

North Los Angeles County Regional Center  
**Consumer Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes (Via Zoom)**  
April 2, 2026

**Present:** Juan Hernandez, Destry Walker, Elena Tiffany, Bill Abrahamson, Jennifer Koster, George Alvarado– **Committee Members**

Lesly Galvan – Support Staff - **Guests**

Santos Rodriguez, Jose Rodriguez, Angela Pao-Johnson, John Van De Riet, Lindsay Granger – **Staff**

**Absent:** Pam Aiona

---

**1. Call to Order & Introductions**

Committee Chair and Board of Trustees Vice President, Juan Hernandez called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

Juan Hernandez read the NLACRC Civility Code and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2. Agenda**

**M/S/C** (Jennifer Koster/Destry Walker) On a motion made by Jennifer Koster, seconded by Destry Walker, it was resolved to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

**3. Public Input**

There was no public input.

**4. Consent Items**

A. Approval of Minutes from March 5, 2026 Meeting

**M/S/C** (Jennifer Koster/Bill Abrahamson) On a motion made by Jennifer Koster, seconded by Bill Abrahamson, it was resolved to approve the meeting minutes from the March 5, 2026 meeting. Motion carried.

**5. Emergency Preparedness (Heat) – Roy Ortega**

Roy Ortega, Emergency Management Specialist at NLACRC, delivered a presentation focused on heat safety and emergency preparedness, noting that recent high temperatures across the region highlight the importance of preparation and awareness.

Roy Ortega explained how heat exhaustion and heat stroke occur when the body is unable to cool itself, particularly during prolonged exposure to high temperatures. Roy Ortega emphasized prevention strategies, including staying hydrated, wearing appropriate clothing such as hats and sun protection, and avoiding outdoor activities during peak heat hours (approximately 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.). Roy Ortega reviewed common symptoms of heat exhaustion, including dizziness,

headaches, nausea, and confusion, and noted that symptoms can escalate to heat stroke if not addressed.

Roy Ortega identified key risk factors, including age (young children and older adults), certain medications, outdoor activity levels, underlying health conditions, and dehydration. Roy Ortega encouraged attendees to share heat safety information with family members and individuals who may be more vulnerable.

Roy Ortega reviewed cooling center options available throughout Los Angeles County, including libraries, shopping malls, and community centers, and noted that individuals can call 311 or visit local emergency preparedness websites to locate nearby cooling centers during extreme heat events.

Roy Ortega also emphasized home safety preparedness, including regularly checking smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, ensuring fire extinguishers are available and inspected, and utilizing Red Cross resources for smoke alarm installation and support.

Roy Ortega introduced Everbridge, NLACRC's emergency notification system, which sends alerts via text, email, or phone during emergencies such as evacuations, fires, earthquakes, or severe weather. Roy Ortega noted that notifications are only sent during active emergencies and encouraged attendees to ensure contact information is current with NLACRC.

George Alvarado shared that Everbridge notifications had not been received for an extended period and requested assistance updating contact information. Roy Ortega offered to follow up directly to review and update records and confirmed that alerts are only sent during actual emergency events.

Bill Abramson emphasized the importance of maintaining emergency kits, including checking expiration dates for supplies such as medications and water and replacing items as needed. Bill Abramson also referenced local emergency preparedness supply stores.

Juan Hernandez asked for recommendations on how to obtain or update an emergency kit. Roy Ortega recommended purchasing pre-assembled kits (such as those available at Costco or preparedness retailers), attending community emergency preparedness events, and contacting organizations such as the Red Cross for available resources.

Roy Ortega emphasized that emergency kits should include essential items such as water, medications, clothing, first aid supplies, copies of identification and important documents, and supplies for pets. Roy Ortega also recommended regularly reviewing and updating kit contents.

Jose Rodriguez reminded attendees to notify NLACRC of any updates to phone numbers, email addresses, or home addresses to ensure emergency notifications are received.

Roy Ortega emphasized that preparedness is proactive and encouraged individuals to plan in advance rather than wait until an emergency occurs.

## **6. Action Items**

There were no action items.

## **6. Committee Business**

### **A. SCDD Training Schedule**

Juan Hernandez reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule and planned topics. The current meeting included the emergency preparedness presentation. For the following month, Juan Hernandez noted a planned presentation focused on online safety and avoiding scams, which Lindsay Granger clarified would be presented by NLACRC's IT Department, including the new IT Director.

Juan Hernandez shared that June will include the May Revision (May Revise) State Budget presentation, covering updates on state funding, legislation, and potential impacts on services.

For August, Juan Hernandez introduced a proposed presentation from the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) regarding public testimony. Jose Rodriguez noted that August typically includes the CAC orientation, which reviews bylaws, goals, and committee focus areas.

The committee discussed whether to hold both the orientation and the SCDD presentation in August or schedule them separately. Lindsay Granger noted that presentations are typically limited to approximately 20 minutes and that the CAC orientation generally takes about 10–15 minutes.

After discussion, including input from Bill Abramson, Jennifer Koster, and Destry Walker, the committee reached consensus to hold both the CAC orientation and the SCDD presentation during the same August meeting.

Juan Hernandez continued reviewing the calendar, noting additional upcoming topics, including open discussion sessions and a November presentation related to building relationships with staff.

For December, Jose Rodriguez and Juan Hernandez confirmed a holiday gathering. Bill Abramson suggested that the December meeting be held in person to allow for a potluck-style event. The group discussed considerations for in-person versus hybrid formats, noting past technical challenges with hybrid meetings. Jose Rodriguez suggested revisiting format decisions closer to the meeting dates to accommodate participation needs.

The committee agreed to continue refining and adding future agenda topics as needed, with Bill Abramson suggesting potential ideas for future discussions, including topics such as pet care.

## B. Discuss Additional Open Topics of Conversation

Juan Hernandez opened a discussion on additional topics for future CAC meetings and invited members to suggest ideas for upcoming presentations or conversations.

Bill Abramson suggested pet care and pet ownership as a future topic, including how to choose the right pet, understanding responsibilities of pet ownership, and basic pet first aid. The committee agreed this would be a helpful discussion topic.

George Alvarado shared that George Alvarado plans to attend a meeting in Sacramento in May and would like to provide an update to the committee in June. During the discussion,

Jennifer Koster asked for clarification about the Sacramento meeting. Juan Hernandez and Lindsay Granger explained that the event is related to the designated CAC ARCA representative role and that George Alvarado is currently serving in that capacity. Lindsay Granger noted that, following recent bylaw updates, the role may need to be discussed further at a future meeting.

Juan Hernandez also suggested a topic focused on recreational activities, including different types of outdoor recreation and activities members may enjoy. Jennifer Koster suggested including ideas such as hiking and outdoor trails. Bill Abramson noted that recreation discussions could also include safety considerations, such as going with a buddy and being prepared for emergencies.

To help narrow the topic, Lindsay Granger suggested framing the discussion as outdoor recreation ideas, opportunities, concerns, and challenges, which the committee supported.

George Alvarado also suggested healthy eating and nutrition as a future discussion topic. Bill Abramson clarified that this could include information on healthy food choices and nutrition. George Alvarado requested that the Sacramento update be placed on a future agenda, and Lindsay Granger confirmed that it would be added.

Additional discussion focused on public safety. George Alvarado raised the idea of safety in outdoor settings, including what to do in situations such as snake bites or getting lost.

Elena Tiffany clarified that this could include safety in wilderness or remote outdoor areas. Juan Hernandez expanded the idea to also include staying safe in public settings, such as using public transportation, crossing the street safely, and knowing what to do when lost in crowded places.

Lindsay Granger summarized the main future topic ideas discussed:

- Pet care and pet ownership
- Outdoor recreation ideas, opportunities, concerns, and challenges
- Public safety and staying safe in public

Roy Ortega helped distinguish between different types of safety topics, noting the difference between wilderness/outdoor first aid and public behavior or safety in community settings.

Roy Ortega shared that workshops on first aid or outdoor safety could potentially be offered again in the future and noted that certified presenters may be needed for certain topics.

Roy Ortega also shared information about possible partnerships with first responders, including:

- the LAPD SMART unit, which focuses on supporting individuals with mental health needs, and
- the Sirens of Silence program, which helps individuals become more familiar and comfortable with emergency sirens.

Roy Ortega encouraged continued collaboration on future safety presentations and community education opportunities. Juan Hernandez thanked Roy Ortega for the input and support. The committee agreed that these were strong topics to build on for future meetings.

The committee viewed two cybersecurity training videos due to available time: one on safe use of public Wi-Fi and another on AI-related cyber threats. The first video focused on risks such as “evil twin” Wi-Fi attacks and emphasized best practices for protecting personal information, including using secure networks and avoiding suspicious connections. The second video highlighted the growing risks of AI-driven scams, including deepfakes, phishing, and impersonation tactics.

Following each video, the committee participated in brief knowledge-check questions and demonstrated strong understanding of the material, correctly identifying key cybersecurity concepts and safety practices.

Members shared positive feedback, noting that the videos were engaging, interactive, and informative.

### C. Pastries & Policies Event

Juan Hernandez introduced the next agenda item, at which time Lindsay Granger informed the committee that the item would not be presented that evening. Lindsay Granger shared that an email had been sent earlier in the day explaining that, due to unforeseen circumstances, the event would not move forward as originally planned and would be deferred.

Elena Tiffany asked whether the event was fully canceled or would be rescheduled. Angela Pao-Johnson clarified that the event was not canceled, but rather postponed. Angela Pao-Johnson explained that the original focus on employment remains a priority, but invited legislators would not be available to participate because of scheduling conflicts and other activity expected in May.

Angela Pao-Johnson shared that NLACRC is now exploring a revised approach centered on expanding employment opportunities through local city leadership. Angela Pao-Johnson referenced the City of Santa Clarita’s Mayor’s Breakfast model, which promotes employment opportunities for all individuals, and explained that discussions are underway about whether a similar effort could be expanded across other cities in NLACRC’s catchment area. Angela Pao-Johnson noted that the goal would be to encourage cities to create more inclusive employment opportunities and highlight the benefits of employing individuals served by NLACRC.

Angela Pao-Johnson stated that the revised event concept is still being developed and that additional time is needed to confirm participation from key individuals. When asked about timing, Angela Pao-Johnson shared that the event may take place in late April or the first week of May, with late April being the preferred timeframe.

Elena Tiffany also mentioned that the City of Los Angeles has been discussing efforts to make hiring more accessible for neurodivergent and autistic individuals and noted that such work may still be in progress. Angela Pao-Johnson expressed interest in learning more about that initiative and invited additional information to be shared with the committee.

Juan Hernandez encouraged committee members to share any information related to housing, jobs, and similar opportunities with the committee going forward.

#### D. Upcoming Events and Flyers

Jose Rodriguez reviewed several upcoming community events and resources available to committee members and the public.

Jose Rodriguez first highlighted free in-person tax preparation services at New Horizons, available on Tuesdays and Thursdays through April 14 on a walk-in basis. Juan Hernandez reminded attendees that the tax filing deadline was approaching. Jose Rodriguez shared that the service is efficient and easy to use. Committee members also discussed other free tax preparation options, including VITA sites at libraries and community locations.

Jose Rodriguez then reviewed an upcoming fraud and scams prevention event on April 8, noting that representatives from organizations such as the FBI, Consumer and Business Affairs, and AARP would be present. Jose Rodriguez encouraged members to attend and gather information, especially in light of the committee's interest in future presentations on online safety and scams.

The committee also discussed a tax preparation event hosted by Senator Menjivar on April 11, which included tacos and pupusas. Angela Pao-Johnson encouraged attendance, noting that Senator Menjivar is involved in important budget discussions and that the event could be a valuable opportunity to show support and remind elected officials of the needs of the developmental disability community. Jose Rodriguez noted that appointments are required and walk-ins are not permitted. Jennifer Koster asked whether attendees needed an appointment specifically to meet Senator Menjivar, and Jose Rodriguez clarified that appointments were for tax preparation services, with any interaction with the Senator dependent on availability at the event. Elena Tiffany noted that event access appeared limited to individuals registered for tax services. Jose Rodriguez stated that follow-up information would be provided after confirming the details.

Jose Rodriguez also shared information about a Community Resource Fair in Burbank on April 11, which was expected to include a wide range of services and community resources. Jose Rodriguez noted that, although the event was outside most of NLACRC's catchment area, some nearby zip codes are still served and the event could still be useful.

Santos Rodriguez then presented information about Inclusion in Action, an NLACRC-hosted event taking place on April 14 at the San Fernando office, with both virtual and in-person attendance options. Santos Rodriguez explained that the event would include a panel discussion featuring NLACRC staff from Community Services, Forensics, Aging, and Self-Determination, with a focus on services for transition-age youth and adults. Santos Rodriguez noted that the event is open to individuals served, families, and community partner organizations. Jennifer Koster requested that the registration link be placed in the chat, and Santos Rodriguez agreed.

Lastly, Jose Rodriguez reviewed the 5th Annual San Fernando Valley Justice and Wellness Fair at CSUN on April 16, which will offer resources related to employment, housing, career development, tax services, health services, volunteer opportunities, and re-entry supports. Committee members discussed the value of understanding available community resources, including supports related to employment and housing challenges. Jose Rodriguez emphasized that even if a resource does not apply directly to a committee member, it may still be useful to share with others in the community.

**7. Review Actions**

Lindsay Granger reviewed key follow-up items for the May agenda. Lindsay Granger noted that George Alvarado will provide an update on the ARCA Client Advisory Committee meeting that George Alvarado plans to attend. Lindsay Granger also confirmed that the committee will receive the planned IT presentation at the May meeting.

Lindsay Granger stated that staff will continue working on the additional future topic ideas discussed during the meeting and that Jose Rodriguez will contact SCDD to provide available dates and coordinate future presentations.

The committee also confirmed that the CAC ARCA representative role will need to be discussed at a future meeting.

During public input, Bill Abramson raised the Jenny Retzinger Award and noted that nomination emails had been distributed. Lindsay Granger clarified that nominations had already closed. Lindsay Granger further explained that the Community Relations Committee would review and vote on the nominations before forwarding a final recommendation to the Board for the final vote.

Juan Hernandez noted that the committee would continue to keep members updated.

**8. Announcements/Information/Public Input**

No additional public input was raised.

**8. Adjournment**

Juan Hernandez adjourned the meeting at 6:21 pm

Submitted by:  
Lindsay Granger  
Executive Administrative Assistant