

Meeting Summary for SDLAC

August 20, 2026

Quick recap

This was the North Los Angeles County Regional Center Self-Determination Local Advisory Committee meeting for August, where committee members and staff gathered to discuss program implementation, challenges, and resources. The meeting began with introductions from committee members including new member Jessica Gould, who was assigned by State Council, and staff representatives from the Self-Determination Program team. Several participants shared public input and resources, with Victoria Berry discussing new requirements for public benefits programs and Christina Cannarella raising concerns about significant barriers in transitioning her son into the self-determination program due to North Los Angeles Regional Center's refusal to provide a budget or spending plan. Diana shared her experiences with challenging FMS (Financial Management Service) selection and payment delays, while Gavi Gershaw from TrueCare FMS introduced their new company as a courtesy vendor offering person-centered services with fast payment processing. The committee also discussed upcoming elections for chair and co-chair positions in September, reviewed the self-governance document outlining responsibilities, and addressed the RFP process for 2027 funds which is currently in the interview phase.

Next steps

Jessica

- Provide feedback on the navigation and usability of the North LA SDP website.

Lori

- Send the chair/co-chair application form to Jessica and add her to the committee email list.

Miriam

- Send the Google Doc feedback survey to Jessica for this month.

Robin

- Reach out to Diana to assist with the status of her spending plan approval process.

Silvia

- Escalate Christina's issue regarding the refusal of a budget for her son due to HCBA waiver cap and ensure someone contacts her.
- Test the Zoom link on the flyer for the SDLAC meeting to ensure it does not require a password.
- Check with other regional centers in September to see if any have successfully implemented SDP for individuals in group home placements.

Collaboration

- Committee Members: Complete the self-review and commit to another year on the committee by the next meeting.
- Committee Members: Apply for the chair and co-chair positions by submitting the candidate statement form to Denise by September 4th.
- Lori and Miriam: Present the suggestion of adding the Google Doc feedback link to the website to the Best Practices subcommittee.

Summary

Self-Determination Program Public Input Meeting

The meeting began with introductions from committee members and staff, including Victoria Berry from Family Focus Resource Center, Miriam Erberich (co-chair), Jordan Feinstock (long-term committee member and client), and new member Jessica Gould who was recommended by State Council. The committee members shared their roles and experiences with the Self-Determination Program (SDP), with several being family members or program participants themselves. Lori Walker, the committee chair, explained that the purpose of the meeting was to gather public input and successes/obstacles related to the SDP at North LA, which would be included in their monthly report to state entities including DDS and the regional center.

Public Benefits Program Updates

Victoria shared information about new requirements for public benefits programs, including the need to renew eligibility for Medi-Cal and CalFresh every six months, and noted a new section on the BenefitsCal website showing exemptions from work requirements. Christina described significant challenges in transitioning her son into self-determination due to roadblocks from North Los Angeles Regional Center, which is refusing to provide a budget or spending plan based on HCBA waiver restrictions. Silvia committed to escalating Christina's situation and ensuring someone follows up with her, while Lori expressed sympathy and offered additional resources including support groups and coaches to help with the complex process.

FMS Provider Accountability Discussion

Diana shared her challenging experience enrolling in the self-determination program, particularly with finding and selecting a Fiscal Management Service (FMS), highlighting issues with communication, payment delays, and lack of accountability among FMS providers. She suggested creating a public review system, similar to Yelp, to help families make informed decisions about FMS providers. Lori acknowledged Diana's concerns and confirmed that the committee has been advocating for greater accountability from FMS providers, while Robin and Miriam provided additional guidance on researching FMS options and emphasized the importance of support group discussions for sharing experiences.

FMS Updates and Training Announcement

Gavi from TrueCare FMS provided an update on their new FMS status and emphasized their person-centered approach, including rapid payment processing within 24 hours and acceptance of participants regardless of budget size. Christiana announced upcoming training sessions on selecting FMS and smart staffing, with recorded sessions available for future reference. Silvia

invited attendees to the third annual Family Expo in the Santa Clarita Valley on September 12th, with an Antelope Valley event planned for October 24th. Taleen shared insights about evaluating FMSs, emphasizing the importance of identifying key needs and understanding payment processes. Jennifer introduced herself as the new liaison from the Board of Trustees at North LA, sharing her positive experience in the SDP program.

Financial Management Services Committee Updates

The meeting focused on updates and resources related to financial management services (FMS) ~~and upcoming elections~~. Gavi explained that their organization currently only offers the bill pay model for FMS, emphasizing its safety for families. Several resources were shared, including the North La self-determination page, a support group run by the Self-determination Institute, and upcoming trainings and webinars from Disability Rights California. Lori announced that the committee is in the process of interviewing applicants for the 2027 RFP funds and will share results at the September meeting. The upcoming election for chair and co-chair positions was discussed, with Miriam and Lori indicating they would not be running again and encouraging interested committee members to apply.

Committee Elections and Governance Process

Lori presented the committee's self-governance document and outlined the process for upcoming elections, including nomination requirements and voting procedures. She announced that committee members need to complete self-reviews by the next meeting to confirm their continued participation. The group discussed how to access information about joining the committee and applying for positions, with Lori encouraging members to apply for both North LA and State Council positions.

Committee Goals and Feedback Review

The committee discussed feedback from a recent board meeting, with Lori expressing frustration about the timing of closed sessions affecting SDP report presentations. The Best Practices meeting focused on reviewing two forms - a to-do list and website feedback form - with updates made to the workbook and vendor list. The committee also reviewed their four goals, with progress reported on Google Doc surveys, website updates, and newsletter reviews. Miriam emphasized the importance of completing feedback surveys, noting that despite limited responses, the feedback is making a difference and being used in DDS meetings.

SDP Feedback Collection Planning

The committee discussed their ongoing two-year committee-centered plan to collect feedback from members about the Self-Determination Program (SDP). Lori and Miriam explained that while they will no longer be chair-co-chair, they will continue managing the document collection process, which includes anonymous feedback and positive stories about the program. Diana suggested making the feedback survey available on the website for families who cannot attend meetings, which Lori agreed to discuss with Best Practices. The committee also welcomed new member Jessica, who volunteered to participate in the current month's survey, and discussed the importance of balancing negative feedback with positive stories about the program's impact.

Recreational Services Staff Training Resources

Ricardo presented a new staff training resource focused on social and recreational services, which includes a simple assessment tool and materials available in both Spanish and English to help regional centers support access to camping and social recreational services. He expressed interest in proposing legislation requiring certification of regional center staff in the Lanterman Act and WIC code. The group also discussed North LA's process for resolving SDP issues, which involves starting with a service coordinator and progressing through various levels of support before contacting the SDP team.

Website Navigation and Feedback Process

Jessica offered to provide feedback on website navigation improvements and requested a point person to communicate with. Lori and Miriam confirmed they are the current contacts and welcomed additional feedback to help improve the website. The group discussed issues with accessing Zoom meetings through certain website links, with Miriam noting that Christina reported needing a passcode to join. Diana asked about the proper escalation process for budget changes, and Robin clarified that service coordinators, not SDP specialists, are the primary contacts for IPP planning and spending plan reviews.

North LA SDP Program Updates

Robin presented North LA's SDP program statistics showing 927 certified budgets and 866 approved spending plans as of August 1st, with program participation continuing to grow significantly. The discussion addressed questions about program implementation in group home settings, with Robin explaining that while participants in residential placements can participate in SDP, it requires more complex planning and cannot fund residential costs directly. Although participants living in group home settings can transition into SDP, we have not had anyone do so at NLACRC. The meeting also covered administrative updates including changes to orientation requirements being handled by State Council rather than local teams, and feedback about flyer access issues that Robin addressed through chat messages.

Pay Rates and Leadership Updates

The group discussed pay rates for personal assistants, with Robin explaining that DDS is working on guidelines, but no current information is available yet. John raised concerns about external factors impacting the community, including ICE actions and proposed changes to public charge grounds of inadmissibility. Silvia provided updates on RFP fund usage across various organizations, reporting a total of \$51,477 remaining. The conversation ended with announcements about upcoming leadership elections for chair and co-chair positions, with forms to be submitted for applications.

North LA Leadership Discussion

The conversation ended with participants expressing gratitude for the feedback received and discussing positive developments at North LA.