

North Los Angeles County Regional Center
Vendor Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

March 2, 2017

Present: Orli Almog, Shelly Briggs, Deborah Cutter, Mariela Feldman, Michelle Heid, Sharoll Jackson, Eleshia Johnson, Staci Jordan, Kristin Laurino, Jenni Moran, Marina Pink, and Wayne Tashjian - Committee Members

George Stevens, Jennifer Kaiser, Kim Rolfes, Erica Beall, Erin Broughton-Rodriguez, Sarah Cox, and Arsho Garlanian – Staff

Deb Donovan, Dolly Wauls, Caleb Logan, Jr., Erik Elliott, Suad Bisogno, Rita Zelaya, Alona Yorkshire, Ziba Behan, Mark Steidl, Fatima Castanean, T. Quarry, Bob Erio, Joseph Rosales, Jackie Stawinski, Jason Trevino, Tina Castro, Jorge Flores, Anthony Jenkins, Rebecca Holik, Dana Andrews, Ralph Stokes, Adam Stokes, Emily Owens, Joseph Taylor, Karin Leissner, Shirley Walker, Jon Francis, Nikisia Simmons, Leticia Leon, Victoria Greenwood, Maria Mendez, Walter Mendez, Tyrone Mendez, Natally Corleto, Chris Bratzel, Kathleen Sturkey, Daisy Pineda, Marisol Yribe, Saeda Farah, Moira Letzer, Nick Vukotic, Mark Morrow, Jessica Morrow, Pat Knight, Kendra Espinosa, Tiki Thompson, Lisa Szilagyi, Teresa Fazio, and Ken Lane – Guests

Absent: Fredlyn Berger, Cynthia Fernandez, and Scott Shepard

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Michelle Heid, VAC chair, called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. Introductions were made.

II. Public Input

- A. Kim Rolfes announced that guests can access the center's WiFi with the username "Guest" and the password "blueanimal."
- B. Michelle Heid sadly announced the passing of Dr. Ali Sadeghi, a long time provider of behavioral services. His service will be held at the Hollywood Hills Forest Lawn at noon on Friday.
- C. Michelle Heid also announced that Dolly Wauls, residential service provider and former VAC member, was recently honored by Assembly Member Tom Lackey as "Antelope Valley Woman of the Year." The Assembly Member visited Dolly's home and was very impressed. Congratulations Dolly!
- D. In responding to a question from the audience, George Stevens explained that the center is no longer planning to hold an open house at the new main office due to restrictions held by the building's owner.

III. Consent Items

A. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was corrected to show that Sharoll Jackson will give the reports on items IX.C. and IX.D.

M/S/C (J. Moran/E. Johnson) To approve the agenda as amended.

B. Approval of Minutes from the January 5th VAC Meeting

M/S/C (S. Jackson/J. Moran) To approve the minutes as presented.

C. Approval of Minutes from the February 2nd VAC Meeting

M/S/C (J. Moran/W. Tashjian) To approve the minutes as presented.

IV. Executive Director's Report

George Stevens gave the following reports:

A. Affordable Care Act: We continue to monitor activity related to the president's proposed repeal of the ACA. Dollars from the ACA go into our Medi-Cal funding. If these dollars are redirected, it will have a dramatic impact on us as people with disabilities and the elderly are the primary funding recipients. This process is not as simple as "repeal and replace."

B. 1915i State Plan Amendment: The 1915i SPA will provide states with the option to offer Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS), previously available only through a 1915(c) HCBS waiver, through the state's Medicaid state plan. The ACA expanded coverable services under 1915(i) to include any of the HCBS permitted under section 1915(c) HCBS waivers, certain services for individuals with mental health and substance use disorders, and other services requested by a state and approved by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. In addition, the changes support ensuring the quality of HCBS, require states to offer the benefit statewide, and enable states to target 1915(i) State Plan HCBS to particular groups of participants but not limit the number of participants who may receive the benefit. The center will be adding more of our consumers to the Medicaid waiver under the 1915(i) SPA.

C. Purchase of Service (POS Expenditure Data Community Meetings: The center will hold 2 community meetings in both English and Spanish on:

1. Thursday, March 23rd, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. (Chatsworth office)
2. Thursday, March 30th, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. (Antelope Valley office)

- D. AB 279 (Holden): George thanked Kim Rolfes, Michelle Heid, and Steve Miller for their part in getting Assembly Member Holden to author this bill, which addresses the L.A. County minimum wage increases and their impact on our providers. The state minimum wage won't catch up with the L.A. County minimum wage until 2020, so we are working hard to get this bill passed by writing letters of support and asking other Assembly Members and Senators to co-author the bill. George met with the Assembly Member yesterday who informed him that he was receiving a lot of letters in support of his bill. A hearing on the bill will be held on Tuesday, March 7th, in Sacramento. Dr. Ron Cohen, director of UCP Los Angeles, and George are both planning to attend that hearing and provide testimony.
- E. Assembly Budget Hearing: A hearing on the budget for developmental disability services was held yesterday. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) glossed over their denials of health and safety waivers for service providers. There was discussion at the hearing about the woefully inadequate budget to implement the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) final rule, which will be costly. The next budget hearing will be held Thursday, March 16th and it can be accessed live at www.calchannel.com.
- F. Behavioral Services Transition: Health Net was recently bought out by another company, so we are working with new people now who are working better with us. A rate issue has come up: they want to pay less than what the regional center pays. The transition is about 75% complete and the remaining consumers are being transitioned on a case-by-case basis.

V. Chief Financial Officer's Report (Kim Rolfes)

- A. NLACRC's Budget: The center's operations budget is currently \$48,909,218 with no surplus or deficit projected. The POS budget is \$376,743,203 with a projected deficit of \$6,748,774 (in the worst case scenario). In the best case scenario, the center is actually projecting a small surplus!
- B. New Contract Language: We are expecting contract language soon from DDS that will be serious about protecting confidential consumer health information. This language will affect regional centers and their service providers.

- C. NLACRC's Audited Financial Statement for FY 2015-16: Has been accepted by our Board of Trustees and has been posted on our website. Other than not meeting a few timelines, the center had another excellent audit.
- D. IRS Form 990: The center's tax return for 2016 will be presented to the Board of Trustees on March 8th and, once it has been accepted by the board, it will also be posted on the center's website.

VI. **Community Services Director's Report** (Kim Rolfes for Yolanda Bosch)

- A. Health and Safety Requests: As George mentioned earlier, DDS has been denying service provider requests for rate increases due to the local minimum wage increases under an unanticipated rate adjustment.
- B. CMS Final Rule Training: The center will soon be offering training to our service providers on the CMS final rule. We want to train our staff first so they will be able to answer any questions providers may have.
- C. Community Integrated Employment (CIE)/Paid Internship Program (PIP): We are trying to work out the practical implementation process for these 2 programs and are still waiting to get some direction from DDS. What we do know is that the Individual Program Plan (IPP) must reflect the need. As soon as we receive information from DDS we will begin training our staff and will also share the information with our providers. Unfortunately, it doesn't look like DDS will fund these activities retroactively.
- D. Independent Review/Audit Requirements: Regulations were changed last year for thresholds and timelines for service provider independent reviews or audits. If a service provider has no findings, they may seek a 2-year exemption from the requirement to submit and independent review or audit to the regional center. The new statute is proactive, not retroactive. Service provider reviews/audits are due to the center 9 months after your fiscal year ends. Our accounting department will be sending out reminder letters this month to providers who have reviews/audits due.
- E. DDS Rate Study: A Request for Proposals (RFP) has been posted on the Department of General Services' website for a consultant to conduct a rate study for DDS. The rate study will assist DDS in designing a sustainable system with rates that can keep pace with inflation. DDS must submit their proposal to the Legislature in 2019. Unfortunately, at yesterday's budget hearing, there was talk about a 1-time rate adjustment – so we need to stay on top of this!

- F. CPP Proposals: Staff are in the process of reviewing the CPP proposals that were submitted.
- G. Residential Services Orientation: The next orientation will be held Monday, March 20th. If you plan to attend, please RSVP.
- H. Antelope Valley Service Needs: The center still has an RFP posted on our website for Early Start service needs in the Antelope Valley.
- I. Social Assessments: The center is in need to providers to conduct social assessments.

VII. Committee Business

- A. Revised VAC Priority Issue Groups for FY 2016-17: At last month's VAC meeting, the members decided they wanted to merge their CMS/WIOA break out group with their Adult Services break out group, and reinstate the Early Start Services break out group. The board's Executive Committee approved this request, on behalf of the board. Copies of the revised priority issue groups were provided.
- B. Immigration Issues: As a result of the new administration, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has begun picking up undocumented immigrants for deportation. This has families hesitant about taking their children to center- based programs or even leaving their neighborhoods to go to work. This is a big problem. We need to let them know that the regional center and its provider agencies are safe places and are not extensions of any enforcement agency. George added that he would like our actions to speak louder than our words. Perhaps a list of consumer/family rights could be developed and distributed.

Action: Any VAC members with insights on how to help address this issue, should bring their ideas to the next VAC meeting for discussion.

- C. Minimum Wage Legislation: AB 279 (Holden): Assembly Member Holden introduced AB 279 which would give DDS the authority to increase provider rates to help them keep pace with local minimum wage increases. We want to get a grassroots effort going to support this bill. The bill will be heard by the Assembly Health and Human Services Committee on Tuesday, March 7th, so they need to receive the support letters prior to that date. **Letters should be sent to Assembly Member Blanca Rubio**, chair of that committee. **Her fax number is: (916) 319-2148.** Michelle handed out copies of sample letters

that could be used. Faxing is better than e-mailing or snail-mailing. Michelle then assigned the following “homework:”

1. Today: Everyone should call or fax their local senators and assembly members urging them to support this bill – and why they should.
2. Tomorrow: Contact as many legislators as you can and urge them to support the bill by becoming a co-author. Then encourage your staff, consumers, and families to do the same.

The more legislators that support and co-author the bill, the stronger it will become.

- D. Identify Nominee(s) to Serve as VAC Chair in FY 2017-18: Only one nominee was identified.

M/S/C (J. Moran/E. Johnson) To nominate Michelle Heid to serve another term as the VAC chair.

Michelle’s election will be held at next month’s VAC meeting.

- E. Developmental Services Task Force (DSTF): The Development Center Task Force was subsequently renamed DSTF to focus efforts on strengthening the community system while continuing to address topics related to the closing of the developmental centers. It is important to keep an eye on this task force as they have also been tasked with looking at the DDS rate study. We need to find out who the members of the task force are so we can begin communicating with them. The DSTF meetings can be seen on the CalChannel and information about their meetings is posted on the CA Health and Human Services Agency’s website.

VIII. Reports from the VAC Priority Issue Work Groups

- A. Early Start Services (Mariela for Fredlyn): The group discussed Early Start cafes, Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) due date changes, and rates. George added that the only findings the center had in its FY 2015-16 audit were for not meeting some Early Start service deadlines.
- B. Implementation of the Behavioral Services Transition (Mariela): The transition is moving forward and, as reported earlier, the transition is about 75% complete. The group has now begun focusing on transitioning these consumers back to the regional center once they turn 21 years of age.

- C. Implementation of the Self-Determination Program (Michelle): The implementation of this program has pretty much stalled until DDS submits the waiver to the feds, so the center's self-determination volunteer advisory committee has begun meeting every other month rather than monthly. The committee didn't meet last month, but will meet this month on Thursday, March 16th, at 7:00 p.m. at the center's Santa Clarita Valley office. These are primarily informational meetings and they rotate meeting locations between the center's 3 offices.
- D. Services for Adult Consumers/Implementation of CMS & WIOA (Eleshia): The group discussed the new paid internship program and wondering what types of proposals it could become attached to. They also discussed how to prepare consumers with realistic employment goals, staffing ratios, rates, and trainings.

IX. Report on Board Committee Meetings

- A. Administrative Affairs (Orli): The committee reviewed the draft FY 2015-16 audited financial statement; it was an excellent audit with just 2 minor audit findings. The committee reviewed several contracts with costs of \$250,000 or more and recommended them for board approval. DDS recently audited the center's 2 family home agencies (Community Options and Free to Be). When reviewing the POS budget status of the 21 regional centers, it was noted that NLACRC had the 3rd highest POS deficit in the state. The monthly human resources report reflected 477 authorized positions with 46 positions open; the center will probably reach 500 staff by the end of this year.
- B. Board of Trustees (Michelle): The board reviewed and accepted the center's FY 2015-16 audited financial statement. The board approved the Government and Community Relations Committee's proposed plans for the center's event celebrating the Lanterman Act's 50th anniversary. George Stevens gave his monthly director's report which included status reports on the allocation methodology; state budget, legislation, and regional center operations. The quarterly appeals/hearings, consumer diagnosis, and exceptions/exemptions reports were presented by the Consumer Services Committee. The next board meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 8th.
- C. Consumer Services (Sharoll): The committee reviewed a statewide report on the fair hearings held by each of the 21 regional centers; typically the larger the center, the more fair hearings they have. The monthly CPP report shows the center's progress in moving their consumers out of the developmental

centers and into the community; the center's goal for this fiscal year is to move 10 consumers, and as of January 31st, the center had already placed 7 of the 10 consumers into the community! The committee also reviewed the new performance standards for the center's service coordinators; the standards were developed to promote more consistency.

- D. Government & Community Relations (Sharoll): The committee discussed AB 279 (Holden) and were given an update on the center's legislative training sessions that are being held. Plans are underway for the center's Lanterman Act anniversary event which will be held Friday, April 21st, at the Airtel Plaza Hotel in Van Nuys. Plans are also underway for the center's local legislative visits and the ones that will take place at the State Capitol as part of the Association of Regional Center Agencies' Grass Roots Day on Wednesday, April 5th. AB 279 will be the main talking point for the legislative visits.
- E. Nominating (Deborah): The committee began interviewing board applicants last night and will finish interviewing applicants this evening. The committee has identified 10 VAC applicants to interview and those interviews will be held the evenings of March 21st and 22nd.
- F. Strategic Planning (Wayne): This committee meets quarterly and last met on Monday, February 8th. They reviewed the statewide report which compared each of the 21 regional centers' performance contract numbers. The goal for each center is to improve upon their own numbers each year and to also strive to be better than the statewide average. In all but 1 case, NLACRC had exceeded its own numbers and exceeded the statewide average. The committee also discussed the CIE, PIP, WIOA, and self-determination, but these topics were already covered earlier in this meeting.

X. Open Issues for Discussion

Michelle Heid encouraged providers to take the following actions to support AB 279 (Holden): Fax, call, and write letters to as many California legislators as you can, asking for them to support and co-sponsor the bill. Then ask your friends, staff, colleagues, and family members to do the same!

XI. Agenda Items for the Next Board Meeting

The following item was identified for the VAC's section of the March 8th board meeting agenda:

- A. Minutes from the March 2nd Meeting

XII. Announcements/Information/Public Input

- A. News You Can Use: Michelle Heid encouraged everyone who has not signed up to receive “News you can use” e-mail bulletins from the regional center should sign up! They really do send you news you can use!
- B. Next NLACRC Board Meeting: Wednesday, March 8th, at 6:30 p.m. Michelle encouraged service providers to attend the monthly board meetings, which are open to the public.
- C. Next VAC Meeting: Thursday, April 6th, at 9:00 a.m. (break out groups meet)

XIII. Adjournment

Michelle adjourned the meeting at 11:13 a.m.

Submitted by,

Jennifer Kaiser

Jennifer Kaiser
Executive Assistant

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