

North Los Angeles County Regional Center
Community Relations Committee Meeting Minutes
November 19, 2025

Present: Cathy Blin, Nicholas Abrahms, Jennifer Koster, Laura Monge, Jennifer Koster, Jacquie Colton, Jason Taketa, George Alvarado, Curtis Wang, Sharon Weinberg, Juan Hernandez, Sharon Weinberg, Jodie Agnew-Navarro – Committee Members

Executive Director Angela Pao-Johnson, Deputy Director Evelyn McOmie, Executive Administrative Assistant Lindsay Granger, Silvia Renteria-Haro, Chris Whitlock, John Van De Riet, Belinda Abatesi, Sarah Yap – Staff Members

Guests:

Absent: Jeremy Sunderland, Lety Garcia

1. CALL TO ORDER

There being a quorum present Cathy Blin called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. Cathy Blin reminded members to identify themselves prior to making a motion and reviewed the NLACRC Board of Trustees Civility Code.

2. COMMITTEE MEMBER ATTENDANCE

3. AGENDA

Absent objection the agenda was approved as amended. Motion carried.

4. PUBLIC INPUT – AGENDA ITEMS

There was no public input regarding the agenda.

5. CONSENT ITEMS

A. Approval of Minutes of the August 20, 2025, Community Relations Committee Meeting

Absent objection the minutes from the August 20, 2025 Community Relations Committee Meeting were approved. Motion carried.

6. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.1 Discuss Ideas for Legislative Events in Spring 2026

Co-Chair Cathy Blin introduced discussion on potential legislative events planned for spring 2026 and invited Chris Whitlock, Public Information Manager, to lead the item. Chris Whitlock provided an overview of proposed and ongoing efforts, including participation in ARCA Grassroots, an annual spring event, and

exploration of new engagement formats such as a more casual “pastries/coffee and policy” style event to connect with legislators in the community.

Chris Whitlock highlighted the success of the recent Legislative Town Hall, noting strong attendance, participation by legislators, and positive feedback. Chris Whitlock also noted that, for the first time, the Consumer Advisory Committee voted on the topics for the Legislative Town Hall, reflecting increased collaboration with other committees and individuals served.

Cathy Blin commended the cross-committee engagement and shared that positive feedback was received regarding the recent event despite being unable to attend. The committee discussed the timing of upcoming events, including plans for another Legislative Town Hall in late winter or early spring, anticipated around February. Chris Whitlock shared that additional winter and spring engagement ideas are still being developed and would be discussed later in the agenda.

Cathy Blin expressed enthusiasm for more informal, short-format engagement opportunities, such as coffee-style gatherings, as an effective way to connect with a greater number of legislators in a shorter amount of time.

6.2 Discuss Ideas of Community Outreach

Co-Chair Cathy Blin opened committee business item B. to gather additional ideas for community outreach to strengthen Board public relations beyond existing efforts. Evelyn McOmie shared that the Board has expressed interest in increasing community outreach and that the committee was tasked with generating ideas to begin the conversation.

Evelyn McOmie reviewed a preliminary schedule of outreach events planned for January–March and noted that several events could be tailored to include Board participation, including advance announcements that Board members will be present and the use of breakout rooms for hybrid/virtual events. Examples shared included monthly Spanish parent support groups (Antelope Valley, February–May), rotating Filipino support group meetings (hybrid/virtual across valleys), LGBTQ Rainbow Connections Social Group (Zoom, February–May), Armenian parent support group (Zoom, February–May), and a tentative Farsi parent support group (March, pending scheduling due to Persian New Year). Evelyn McOmie also referenced “Regional Center on Wheels” community outreach at locations such as the YMCA and clinics, and emphasized that support groups may offer a stronger setting for Board engagement due to larger attendance.

Sharon Weinberg asked whether outreach could include vendors in addition to individuals served, and suggested vendors would value opportunities to meet with the Board and collaborate. Angela Pao-Johnson suggested reviving vendor/facility site visits and day program visits, noting these were done prior to COVID, as a way to connect with both vendors and individuals served.

The committee discussed the need to determine how often Board outreach should occur and the importance of securing Board member commitments to participate. George Alvarado suggested informal social activities to build relationships, such as a picnic/potluck with games, and also proposed activities such as paintball (noted as higher risk) and other community-based recreation ideas. Jodie Agnew-Navarro emphasized inclusion and encouraged using typical community venues and activities (e.g., bowling) rather than events that might feel segregated, and suggested rotating activities across communities. Evelyn McOmie confirmed the Empower Expo dances were well attended and well received, explained they were supported through HCBS funding, and noted plans to hold similar events again in the next fiscal year. Evelyn McOmie also proposed exploring a community activity (using bowling as an example) that could serve a dual purpose by engaging individuals served and partnering with the Consumer Advisory Committee, with CAC outreach/table presence and opportunities for the Board to meet individuals served, families, and providers.

Laura Monge suggested a future outreach opportunity involving participation in city holiday parades, including building a small float and engaging individuals served, vendors, and the broader community. Laura Monge also noted that these parades could be paired with resource fairs, providing additional opportunities for community engagement and visibility.

A list of upcoming events will be brought back to the next meeting with proposed activities and dates, including opportunities for Board members to sign up.

ACTION: Evelyn McOmie to compile the outreach/activity ideas discussed and bring a proposed list back to the next meeting, including suggested activities and dates (and additional events as they are added).

ACTION: Evelyn McOmie / Cathy Blin to bring back the outreach events schedule (January–March and beyond) in a format the committee can use to decide which events to include Board participation.

ACTION: The committee/leadership to develop a Board sign-up/commitment process once dates/activities are identified (Cathy Blin noted the need for Board commitments; Evelyn McOmie referenced sign-ups).

ACTION: Committee to continue discussion and clarify scope of “community outreach,” including whether outreach will include vendors (raised by Sharon Weinberg) and how vendor engagement (e.g., reviving vendor/site visits) could be incorporated (suggested by Angela Pao-Johnson).

6.3 Discuss Nominations for the Jynny Retzinger Community Service Award 2026

Cathy Blin introduced Item C regarding nominations for the Jenny Retzinger Community Award and invited Chris Whitlock to provide an overview. Chris Whitlock shared background on the award, noting that Jenny Retzinger was a longtime member of the NLACRC Board of Trustees, a parent advocate, and a strong leader in legislative and grassroots advocacy. Jenny Retzinger founded the first NLACRC Legislative Breakfast and previously chaired the Government and Community Relations Committee, providing guidance on legislative issues.

Chris Whitlock explained that the award honors community advocates in recognition of Jenny Retzinger’s dedication to volunteerism and advocacy and is presented annually at the Legislative Breakfast. An outreach campaign began on November 1, including email and social media efforts, with a nomination deadline of March 1, 2026. Chris Whitlock reported that several nominations have already been received and noted that a nomination link is available for anyone interested in submitting a nomination.

Cathy Blin thanked Chris Whitlock for the update and noted positive feedback and early engagement with the nomination process.

7. ACTION ITEMS

7.1 Review and Approve New Committee Priorities

Cathy Blin introduced the action item to review and approve new committee priorities and reminded the committee that, at the previous meeting, members discussed the need to consolidate priorities from two former committees into a single, more focused set of objectives. The goal was to reduce overlap, clarify the committee’s scope, and better align priorities with current work and capacity. Cathy Blin noted that Evelyn McOmie and staff were asked to return with a streamlined and rebranded set of priorities reflecting work already accomplished and clearer direction moving forward.

Evelyn McOmie explained that feedback from the prior meeting was incorporated and that priorities from the former Consumer Services Committee and the Government and Community Relations Committee were reviewed and combined. Approximately 11 existing priorities were consolidated into four overarching priorities. Evelyn McOmie noted that the committee chairs, Jeremy and Cathy, reviewed the draft in

advance and that the proposed priorities were intended to reflect the core work of the committee without unnecessary duplication.

Evelyn McOmie then presented the proposed FY 2025–26 priorities, which included: developing and maintaining relationships with elected officials and legislative candidates based on relevance and committee priorities; monitoring service delivery and compliance across programs such as Self-Determination and waiver services to ensure alignment with statutory, regulatory, and community needs; engaging families of color to identify barriers, address service disparities, and support increased Purchase of Service expenditures; and taking an active advocacy role with government entities and community partners on key legislative priorities, including caseload ratios and increased funding to strengthen the regional center service system. Evelyn McOmie also noted that certain prior priorities, such as those related to mental health and employment, were not carried forward because they had already been addressed or were being managed through other efforts.

Cathy Blin commented that the revised priorities were significantly clearer, more concise, and easier to follow than the prior versions, which had been expansive and overlapping. Cathy Blin noted that the consolidated priorities provided a stronger framework to guide the committee's work and decision-making. Cathy Blin invited questions, concerns, or additional input from committee members, and none were raised. Committee members expressed support for the revised approach.

On a motion made by George Alvarado, seconded by Laura Monge, it was resolved to adopt the proposed committee priorities for FY 2025-26. Motion carried.

7.2 Review and Approve New Format of Proposed Purchase of Service Expenditure Data Report

Evelyn McOmie presented the new format for the **Purchase of Service Expenditure Report**, presented for the committee to review. Evelyn McOmie explained that has historically been referred to as a “disparity report,” which created confusion given the existence of a separate Disparity Report prepared by the Disparity Committee. To improve clarity, the report will be renamed and will continue to be presented every six months.

Evelyn McOmie provided background on the revisions, noting that at the Committee's prior review of the data, members requested additional detail breaking down expenditures by ethnicity. In response, staff developed new graphs that display the top five purchase of service expenditures by ethnicity, as well as expanded views showing expenditures by diagnosis, by service category, and by ethnicity, including both gross total and per-capita figures. Sample data was presented for demonstration purposes only and clearly labeled as such to avoid confusion with current reporting data.

Staff noted that while the underlying data remains the same, the updated report significantly improves readability and usability. The revised format reduces the overall length of the report by consolidating content and presenting multiple graphs per page, allowing for easier scanning and review.

Staff noted that the revised report presents the same data in a more streamlined, readable, and visually digestible format, with multiple graphs displayed per page to reduce packet size while maintaining readability.

Committee members reviewed the revised format, asked clarifying questions, and confirmed that the revised presentation clearly addressed prior feedback and effectively displayed the data by both service category and ethnicity.

On a motion made by George Alvarado, seconded by Laura Monge, it was resolved to approve the new format of the proposed purchase of service expenditure data report to present to the full board. Motion carried.

8. REPORT OUTS

8.1 Legislative Update

Belinda Abatesi presented the legislative update that includes updates on recent legislative developments and a recap of the Legislative Town Hall.

Belinda Abatesi provided an overview of CalFresh updates, noting anticipated federal changes that may result in reduced benefits for some households, pending further federal guidance. California's waiver protecting adults without dependents remains in effect through January 31, 2026, while certain lawfully present immigrants may lose eligibility beginning January 1, 2026. Belinda Abatesi also reported that, effective November 1, 2025, only seniors and individuals with disabilities will qualify for the standard utility allowance. SNAP benefits have been fully restored statewide, and food access resources were shared.

Belinda Abatesi noted that DPSS is offering free webinars to help the community understand upcoming changes. Next Covered California updates were reviewed, explaining that enhanced premium tax credits, which help lower monthly health insurance costs, are set to expire after 2025 unless renewed by Congress. Without renewal, many households may see increased premiums in 2026.

Belinda Abatesi introduced "Board Members in Action" advocacy tools aligned with the committee's newly adopted priorities. These include participation in ARCA's Voter Voice campaign, opportunities to provide feedback to improve transit accessibility, ARC's one-click advocacy form to support disability services funding, and everyday advocacy actions Board members can share with the community.

Belinda Abatesi highlighted recent legislative bills enacted by Governor Newsom on October 13, 2025, encouraging members to review the interactive materials for items impacting regional center services. Upcoming legislative events and key dates on the state calendar were also shared, with committee members invited to notify Lindsay Granger if interested in attending.

The report out concluded with a recap of the Legislative Town Hall, noting it was well received and attended by over 80 participants. The event included Representative Laura Friedman, Assemblymember Pilar Schiavo, staff from Assemblymember J.C. Gabriel's office, and a representative from ARCA. Discussion focused on pressing community issues, including healthcare access, behavioral services, transportation, and housing.

ACTION: Lindsay Granger and Belinda Abatesi will send requested materials to committee members.

8.2 Social Media Update

Cathy Blin invited John Van De Riet to provide the social media update. John Van De Riet reported overall growth across all platforms.

Facebook followers increased from 7,871 in July to 8,015 by the end of October, surpassing the 8,000 mark, with a notable spike in September due to a paid board recruitment campaign. The social media team has set a goal of 20% growth across Facebook, Instagram, and X by the end of the fiscal year. Instagram was identified as the fastest-growing platform, increasing from 1,693 to 1,906 followers, with engagement and reach continuing to trend upward. X showed slower growth, with a net increase of six followers, consistent with trends seen at other regional centers.

John Van De Riet also reported that overall interactions and page reach have nearly doubled since July, with page reach reaching approximately 41,000. Discussion included expanding to additional platforms, including LinkedIn to better reach professional audiences, and the recent launch of Threads, a conversational platform connected to Instagram. Performance data for these platforms will be shared at a future meeting.

8.3 Self-Determination Program Report and SDLVAC Liaison Report

Cathy Blin introduced the Self-Determination Program report, which was presented by Silvia Renteria-Haro. Silvia Renteria-Haro reported that, effective November 1, there are 646 participants enrolled in the Self-Determination Program, with 22 transitions occurring in November and a total of 171 transitions in 2025 to date. Monthly orientations continue to be offered on the first Monday of each month in English and the third Monday in Spanish. Attendance remains higher for the English orientation, while Spanish orientation attendance has been limited. Silvia Renteria-Haro also reviewed Fiscal Management Services (FMS) models, noting that the co-employer model continues to be the most commonly selected option, as participants often view it as involving less liability while allowing shared responsibility.

8.4 SDLVAC Board Liaison Report Out

Cathy Blin introduced the SDLVAC Liaison Report. Juan Hernandez provided highlights from the most recent SDLVAC meeting, noting discussion of developing plain-language tools and templates, including a checklist to help consumers prepare for IPP meetings. Juan Hernandez also reported that the committee reviewed survey outcomes, spending plans, and cost-effectiveness considerations, and shared that upcoming vendor forums will be hosted to address questions related to the Self-Determination Program. Juan Hernandez invited committee members to attend future SDLVAC meetings.

It was noted that SDLVAC meeting information is posted on the NLACRC website calendar and that the next meeting will be held virtually via Zoom.

8.5 1st Quarter Disparity Committee Report Out (July-September)

Cathy Blin introduced the First Quarter Disparity Committee Report, presented by Sarah Yap, covering activities from July through September.

Sarah Yap reported that the Disparity Committee welcomed several new members, including representatives from the Department of Rehabilitation, United American Indian Involvement, New Horizons, the SDP Local Volunteer Advisory Committee, and a new North LA Dental Consultant. The committee identified key focus areas for the current fiscal year, including oral health access, employment supports for adult individuals, Self-Determination Program outreach and awareness for non-English-speaking families and communities of color, social recreation access and awareness, and strategies to cultivate additional vendors, particularly in the Antelope Valley.

Sarah Yap also shared that, based on feedback from the August Community Relations Committee meeting, the Disparity Committee has begun discussing metrics to measure progress in these focus areas. Committee members were asked to consider potential metrics over the holidays, with continued discussion planned at the next meeting. The next Disparity Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 15, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. via Zoom.

A brief discussion followed regarding vendor and VAC participation. It was clarified that the Disparity Committee is a standalone committee rather than a board committee, though vendors and board members attend periodically. Committee members were encouraged to attend on a voluntary basis if interested.

8.6 1st Quarter Intake Data By Location Report (July-September)

Evelyn McOmie presented the 1st Quarter Intake Data by Location report covering the period from July through September.

Evelyn McOmie reviewed intake assessment timelines, focusing on cases exceeding 120 days and 142 days. August reflected a slightly higher volume compared to July and September; however, overall

percentages remained low and continued to trend downward. The percentage of intakes exceeding 120 days was approximately 0.8%, while intakes exceeding 142 days included one case in July and none in August or September.

By service area, San Fernando Valley and Santa Clarita Valley reported zero cases exceeding both 120- and 142-day thresholds across all three months. For the Antelope Valley, one case exceeded 142 days. Evelyn McOmie noted that overall performance has improved significantly, with the percentage of cases exceeding 142 days declining from 6.36% earlier in the year to approximately 0.83%.

Evelyn McOmie attributed this improvement to the increased number of clinicians brought on through vendoring over the past two years, which has strengthened capacity and supported timely eligibility determinations.

9. BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEMS/ACTION ITEMS

- Evelyn McOmie to compile the outreach/activity ideas discussed and bring a proposed list back to the next meeting, including suggested activities and dates (and additional events as they are added).
- Evelyn McOmie / Cathy Blin to bring back the outreach events schedule (January–March and beyond) in a format the committee can use to decide which events to include Board participation.
- The committee/leadership to develop a Board sign-up/commitment process once dates/activities are identified (Cathy Blin noted the need for Board commitments; Evelyn McOmie referenced sign-ups).
- Committee to continue discussion and clarify scope of “community outreach,” including whether outreach will include vendors (raised by Sharon Weinberg) and how vendor engagement (e.g., reviving vendor/site visits) could be incorporated (suggested by Angela Pao-Johnson).
- Board Support will add the new format of the purchase of service expenditure data report to the agenda for the next board meeting for approval.
- Lindsay Granger and Belinda Abatesi will send requested materials to committee members.

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS / PUBLIC INPUT / INFORMATION ITEMS

Curtis Wang asked a clarifying question regarding the holiday potluck event, indicating that he had received an email and submitted his availability. Lindsay Granger responded that she would follow up with Curtis directly to provide an update, noting that final details were still being confirmed.

George Alvarado shared an announcement that he is starting an electric bike club and invited interested individuals to contact him if they would like to participate or learn how to ride an electric bike. Chair Cathy Blin acknowledged and thanked George for sharing.

No additional public comments or announcements were made, and the public input period concluded.

11. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Executive Finance Committee will be January 21, 2026 at 5:00 p.m.

12. ADJOURNMENT

It was agreed that there was no further business to transact; the meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

DISCLAIMER

NLACRC Community Relations Committee
Meeting Minutes

The above minutes 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.



Submitted by:
Lindsay Granger
Executive Administrative Assistant – Board Relations Liaison