Dolly inquired about the transition to new consumer service levels, asking when Level 4I would shift to Level 6. Arshalous Garlanian responded that the transition to the new levels is expected to occur within the next few months, before the end of the year.

Dolly also expressed interest in future opportunities to serve on vendor committees, highlighting ongoing work supporting consumers with higher functioning levels and increased mental health needs. Dolly commended the Regional Center’s staffing improvements and noted that vendors in the Antelope Valley are working diligently to remain in compliance while adapting to evolving consumer needs.

Sharon Weinberg inquired about whether the Regional Center would continue holding the separate residential provider meetings, noting that these sessions had been valuable for addressing unique issues distinct from other vendor discussions. Arshalous Garlanian explained that the Regional Center is currently reviewing and evaluating the format due to declining attendance, with only a few vendors participating in recent sessions. Evelyn McOmie added that the meetings were originally established during the pandemic to keep providers informed about evolving guidance from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the

Department of Public Health, and the CDC, but participation has since diminished.

Evelyn McOmie noted that residential providers demonstrated strong engagement and responsiveness during rate reform efforts, achieving nearly full compliance with required submissions. She emphasized that the Regional Center remains committed to supporting the residential service community and is exploring new engagement strategies that may better meet provider needs.

Arshalous Garlanian stated that one option under consideration is holding an annual in-service meeting specifically for residential providers to consolidate updates and discussions. Garlanian also reported that a recent survey of residential providers had a 90% participation rate, indicating strong communication within that group.

Jen Pippard expressed agreement with Sharon Weinberg, highlighting that residential provider meetings have been beneficial, particularly given the challenges of rate reform, and offered support for helping re-establish or reimagine future sessions.

12. NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Vendor Advisory Committee meeting is November 13, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. at the Antelope Valley office.

13. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made and carried, it was agreed that there was no further business to transact; the meeting closed at 11:36 a.m.