

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

**MINUTES OF THE VENDOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
HYBRID – ANTELOPE VALLEY OFFICE / TELECONFERENCE
NOVEMBER 13, 2025, 9:30 A.M.**

MEMBERS:

Alex Kopilevich, Jaklen Keshishyan, Jodie Agnew-Navarro, Octavia Watkins, Masood Babaeian, Paul Borda, Andrea Devers, Ute Escoria, 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 9:30 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 a video from the Empower Expo.

4. PUBLIC INPUT

Vendor Advisory Committee member Ricki Macken-Chilvers raised questions regarding vendor communication and access to information. Ricki Macken-Chilvers shared that vendors often do not know when a case handled by the Officer of the Day transitions back to the assigned Case Service Coordinator and asked how that information is communicated. Ricki Macken-Chilvers also noted ongoing challenges obtaining IPPs and addendums, which are needed for reviews such as HCBS, and asked whether these documents are still standard to be sent to vendors at the start of services.

Ricki Macken-Chilvers also expressed concern that an addendum received by the agency was addressed to a sibling rather than the individual served, and the sibling was not a conservator.

This raised questions about how NLACRC reinforces that the individual served is the primary focus and rights holder.

Deputy Director Evelyn McOmie explained that when a new Case Service Coordinator is assigned, welcome letters should be sent to the consumer, the family, and any listed vendors, and possible mailing issues will be reviewed and corrected. Evelyn McOmie clarified that IPPs are locked and distributed by support staff based on direction from the Case Service Coordinator, and copies may be sent to family members when the individual requests their involvement. The specific situation involving an addendum addressed to a sister will be reviewed further, and corrections will be made if appropriate.

Regarding the Officer of the Day process, Evelyn McOmie shared that the Officer of the Day manages situations when the assigned Case Service Coordinator is unavailable or the case is uncovered. If the matter requires ongoing attention, the case may be temporarily assigned to a floater until it is reassigned. Follow-up will occur with Ricki Macken-Chilvers regarding the individual case discussed.

Alex Kopilevich recognized Sharon Weinberg for a question. Sharon Weinberg shared that during a recent FHA and FFA audit, auditors noted repeated vendor requests to Case Service Coordinators for IPPs, signature pages, and addendums that were not fulfilled despite multiple calls and emails. Sharon Weinberg stated this echoed concerns raised earlier and emphasized that vendors continue to experience difficulty receiving required documents, even when requests are made appropriately and repeatedly.

Deputy Director Evelyn McOmie acknowledged the concern and stated that NLACRC will review the situation, work with directors, and ensure reminders go to supervisors so that when IPPs are sent to families, service providers listed on the case also receive copies.

The chair noted that additional public input not on the agenda would be taken at the end of the meeting in accordance with meeting procedures.

Alex Kopilevich reported that several vendors and committee members have been receiving calls from Gallagher regarding verification of insurance certificates. Alex Kopilevich shared that NLACRC submitted its certificate on September 8, with an expiration date of October 29, and was informed that the certificate was submitted "too early" and needed to be resubmitted with updated dates. Alex Kopilevich noted that vendors who submit certificates ahead of expiration may still receive verification calls and wanted to alert members so they understand why these calls may occur.

With no additional public input, the meeting proceeded to the next item.

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 September 11, 2025, as presented. Motion carried.

On a motion made by Tal Segalovich, seconded by Sharon Weinberg, it was resolved to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

6. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.1 Call for new VAC Members

Alex Kopilevich noted that there were no action items for this meeting and moved to the agenda item regarding new Vendor Advisory Committee members. Alex Kopilevich shared that this will be the final year serving as chair, and a new chairperson will be elected. Two VAC positions will also be open. The deadline to submit applications is January 15, 2026, to allow time for scheduling interviews, particularly since the committee is dark in December.

Alex Kopilevich stated that the Regional Center is advertising the open positions online and possibly through mailers and requested confirmation that the advertising information is current. Alex Kopilevich clarified that there are two total open positions on the committee.

6.2 VAC Applicant Interview Panel

The committee discussed the process for interviewing applicants for the open Vendor Advisory Committee positions. Alex Kopilevich explained that, in the past, the Nominating Committee conducted VAC interviews, but the process has since shifted so that the Vendor Advisory Committee oversees recruitment and interviews and then forwards recommendations to the Board of Trustees for final approval.

Alex Kopilevich recommended establishing a three-member interview panel. All applicants will first be shared with the full committee for review and discussion, and the committee will determine which applicants should move forward to interviews. Alex Kopilevich volunteered to serve on the panel. After discussion, Tal Segalovitch and David Ebrami also volunteered to serve on the panel. A formal motion was not required, as participation is voluntary.

Alex Kopilevich noted that interviews are typically grouped two to three per day, using a structured set of questions. Interviews are expected to occur in February or March, with final recommendations targeted for the May meeting to allow time for onboarding and paperwork.

6.3 Update on VAC Members with Expiring Terms

Alex Kopilevich asked for clarification on which Vendor Advisory Committee members are approaching the end of their terms and whether there are any open positions. Committee staff reviewed the roster and confirmed one open position and clarified several member term dates, including that some members are not yet expiring.

The committee reviewed the color coding on the term tracker. Red indicated members who were due for term renewals, and yellow indicated members scheduled to term out at the end of the fiscal year, including Daniel Ortiz, Alex Kopilevich, and Cal Enriquez. Questions arose about why recruitment was only planned for two positions when more members appear to be terming out.

Lindsay Granger stated that the committee roster and term list will be reviewed and updated with Public Information, and updated information will be shared with the committee to confirm the accurate number of vacancies.

6.4 Update on Term Renewals

Alex Kopilevich asked whether there were any questions regarding expiring Vendor Advisory Committee terms. A question was raised about whether newer members will receive formal letters, and staff confirmed that letters will be sent.

Alex Kopilevich noted that updates to term renewals had largely already been discussed and reiterated that this is the final year serving as chair. Once new members are confirmed mid-year, the committee will select a new chair. Alex Kopilevich shared that a transition meeting will take place, similar to the transition provided by former chair Suad BISONO, to help support the incoming chair.

6.5 Update on Vendor Mentorship Program

This item was deferred.

6.6 Self-Determination Update

Silvia Renteria-Haro provided an update on the Self-Determination Program. As of November 1, there are 646 participants enrolled, with 22 participants transitioning into the program during the month, reflecting continued growth.

Silvia Renteria-Haro reported that the first Self-Determination Program Vendor Forum was held on October 21. Two additional forums are scheduled, on November 19 at 9:00 a.m. and December 1 at 3:00 p.m. Information was distributed by email. Vendors who did not receive the announcement and are interested in attending were encouraged to contact Silvia Renteria-Haro directly.

The Vendor Forum is designed to give vendors an opportunity to ask questions about how the Self-Determination Program works, including processes and payment.

6.7 Update on Legislative Townhall

Belinda Abatesi announced that NLACRC will host a virtual Legislative Town Hall on Tuesday, November 18, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The session will focus on the future of healthcare access and services for the community. The panel is expected to include Representative Laura Friedman, Assemblymember Juan Carrillo, Assemblymember Pilar Schiavo, Nicole Vasquez, Patrick Lee from the Office of Assemblymember J. C. Gabriel, and Tony Anderson.

Belinda Abatesi shared that an RSVP link will be provided in the chat and invited participants to contact Belinda Abatesi directly with any questions.

7. REPORT OUTS

7.1 Deputy Director Officer's Report

Deputy Director Evelyn McOmie provided the Deputy Director's Report and began by thanking vendors who participated in the North Los Angeles County Regional Center Family Expos held in both the Antelope Valley and Northridge. Evelyn McOmie shared that the events were very successful and reached more than 1,000 individuals and families. Families had the opportunity to learn about vendor programs and services, and many appreciated the resources and materials ("goodies") provided. Evelyn McOmie noted that NLACRC hopes the experience was as positive for vendors as it was for families.

Evelyn McOmie also thanked vendors who attended the vendor fair and acknowledged that NLACRC recently hosted back-to-back events. Announcements were distributed through Eventbrite. Some vendors expressed that they had not realized the vendor fair was occurring. Evelyn McOmie clarified that the vendor fair announcement was intentionally sent after the Expo announcement to avoid confusion, and that the Expo and vendor fair were two separate events. Additional clarity will continue to be provided in future communications.

Evelyn McOmie reported that NLACRC has secured funding to host another Family Expo next year, which will be the third Expo in a row. Planning is underway to expand the event, identify larger venue sites, and create space for more vendors, including those who were unable to participate this year due to space limitations. NLACRC hopes vendors who participated this year will return, and that additional vendors will be able to join next year. Evelyn McOmie expressed appreciation to the department that provided the additional funding.

Evelyn McOmie also provided an update on the SANDIS IPP survey initiative. Vendors and staff were encouraged to help remind families to complete the survey at the end of IPP meetings. Beginning in January, flyers with QR codes will be distributed to make access easier. Families will be able to select their preferred language using the language icon on the survey. The survey includes six questions and is intended to gather meaningful feedback for the Department. Evelyn McOmie emphasized the importance of vendor support in promoting participation.

In response to a question, Evelyn McOmie confirmed the survey is specific to the IPP experience, including one question related to the Self-Determination Program, and focuses on the experience of the SANDIS IPP meeting and how it was conducted.

Evelyn McOmie concluded by thanking vendors for their partnership, encouraging continued outreach, wishing everyone a happy Thanksgiving, and expressing appreciation for the work done on behalf of families.

7.2 Chief Financial Officer's Report

Chief Financial Officer Vini Montague provided the financial update. Vini Montague shared that Accounting Supervisor Robert Gan has returned from leave and is available to assist with escalated payment or authorization questions.

Vini Montague reported that the final billing deadline for Fiscal Year 2023 to 2024 is February 6, 2026, and vendors were asked to review outstanding invoices and submit any remaining billing by that date. Vini Montague also noted that NLACRC is preparing 1099s for the close of calendar year 2025 and asked vendors to ensure current mailing and contact information is updated with Community Services.

For Fiscal Year 2025, NLACRC is currently projecting an approximate forty million dollar purchase of services deficit. The Department of Developmental Services has been notified, and NLACRC anticipates receiving an additional allocation. Several other regional centers are also reporting anticipated deficits.

Vini Montague then discussed upcoming Public Records Act requirements. Effective January 1, 2026, regional centers will be fully subject to the Public Records Act. Certain records, including contracts and vendor related documents, may be subject to disclosure. A vendor notice will be distributed, and Megan Mitchell, Director of Privacy and Compliance, provided additional context. Megan Mitchell explained that the requirements are based on Assembly Bill 1147 and that any member of the public, including anonymously, may request records. Proprietary and confidential information may qualify for exemption, but some vendor related information, including portions of contracts or billing performance, may still need to be released. NLACRC will review records carefully, apply exemptions when appropriate, notify providers when records are released, and send a letter with guidance and a dedicated contact email.

In response to questions, staff clarified that vendors requesting copies of their own records should continue to contact Community Services, and that Public Records Act requests from

the public are handled separately. Megan Mitchell confirmed that the Assembly Bill number is 1147.

7.3 Community Services Director's Report

(00:44-00:56)

Community Services Director Arshalous Garlanian provided the Community Services update and clarified that vendors who need copies of their own records should contact Carmina Romero, as the Contracts and Compliance team is currently focused on rate reform.

Arshalous Garlanian thanked vendors for their participation and partnership at recent events and then provided several program and directive updates. The Department has released the Quality Incentive Program for Fiscal Year 2027, and providers should have received emails on November 3 with required surveys. Three types of surveys are being used: employment, health and wellness, and provider capacity. Surveys are due by January 31, and data collected will apply beginning July 2026. Depending on program type, providers may receive more than one survey. Notes regarding terminology and program definitions were included in vendor packets.

Arshalous Garlanian reminded providers that, for future Quality Incentive Program eligibility, compliance is required in areas including electronic visit verification, HCBS Final Rule requirements, and independent audits. Community Services and Accounting are reviewing provider compliance and will contact providers when clarification is needed. Providers were encouraged to review their records and reach out if uncertain.

Arshalous Garlanian reported that DDS issued clarification regarding supplemental transportation billing. For service code 880, a maximum of two trips per day may be claimed. Employment capacity and employment access Quality Incentive Programs are being processed, and qualifying providers will be contacted by Miguel.

An update was provided on the DSP Internship Program. Interested vendors may apply through the DDS online portal, with details included in the packet. Self-paced ASL classes are available for interested vendors. Arshalous Garlanian also thanked vendors for their patience as NLACRC transitions to Gallagher Verified for insurance monitoring and encouraged providers to respond promptly to Gallagher requests and clearly explain program details to avoid incorrect assumptions about transportation, staffing, or workers' compensation needs.

Arshalous Garlanian announced upcoming emergency preparedness trainings for day programs, to be delivered by Emergency Management Specialist Roy Ortega, with sessions scheduled in Chatsworth on November 18 and Lancaster on December 3.

During discussion, staff clarified that lack of outreach from Accounting or Community Services typically indicates that required compliance documents are current, but vendors were encouraged to contact Accounting if they are unsure about audit exemptions or deadlines.

Staff noted that DDS will notify regional centers around March regarding which providers qualify for one hundred percent of the benchmark rate, and regional centers will then notify providers. Vendors with questions about HCBS reviews were advised to contact **David Ramos**, with ongoing site visits continuing through year end.

7.4 Legislative Report

Belinda Abatesi provided legislative updates. Belinda Abatesi began by noting that earlier information prepared regarding the potential federal government shutdown was no longer current because the shutdown had ended. That portion of the presentation was skipped.

Belinda Abatesi then reviewed recent changes to the CalFresh program. Federal changes will gradually reduce some CalFresh benefit amounts, although California will supplement funding to help stabilize the program. The current waiver protecting certain adults without dependents from strict work requirements remains in place until January 31, 2026. After that date, additional work requirements may apply, depending on federal and state guidance. Some lawfully present immigrants may lose eligibility beginning January 1, 2026, although implementation will not occur until federal guidance is issued. Changes to utility allowances may also reduce benefits for some households, with higher allowances reserved for households that include seniors or individuals with disabilities. Restored CalFresh benefits ordered by a federal court have begun loading to EBT cards, and families were encouraged to check balances.

Belinda Abatesi highlighted “Vendors in Action,” which provides advocacy tools vendors can use to support individuals served. Resources include opportunities to contact legislators through ARCA, The Arc, and other advocacy organizations, along with everyday advocacy suggestions.

Belinda Abatesi provided updates on Covered California and enhanced premium tax credits. Enhanced credits allow more families, including those above 400 percent of the federal poverty level, to qualify for help and cap expected contributions. These enhancements are scheduled to expire after 2025 unless extended by Congress, which could result in higher premiums beginning in 2026.

Belinda Abatesi reviewed the state legislative calendar and several recently signed “operations” bills affecting organizational practices, including laws addressing non-compete agreements, worker retention, nonprofit contracting requirements, employee rights notices, and wage reporting and payment requirements. ARCA-sponsored bills signed into law were also noted, including legislation related to seizure medication administration, changes in criminal code protections, and improved access to dental care.

Finally, Belinda Abatesi encouraged participation in upcoming community and legislative events and emphasized the importance of vendors staying engaged, connecting with representatives, and supporting advocacy efforts.

7.5 Executive Director’s Report

Executive Director Angela Pao-Johnson provided the Executive Director’s Report and highlighted several positive developments and ongoing system issues. Angela Pao-Johnson reported that Self-Determination Program training was rolled out across all case management departments except Early Start. Approximately 30 percent of staff completed the post-training survey, and 97 percent of those respondents reported that they learned a lot and felt better prepared to educate families about Self-Determination. Angela Pao-Johnson also recognized the Lanterman intake team, noting that they have completed more than 4,500 intakes year-to-date, with only 0.22 percent exceeding the 120-day timeline.

Angela Pao-Johnson shared results from the annual employee survey, which repeated the same 53 questions as the prior year to allow direct comparison. Favorability increased in all areas. Diversity, equity, and inclusion remained strong, increasing from 72 percent to 76 percent favorability. The largest improvement was in perceptions of senior leadership, which rose to 53 percent; while this is still an area for continued growth, it is now in a range considered typical for large organizations. Employees reported feeling strongly connected to

their direct managers, a key factor in retention. Compensation remained the lowest-rated area, although this has historically been the case and is under review.

Angela Pao-Johnson introduced the new IT Director, Mustafa Sarwari, who joined earlier in the month with approximately 15 years of IT leadership experience, including in healthcare organizations. Mustafa Sarwari has been quickly engaged on IT priorities, including issues with SANDIS, the regional center's case management platform. Angela Pao-Johnson then provided updates from the Department of Developmental Services. The statewide respite assessment tool is not expected to be implemented in January as originally anticipated. The tool is intended to standardize respite hours, but there are concerns that some individuals with higher needs may receive reduced hours under a strictly standardized model. DDS is piloting the tool and building in exceptions and exemptions. Angela Pao-Johnson also described recent guidance from the Respiratory Care Board affecting licensed vocational nurses' ability to perform certain tasks such as ventilator adjustments and tracheostomy suctioning. DDS and ARCA are working on possible exemptions for the regional center population and exploring alternatives such as expanded use of registered nurses and updated rate models; there is currently no change in practice while this is under review.

Angela Pao-Johnson noted that health and safety waivers for Adult Residential Facilities for Persons with Special Health Needs and specialized residential facilities will expire at the end of February, and new cost worksheets and surveys due in mid-November will inform future rate models for this segment of the vendor community. For transportation (service code 875), DDS is collecting November mileage data to reassess rates following a prior per-mile increase of approximately 43 to 48 percent, with particular attention to high-traffic areas and the time and effort required to transport individuals with higher needs. Angela Pao-Johnson encouraged vendors to continue providing feedback when current models do not reflect actual service conditions.

Angela Pao-Johnson gave a detailed update on SANDIS outages, explaining that although the system is used by all 21 regional centers, the recent instability appears to be affecting primarily NLACRC and possibly one other center. DDS, IBM, the cloud hosting provider, and NLACRC IT staff are meeting regularly to diagnose and resolve the issue. While there was a period when outages were frequent and significantly disrupted operations, recent weeks have been more stable. Angela Pao-Johnson acknowledged the impact on both staff and vendors and committed to ongoing communication as work continues.

Angela Pao-Johnson also reviewed special contract updates related to the SANDIS IPP survey. Current survey participation is approximately 1.97 percent of completed IPPs, while DDS has set a target of 15 percent for NLACRC to exit special contract status for this requirement. Survey results show overall satisfaction of about 85 percent in most categories, with lower scores in self-direction. Angela Pao-Johnson connected this to the agency's focus on Self-Determination training and hopes to see self-direction scores improve as staff become more comfortable discussing these options with families. Committee members raised questions about who is allowed to complete the IPP survey (for example, individuals in residential settings and their caregivers) and about accessibility for individuals with varying communication, literacy, and technology access. Angela Pao-Johnson explained that the current format is a six-question Likert-scale survey accessed via QR code on the IPP signature page, with language options built in, and shared that NLACRC is creating leave-behind flyers with QR codes and exploring additional suggestions such as links and text-based access. Angela Pao-Johnson agreed to bring questions about who can complete the survey and accessibility options back to DDS for clarification.

Finally, Angela Pao-Johnson reviewed caseload ratio trends and organizational capacity. Current ratios are approximately 1 to 57 for ages 0 to 5 (statewide average 1 to 48), 1 to 80 for Medicaid Waiver (statewide average 1 to 72), and 1 to 76 for all other categories (statewide

average 1 to 70). Angela Pao-Johnson noted that the regional center has made significant progress since Medicaid Waiver ratios were previously around 1 to 113, and that staff now report caseloads feel more manageable, though there is still work to do to meet statutory targets. Recruitment efforts are now focused on hiring and retaining staff who will stay long-term and support higher-quality work. Across the three valleys, NLACRC currently serves 40,897 individuals. Recently, 15 new staff have been onboarded, with additional hiring expected through an upcoming virtual job fair. Quality Assurance completed 166 residential visits and issued four plans of correction. Angela Pao-Johnson also highlighted recent outreach, including participation in a trunk-or-treat event at a charter school in Pacoima, as well as ongoing collaboration with the State Council on Developmental Disabilities and other advisory bodies. Angela Pao-Johnson responded to additional questions about opportunities for public comment on the LVN issue and the timing and application of the respite assessment tool, and committed to follow up with DDS and clinical leadership and to share further information with vendors as it becomes available.

8. OPEN DISCUSSION TOPICS

8.1 Discuss Vendor Survey Results

Vendor Advisory Committee Chair Alex Kopilevich opened the discussion on open topics and reviewed the recent Vendor Advisory Committee survey results. Alex Kopilevich noted that 31 vendors responded out of approximately 700 vendors and 1,600 programs, and expressed a desire for greater participation in future surveys. Alex Kopilevich shared that the team is working to keep responses anonymous to encourage more vendors to respond.

Lindsay Granger summarized the survey findings. Overall, most respondents reported being satisfied with the topics covered during Vendor Advisory Committee meetings, with only one respondent indicating dissatisfaction. Legislative updates were viewed as helpful by an overwhelming majority of respondents. Lindsay Granger walked through charts showing vendor ratings of Community Services, Client Services, Clinical Services, and Admin and Finance, which generally reflected ratings clustered around good and outstanding, with communication identified as an area for continued improvement in some departments. Open ended responses highlighted interest in additional guidance and resources on Self Determination Program, navigation support for vendors, more engagement and collaboration opportunities with the regional center, and more information on rate reform, individual program plan and individual service plan processes, and internal changes that affect vendors. Vendors also shared positive feedback about the impact stories presented at the beginning of Vendor Advisory Committee meetings and expressed a desire to see more topics added under the open topics portion of the agenda. Alex Kopilevich reminded members to email suggested open topics at least one week before the meeting so they can be added to the agenda.

In response to vendor feedback, Alex Kopilevich confirmed that, going forward, the committee will wait approximately sixty seconds before formally adjourning virtual meetings to allow attendees time to review and copy chat content. Staff also clarified that saving the chat is currently limited based on meeting settings and practice. Jaklen Keshishyan asked whether different chart formats could be used in future presentations to improve readability. Lindsay Granger agreed to adjust graph types as needed and explained that the current charts were based on default Google Forms outputs that were then formatted into the presentation.

8.2 System Industry News

Executive Director Angela Pao-Johnson provided an update on efforts to develop a provider directory and onboarding process. Angela Pao-Johnson shared that the team is exploring use of the San Diego SANDIS service provider portal, which several other regional centers already

use. The system offers needed functionality, including the ability for vendors to access authorizations.

Previously, North Los Angeles County Regional Center did not implement the portal because it did not support multi-factor authentication, which raised security concerns. Information Technology staff are now working on a solution to ensure appropriate security controls while allowing the system to be used.

Angela Pao-Johnson stated that the team is cautiously optimistic and is tentatively aiming for a rollout as early as January, while continuing to troubleshoot technical issues and plan for a smoother onboarding process than prior attempts. Angela Pao-Johnson asked vendors to remain patient while work continues.

8.3 SLS Audits

Staff reported that North LA will begin formal oversight and monitoring of Supported Living Services (SLS) providers starting in 2026. David Ramos has been assigned as the SLS specialist and will serve as the primary liaison with providers.

The monitoring process will be modeled after residential annual reviews and will focus on regulatory compliance, program design, documentation, and recordkeeping. North LA is developing tools and resources to support providers in preparing for reviews.

Providers will be contacted in advance and meetings will be scheduled individually. The goal is to strengthen compliance and support providers, not to be punitive.

No additional comments were raised.

8.4 New Vendorization Process

Arshalous Garlanian reported on upcoming statewide changes to the vendorization process. The Department of Developmental Services will implement a standardized vendorization system effective no later than January 1.

North LA participated in a pilot in September to prepare for the transition. Under the new process, vendor applications will be submitted through an online statewide portal, and regional centers will review applications within required timelines.

Because of the new structure, regional centers will no longer be able to provide the same level of hands-on consultation as before, although staff will still provide support as appropriate. Current instructions remain on the website, and the vendorization page will be updated in the coming weeks to reflect the new system.

Additional guidance will be shared as implementation moves forward.

8.5 Early Start Rate Reform

Jodie Agnew-Navarro shared significant concerns regarding Early Start rate reform and read a letter currently being circulated among Early Start providers statewide. The letter highlights that the current rate model threatens access, stability, and quality of early intervention services, particularly during critical developmental years.

Key issues raised included workforce shortages due to low reimbursement, loss of incentives that previously helped stabilize services, and inequities between home-based and center-based models. Additional concerns included lack of payment for absences and

unfunded mandatory assessments and progress reports, which place financial strain on providers.

The letter urges DDS to update rates to reflect true service costs, maintain incentives, recognize therapy assistants appropriately, and ensure families have meaningful choice in service delivery. The letter will be presented to the Early Start Committee for signatures.

Upcoming opportunities for continued discussion include the Early Start Interagency meeting and an Infant Development Association webinar. Participants also discussed limited insurance billing options for some programs.

Committee members expressed appreciation for the update and emphasized the importance of proactive collaboration across regional centers on rate reform issues.

Early Start Committee Update:

The committee has not met since the last report and will meet on November 20 at 9:00 a.m.

8.6 Quality Incentive Program – Prevention and Wellness

The committee briefly revisited the Quality Incentive Program related to prevention and wellness. Although the original requester did not speak, it was noted that, unlike prior cycles, children will now be included in the prevention and wellness focus areas. No additional discussion or action items followed.

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 group has not met recently and is scheduled to meet next on the 20th at 9:00 a.m.

9.2 School Age Services

Alex Kopilevich introduced the School Services update.

Cal Enriquez shared that the group has not met due to personal circumstances affecting facilitators. A meeting is being scheduled for November, with the possibility of an additional meeting in December to close out the year. Interested members were encouraged to join.

9.3 Adult Services

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

Octavia Watkins reported that the Adult Services Workgroup met on September 15 at 11:00 a.m. Maria Sandoval, Outreach Specialist for CalABLE, provided an overview of the CalABLE program (Achieving a Better Life Experience), which allows individuals with disabilities to save and invest without jeopardizing certain benefits such as SSI. Octavia noted that the program is overseen by the State Treasurer's Office, currently manages more than \$200 million in assets with over 15,000 active accounts, and allows contributions from individuals, families, friends, organizations, and employers. Funds may be used for qualified disability-related expenses. Eligibility requires disability onset before age 26, which will increase to age 46 in 2026. The lifetime contribution limit is \$529,000, although SSI recipients may risk benefit

suspension if their account exceeds \$100,000. Opening an account requires \$25, and smaller balances may be affected by program fees.

Octavia also shared that the next Adult Services Workgroup meeting will take place on November 17 at 11:00 a.m. Bob Arrio will present on initiatives connecting aging and IDD systems, with strategies to support older adults and caregivers. Participants interested in joining were encouraged to contact Octavia Watkins by email.

10. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

10.1 Executive Finance Committee

Jaklen Keshishyan reported that the Executive Finance Committee last met on September 25. The committee reviewed and approved the authorization for the Officer to secure workers' compensation coverage for calendar year 2026. The committee also approved engaging a board leadership and coaching consultant and reviewed POS/CPP startup contracts that allow vendors to receive designated contract funds.

Additional items included review of community business and updated financial reports, outstanding authorization reports, and multiple audits, including the DDS audit related to Service Code 880. NLACRC submitted an appeal and is awaiting a response. The committee also reviewed annual whistleblower complaint reports, as well as data for August. The next meeting is scheduled for November 20, 2025 at 6:05 p.m.

10.2 Nominating Committee

Alex Kopilevich provided the Nominating Committee report. The Nominating Committee did not meet in October. The committee met on November 7 to interview two candidates for open Board of Trustees positions. The candidates will be brought back to the full Nominating Committee for discussion at the next meeting, scheduled for the first Wednesday in January. Following that discussion, the Board will determine whether to move the candidates forward for a vote. No December meeting is scheduled.

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC INPUT

The next VAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 9:30 a.m., and will be held as a hybrid meeting at the Chatsworth office. Committee attendance was reviewed and no members were identified as being at risk of non-compliance.

During public input, vendor Wilda Tillman shared concerns about receiving detailed email questionnaires instead of risk-mitigation meetings following SIR submissions. Staff noted that DDS has increased scrutiny regarding SIR reviews and acknowledged the issue may also involve training. Staff committed to following up directly and providing clarification as needed.

Additional announcements were made regarding the upcoming CALTASH conference in February in Sacramento, with information shared in the chat. A question was also raised regarding available payee services and FACT's role. Staff confirmed that an RFP is in progress to expand payee service options and clarified that FACT manages financial responsibilities while service coordinators remain responsible for case management and should be contacted if concerns arise.

To allow attendees time to copy information from the chat, the meeting remained open briefly following adjournment.

12. NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Vendor Advisory Committee meeting is January 8, 2026, at 9:30 a.m. at the Chatsworth 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 11:31 a.m.