

North Los Angeles County Regional Center  
**Community Relations Committee Meeting Minutes**  
March 18, 2026

**Present:** Jeremy Sunderland, Cathy Blin, Nicholas Abrahms, Laura Monge, Jennifer Koster, Jacquie Colton, Lety Garcia, Jennifer Koster, Curtis Wang, Juan Hernandez, Sharon Weinberg – 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:** Jason Taketa, George Alvarado

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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 presented. Motion carried.**

4. **PUBLIC INPUT – AGENDA ITEMS**

There was no public input regarding the agenda.

5. **CONSENT ITEMS**

A. Approval of Minutes of the January 21, 2026, Community Relations Committee Meeting

**M/S/C (Sharon Weinberg) On a motion made by Sharon Weinberg, to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2026, meeting. Absent objection the motion carried.**

6. **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

6.1 **Update on 2026 Jynny Retzinger Community Service Award Nominations**

Cathy Blin introduced an update on the 2026 Jynny Retzinger Community Service Award nominations, inviting Chris Whitlock to provide a status report.

Chris Whitlock shared that the nomination period closed on March 1, with a total of 12 nominees submitted. He noted that the nominations will be distributed to the committee for review and voting. The top three candidates selected by the committee will then be forwarded to the Board of Trustees for final consideration and selection. The award recipient will be recognized at the upcoming legislative breakfast.

Cathy Blin expressed appreciation for the strong number of nominations, noting it reflects the meaningful contributions being made within the community. Chris Whitlock confirmed that the timeline is expected to align with the April committee and board meeting schedule.

No additional discussion or questions were raised.

## **6.2 Discuss Self-Determination Program Report at Community Relations Committee Meeting and Board**

Cathy Blin introduced a discussion regarding the reporting structure for the Self-Determination Program (SDP) updates across committees and the Board of Trustees.

Evelyn McOmie provided clarification on the two components of SDP reporting: (1) the SDP implementation report, which includes data, charts, and program updates, and (2) the Board member report-out form, which summarizes key topics discussed at SDP meetings. Evelyn McOmie explained that the implementation report is typically reviewed at the Community Relations Committee (CRC) and included in the board packet, while the Board member report is presented at the board meeting.

Committee members discussed whether presenting both components at multiple levels was duplicative. Juan Hernandez, Sharon Weinberg, and Lety Garcia expressed that the current approach results in redundancy, particularly for members serving on multiple committees.

Following discussion, the committee reached consensus to streamline the process by limiting full SDP reporting to the Board of Trustees. Both the SDP implementation report and the Board member report-out will be presented at the board meeting, rather than duplicated at the CRC.

At the request of Lindsay Granger, a formal motion was made.

**M/S/C (Jeremy Sunderland/Cathy Blin) On a motion made by Jeremy Sunderland, seconded by Cathy Blin, it was resolved to no longer present the self-determination program report and liaison report at the Community Relations Committee meetings. Motion carried.**

No further discussion followed.

ACTION: Moving forward both the SDP Implementation Report and the Board member report out will be presented only at the Board meetings not the Community Relations Committee meetings.

## **7. ACTION ITEMS**

There were no action items.

## **8. REPORT OUTS**

### **8.1 Legislative Update**

Jeremy Sunderland introduced the Legislative Update Report and invited Belinda Abatesi to present.

Belinda Abatesi reported that North Los Angeles County Regional Center participated in the Association of Regional Center Agencies Grassroots advocacy event, joining regional centers across California to meet with legislative offices within the catchment area. The delegation advocated on key issues impacting

individuals with developmental disabilities and families. Belinda Abatesi recognized Juan Hernandez and Jeremy Sunderland for participating in the advocacy efforts.

Belinda Abatesi outlined the primary advocacy priorities discussed during the visits, including youth caregiver support, improving access to dental care for individuals with disabilities, ensuring regional center funding stability, and recognizing the 60th anniversary of California's first regional centers. Belinda Abatesi also highlighted two pieces of legislation: SB 1052, which focuses on future planning support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and AB 1900, which proposes a statewide healthcare system to expand access to comprehensive coverage.

At the federal level, Belinda Abatesi shared updates regarding upcoming changes to CalFresh eligibility beginning April 1, 2026. These changes may impact certain non-citizen populations, with some individuals potentially losing eligibility upon renewal if criteria are no longer met.

Belinda Abatesi also shared information about a nonpartisan candidate interview series hosted by the Lanterman Act coalition, focused on disability rights and California's commitment to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. An upcoming session was noted for March 25. Additional resources, including a state events calendar and upcoming meetings, were referenced for member participation. Belinda Abatesi also introduced a new advocacy engagement tool, the Lanterman Coalition Action Form, designed to allow stakeholders to sign up for alerts and stay informed on legislative activities.

Jeremy Sunderland asked whether follow-up information regarding the 60th anniversary discussion with Assemblymember Carrillo had been sent. Belinda Abatesi confirmed that follow-up emails and communications had been completed with legislative offices.

Lety Garcia raised concerns regarding limited advance notice for legislative and vendor site visits, noting that short timelines make participation challenging. Lety Garcia requested improved proactive communication, including a tentative schedule or advance notice of potential visit dates. Lety Garcia also recommended that copies of correspondence sent to legislators, including meeting requests, support letters, and thank-you letters, be shared with the committee to support transparency, awareness, and recordkeeping of advocacy efforts.

Jeremy Sunderland acknowledged the scheduling challenges and supported providing earlier notice when possible, including sharing tentative dates in advance. Lindsay Granger acknowledged the feedback, noted that some opportunities arise with short notice, and agreed to explore ways to provide earlier communication and potential scheduling visibility moving forward.

No formal action was taken.

## **8.2 Social Media Update**

Jeremy Sunderland introduced the Social Media Update, which John Van De Riet, Public Information Supervisor, presented.

John Van De Riet provided an overview of recent social media performance across platforms. On Facebook, follower growth and engagement remained steady, with increases in followers each month and reach ranging from approximately 13,000 to over 26,000 users. Instagram also showed consistent growth in followers, with regular posting and moderate engagement levels. LinkedIn demonstrated strong growth with consistent monthly increases in followers, while YouTube experienced modest subscriber growth, with a notable increase in February.

Jeremy Sunderland suggested increasing visibility of social media by placing "follow us" links at the top of email communications in addition to the bottom. Juan Hernandez and Cathy Blin expressed agreement with this approach.

Laura Monge raised a question regarding the ability to expand connections on Instagram beyond current follower metrics. John Van De Riet agreed to review and confirm platform capabilities.

Lety Garcia raised concerns regarding limited posting activity on Spanish-language social media pages and emphasized the importance of consistent, bilingual content to better reach the community. John Van De Riet acknowledged the concern and agreed to review posting consistency and ensure alignment between English and Spanish platforms.

Committee members discussed strategies to improve engagement, including increasing posting frequency, maintaining fresh and relevant content, and leveraging analytics to determine effective content types. Lety Garcia suggested surveying followers to better understand content preferences.

Additional discussion focused on expanding accessibility through Spanish-language content, including translating or adding subtitles to podcast episodes, and incorporating Spanish-speaking guests or segments. Juan Hernandez and Lety Garcia suggested creating shorter Spanish-language podcast segments or highlights to increase reach and engagement.

John Van De Riet confirmed that efforts are underway to enhance content strategy, including video content, podcasts, and potential Spanish-language initiatives.

No formal action was taken.

### **8.3 Self-Determination Program Report**

Jeremy Sunderland introduced the Self-Determination Program (SDP) update, and Silvia Renteria-Haro provided the report.

Silvia Renteria-Haro shared that the last Local Volunteer Advisory Committee meeting was held on February 19, with the next meeting scheduled virtually from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Silvia Renteria-Haro noted that the committee is currently advocating to preserve annual SDP implementation funds, which support individuals transitioning into the program and are scheduled to sunset in 2028.

Silvia Renteria-Haro reported that, as of March 1, there were 730 SDP participants. There were 22 transitions during the month and 60 total transitions for 2026. Orientation attendance included 29 English participants and 2 Spanish participants.

Silvia Renteria-Haro stated that, beginning April 1, the State Council will take over SDP orientations statewide to support consistency across all regional centers. Orientations are expected to be more in-depth, offered virtually, and available in multiple languages.

Committee members discussed the importance of promoting SDP through clear, accessible information and personal experiences. Jacquie Colton and Sharmila Brunjes shared personal perspectives regarding the value of SDP orientation and participation. Sharon Weinberg and Jeremy Sunderland suggested that testimonials or impact stories may help families better understand the program.

Laura Monge asked how SDP is promoted to families. Silvia Renteria-Haro explained that SDP information is included as part of the IPP signature page discussion, supported by flyers, and promoted through coaches funded by implementation funds to help guide families through the transition process. Juan Hernandez expressed concern about not receiving SDP information during prior IPP meetings.

Silvia Renteria-Haro confirmed that SDP information is intended to be shared with all individuals and families.

Jeremy Sunderland thanked the committee and staff for the discussion and engagement.

#### **8.4 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Disparity Committee Report Out**

Jeremy Sunderland introduced the Third Quarter Disparity Committee Report, and Sarah Yap provided the update.

Sarah Yap reported that the Disparity Committee met in January, February, and March 2026, with the most recent meeting held on March 12. During the quarter, community-based organizations continued presenting on their work and impact related to improving service access. Presenters included Integrated Community Collaborative and Family Focus Resource Center.

Sarah Yap shared that support groups continue to be well received, with ongoing interest in in-person gatherings. Sarah Yap also announced that the DEIB team will host the second Inclusion in Action Hybrid Workshop on April 14 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the San Fernando Valley office and via Zoom. Topics will include community services, conservatorship, aging adults, and general Self-Determination Program information.

The next Disparity Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 9, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Lety Garcia noted that a Consumer and Family Guide had previously been developed and suggested that the committee reference it as work continues on resource-sharing efforts. Sarah Yap confirmed awareness of the guide, stated that it is currently being updated, and agreed to follow up.

Jennifer Koster requested a calendar invitation for future Disparity Committee meetings. Sarah Yap agreed to coordinate with administration.

No formal action was taken.

#### **8.5 Semi-annual Expenditure Data Report**

Jeremy Sunderland introduced the Semi-Annual Expenditure Data Report, and Evelyn McOmie provided the update.

Evelyn McOmie reviewed the top five expenditures by ethnicity, which included personal assistance, in-home respite, residential facility services, community integration, and supportive living. Evelyn McOmie explained that the data compared Fiscal Year 2024–2025 with the first half of Fiscal Year 2025–2026, with data pulled as of February 5.

Evelyn McOmie also reviewed an additional slide on the top five expenditures for individuals living in the home, which included personal assistance, in-home respite, infant development services, community integration, and adaptive skills. Evelyn McOmie noted that this slide would be added to the meeting packet.

Lety Garcia asked for clarification regarding the difference between the overall top five expenditures and the top five in-home expenditures. Evelyn McOmie explained that the in-home expenditures are specific to services supporting individuals living at home. Evelyn McOmie also clarified that adaptive skills training generally supports everyday living skills and is more commonly used for children, though it may also be used for adults in certain circumstances.

Committee members discussed how expenditure patterns may reflect differences in living arrangements across communities, including supported living and residential services. Evelyn McOmie explained that

the data should be reviewed in context, including cultural differences, historical service patterns, and the types of residential or independent living supports being used.

Lety Garcia emphasized the importance of educating families about supported living and future planning options, particularly for families concerned about long-term care when parents or caregivers are no longer able to provide support.

**M/S/C (Jennifer Koster/Lety Garcia) On a motion made by Jennifer Koster, seconded by Lety Garcia, it was resolved to include ethnicity breakdowns for infant development and adaptive skills in the future semi-annual expenditure reports. Motion carried**

Jennifer Koster asked whether the expenditure data could be shared with the Disparity Committee. Evelyn McOmie agreed to coordinate with staff regarding a future presentation.

No further questions were raised.

## **8.6 Semi-annual 4731 Report**

Jeremy Sunderland introduced the Semi-annual 4731 Report, and Dana Lawrence provided the update.

Dana Lawrence reported that 76 complaints were filed between July and December 2025, including 195 individual allegations. Of those, 53 violations were identified, including 12 violations found during the investigation that were not part of the original complaints.

Dana Lawrence shared that the most common violation involved notices of proposed action, with 25 violations related to untimely or missing notices. Dana Lawrence also noted a newer trend involving IPP meetings not being held when requested or not being held timely, with 10 violations identified. Other violations included issues with IPP planning, service coordination, and one vendor-related violation.

Lety Garcia asked what corrective action occurs when violations are found. Dana Lawrence explained that findings are shared with the case management team, Evelyn McOmie, and the Executive Director. When a violation is identified, a proposed resolution is required, most often additional training for the team involved.

Sharon Weinberg asked whether the report format could be made easier to read. Dana Lawrence explained that the format is based on the DDS-required report template and may change when the new complaint process goes into effect.

Lety Garcia asked about complaints related to lack of response from service coordinators. Dana Lawrence explained that while NLACRC has an internal expectation for responses within 72 hours, there is no statutory response-time requirement under the Lanterman Act. Dana Lawrence noted that significant or prolonged lack of response may still be identified as a failure of service coordination.

## **8.7 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Intake Data by Location Report**

Jeremy Sunderland introduced the Third Quarter Intake Data Report, and Evelyn McOmie provided the update.

Evelyn McOmie reported minimal instances of intakes exceeding the 120-day compliance requirement, with two cases in October, one in November, and one in December. The out-of-compliance cases were attributed to factors such as scheduling coordination and cancellations. Evelyn McOmie noted that November achieved 100% compliance.

Evelyn McOmie stated that the low number of out-of-compliance cases reflects strong performance by the intake department, emphasizing that this level of compliance is considered a positive outcome.

No questions were raised.

**9. BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEMS/ACTION ITEMS**

Jeremy Sunderland transitioned the meeting to Board Meeting Agenda Items and confirmed that no items were identified for inclusion on the upcoming Board of Trustees agenda. Lindsay Granger clarified that no additional items were needed, as relevant updates would already be presented at the board level.

**10. ANNOUNCEMENTS / PUBLIC INPUT / INFORMATION ITEMS**

Jeremy Sunderland moved to announcements and confirmed the next meeting is scheduled for May 20.

Jeremy Sunderland encouraged members to participate in future grassroots advocacy efforts, noting the value of engagement with local legislators.

Jennifer Koster asked for clarification regarding the status of state developmental centers. Evelyn McOmie explained that most facilities have been closed, with a limited number of specialized sites remaining for individuals with higher needs.

Lety Garcia suggested reinstating a Deputy Director report for the committee to provide broader updates on case management and consumer-related topics. Evelyn McOmie agreed to explore this and potentially implement a report beginning in the next fiscal year.

Lindsay Granger confirmed that all attendees, including those who joined late, would be marked as present.

**11. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Community Relations Committee will be on May 20, 2026 at 5:00 p.m.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

**The meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.**

**DISCLAIMER**

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.

