

North Los Angeles County Regional Center  
**Vendor Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

February 2, 2023

**Present:** Suad Bisogno, Alex Kopilevich, Andrea Devers, Dana Kalek, Cal Enriquez, Jaklen Keshishyan, Masood B., Octavia Askew, Sharon Weinberg, Erica Beall, Jodie Agnew-Navarro, Vahe Mkrtchian, Kimberly Visokey, Catherine Carpenter, Cristina Preuss, Daniel Ortiz, Donna Rentsch, Emmanuel Gutierrez, Geri Sue Cox, Masood Babaeian, Mayra Alvarado– **Committee Members**

Vini Montague, Evelyn McOmie, Gabby Esharti, Arshalous Garlanian – **Staff Members**

Michelle Heid - Legucator, Chris Gardner -Minutes Services – **Guest**

**Absent:**

---

**I. Call to Order & Introductions**

Suad Bisogno, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. The board announces the annual board dinner on May 3rd, encouraging vendors to submit success stories by February 15th for recognition. They seek applications for the VAC committee due to upcoming term expirations, emphasizing the need for active representation. The application deadline for committee positions is February 15th, and interested individuals are urged to apply.

**II. Public Input**

Public Input was given.

**III. Consent Items**

**A. Approval of Agenda**

Suad Bisogno acknowledges the commendable work of CCLN and praises Mark. The meeting proceeds to consent items, starting with the approval of the agenda. A correction is made to Evelyn's title, Which is changed to deputy director.

**M/S/C** (C. Enriquez/A. Kopilevich) To approve the agenda as amended.

**B. Approval of Minutes from the October 5, 2023, Meeting**

Sharon Weinberg raises questions and suggestions for corrections. She notes a discrepancy on page three regarding "DDC" instead of "DDS" and points out the correction. Additionally, on page two, she suggests changing "check in" to "check run" under the financial officer report. Sharon also draws attention to an action item on page five related to Ruth Jenka's follow-up on subcodes for remote services.

Suad Bisogno acknowledges and incorporates the corrections, clarifying the changes with Sharon. Regarding the action item, Sharon proposes adding it to the agenda under committee business. Suad agrees, and they decide not to make it a formal action item but to include it in the discussion during committee business.

**M/S/C** (A. Kopilevich/E. Beall) To approve the Minutes presented with corrections.

IV. **Executive Director's Report** – Cristina Preuss  
NLACRC Human Resources New Hires Report

Cristina Preuss presented the Human Resources Report as presented in the packet.

Suad Bisogno expresses gratitude to Christina for her comprehensive report and then raises a specific question regarding the budget, focusing on the coordinated family support services. Suad notes a \$36 million reduction in funding due to the expiration of one-time funding for the preschool phase. She mentions that North L.A.'s website still indicates open requests for providers to offer coordinated family support services. Suad seeks clarification on whether this reduction implies a complete cessation of funding for this service in the upcoming fiscal year.

Christina Preuss responds, indicating that the information provided is part of the budget proposal. She emphasizes that the department is exploring various options for regional centers to continue with the program, considering its positive impact on communities and individuals who rely on it for better access to generic resources. Christina assures Suad that more details will be forthcoming, expressing the department's intent not to eliminate the program but to explore alternative options.

Suad shares her concern, highlighting the efforts vendors have invested in the vendorization process for coordinated family support services, only to see it phased out within a year potentially. Christina acknowledges the significance of community services' input in this matter, implying that stakeholders will likely play a role in shaping the final decision.

V. **Chief Financial Officer's Report** – Vini Montague

Vini Montague presented the Chief Financial Officer's Report as presented in the packet.

Vini stated that the monthly expenditures for the month total 70.2 million, with year-to-date expenditures reaching 261.4 million. The projected annual expenditures for the year are 921.1 million. Vini mentions completing the first purchase of services expenditures projection for the fiscal year 2024 for DDS, projecting a deficit of 73.9 million. Vendors are reminded to submit their 1099 and C forms by February 6. Vini informs vendors impacted by the state minimum wage increase that the state minimum wage worksheet is available on their website.

Vini also announced the hiring of Jonathan Estrada as a senior accounting specialist dedicated to escalated payment issues. She encourages vendors with outstanding authorization or payment issues to email Jonathan and copy the accounts payable supervisor, Robert Scan, to expedite issue resolution.

Suad Bisogno raises questions about the fiscal year closing process and suggests a streamlined approach where providers can drop outstanding contract details into an Excel spreadsheet. Vini suggests sending any concerns or issues directly to Jonathan Estrada via email. Suad agrees and plans to share a spreadsheet from another regional center to explore the possibility of implementing a similar process at North LA.

Alex Kopilevich asks about a potential delay in the processing of POS (Purchase of Service) dated December 28, as they were only mailed out on January 23. Vini expresses unawareness of any delays and promises to look into the matter, assuring Alex that she will send an email with updates once she investigates the situation.

VI. **Chief Consumer & Community Services Officer Report** – Evelyn McOmie

Evelyn McOmie expresses gratitude to day programs that volunteered to host Community Service Coordinators (CSC) tours, a practice reinstated as part of new staff orientation. Evelyn invites those interested in being added to the rotation for the CSC tours to email her directly at nlacrc.org by the upcoming Tuesday, February 6. This opportunity is time-sensitive, and Evelyn emphasizes the importance of this practice in staff training, allowing them to familiarize themselves with various programs in the community.

In addition, Evelyn mentions a new initiative where North LA CRC is sending surveys with every Individual Program Plan (IPP) report to families and individuals served. The goal is to gather feedback on the IPP process, helping to identify areas for improvement and make informed decisions on adjustments to enhance systems and processes. This initiative covers the initial IPP and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) processes, as well as the social recreation reimbursement process.

Furthermore, Evelyn announces her plan to continue meeting with individual service providers in 2024. She acknowledges those who have already participated in partnership check-ins, appreciating their time and feedback. Evelyn mentions that these meetings provide an opportunity to address challenges and discuss pending action items. Invitations for meetings will be sent out in the coming months, and she looks forward to meeting with more service providers throughout the year. The presentation ends without questions.

VII. **Community Services Director's Report** – Arshalous Garlanian

Arshalous Garlanian provides updates during the meeting, starting with gratitude for the feedback received. She announces that DDS is preparing to launch the Service Provider Directory in February, aiming to make service provider information more manageable for providers and accessible for consumers. The directory's capabilities will be released in phases, with the initial phase allowing service providers to view and validate their information in the portal. Arshalous mentions that on-demand training materials will be available, and future phases may include improvements to vendorization and deployment of a customer-facing portal.

She discusses the monitoring and corrective actions related to the HCBS final rule, emphasizing that North LA is conducting on-site reviews of all HCBS settings. The deadline to complete all reviews and ensure provider compliance is set for August 31, 2024. Office hours for service providers are offered every Thursday at 2 pm, along with various resources and training opportunities.

Arshalous provides information about upcoming training programs, including the Person-Centered Thinking certificate program, which is sold out for February and March but has

available dates in April and May. Transition from Consumers to Producers training is scheduled for March 25-27. There's also a self-guided learning module for providers, and Arshalous encourages those interested to contact David Ramos for registration details.

She informs about the California state minimum wage increase effective January 1 and includes links for rate adjustment requests. Arshalous emphasizes the importance of following local minimum wage ordinances, which may be higher than the state's.

Arshalous highlights DSA 1891, urging vendors to update information on the portal. The vendor support forum is scheduled for Thursday, February 15, and Arshalous encourages emailing contracts and compliance for topic suggestions. There's also an announcement for a Cal Able workshop on February 21.

Other updates include reminders for PIP and CIE requests, an open proposal period deadline on February 2, ongoing vendorizations for coordinated family supports, social rec, and self-directed support services. A new request for money management services will be published next week.

The Residential Service Orientation (RSO) registration is open until March 1, and Arshalous mentions completed vendorizations for coordinated family support and upcoming information sessions for case management. Vendorizations for social rec and self-directed support services continue, with a new request for money management services on the horizon. Arshalous concludes with information about Electronic Visit Verification (EVV), with DDS hosting office hours, and she encourages checking the packet for more details.

Suad Bisogno expresses gratitude for the feedback received, particularly regarding money management services. She emphasizes the challenges faced in finding enough providers for this service and suggests incorporating benefit and wage reporting support within the money management services to prevent overpayments.

Arshalous Garlanian appreciates the feedback received, stating that it has helped in assessing and improving processes. Octavia Askew asks questions regarding the Person-Centered Thinking training's \$500 incentive, seeking clarification on how the incentive is paid out. Arshalous explains that the incentive is for service providers, and North LA will directly pay the service providers. The \$500 can be used by the agencies to offset staff wages for attending the training.

Octavia asks if agencies can pay the incentive directly to staff, and Suad Bisogno explains that it is more of an operational incentive to help agencies cover the cost of staff attending the training. Octavia seeks confirmation on how the \$500 is distributed, and Suad Bisogno explains that agencies can decide how to use the incentive, such as paying staff wages or providing a bonus for attending the training.

Jacqueline Keshishyan raises questions about Coordinated Family Support (CFS) services, asking if the regional center will support in identifying who at DDS receives the required documents. Arshalous Garlanian takes note of the question and offers to look into it, mentioning she will contact Jacqueline later. Jacqueline also inquires about CSCs (service coordinators) receiving

training for CFS services, and Arshalous mentions that training has been ongoing, and information sessions will be organized for service coordinators to learn more about the programs.

**VIII. Legislative Report – Michelle Heid**

Michelle proceeds with her report. She discusses the ongoing two-year legislative cycle in California, highlighting that bills from the previous year can continue moving while new legislation will be introduced by the February 16 deadline. Michelle anticipates potential leadership changes in the Senate, and she covers the upcoming March 5 primary election, detailing various seats up for election, including assembly seats and the U.S. Senate seat held by Diane Feinstein.

She provides insights into the governor's January budget proposal, which initiates the advocacy and negotiation phase. Michelle underlines the significance of the Lanterman coalition's efforts to prevent the delay of the rate implementation, urging providers to engage in advocacy for the rate implementation to proceed as scheduled.

Michelle touches on the legislative calendar, noting the upcoming deadline for bill introductions on February 16. She provides updates on bills from the previous year, mentioning that AB 222 and AB 649 are dead for the year, while AB 1147 may continue moving through the process.

She informs the committee about a recently introduced bill related to ABA services and addresses the implications of delays in reevaluation or rediagnosis for individuals receiving such services. Michelle shares links to Lanterman coalition public policy priorities and discusses directives issued by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

The report delves into the DS task force, stakeholder events, DSP training stipends, State Council updates, self-advocacy chats, and disability voting initiatives. Michelle encourages sharing information about free digital behavioral health platforms and highlights upcoming events, including the CalTash conference and a disability policy seminar.

She also provides details about the early start of interagency coordinating council meetings, opportunities for public input, and free classes for caregivers from Caring Futures. Michelle addresses minimum wage hikes and their potential impact on hiring challenges in the disability services sector. She informs the committee about the federal government's call for public comments on autism and co-occurring conditions.

Local legislative events, including Assemblywoman Polar Shiva's pizza party, are highlighted, and Michelle concludes her report by addressing concerns about entry-level DSP rates potentially falling below minimum wage in certain regions.

**IX. Committee Business**

**A. System/Industry Issues update– 2024**

The committee acknowledges that there might be a need for follow-up regarding remote services, specifically addressing Sharon's question. The issue raised is related to

the difficulty in transitioning individuals who are eligible for remote services, to this mode on a short-term basis. The challenge becomes more prominent during peak times when individuals are sick and a quick transition to remote services is required.

The committee is seeking ways to streamline the usage of remote services, especially in instances where a person needs temporary access due to illness. The question is directed towards North L.A., asking if there is a way to make the process more efficient and user-friendly, particularly for service codes eligible for remote services. This is treated as an action item, and feedback is expected at the next meeting.

The discussion highlights the difficulties faced by service providers when a short-term request for remote services is made. The delays in authorization updates result in providers being unable to bill for services during that month. This creates barriers for service providers, and it is suggested that, at times, it may seem more convenient for them not to provide any service at all than to offer just a week of remote service.

**B. Legislative Grassroots Sub-Committee Sign-ups**

Jodie Agnew-Navarro provides information on the government and community relations committee's annual grassroots legislative visits. These visits are planned to be in person, and VAC members are encouraged to sign up to be advocates in the teams that will meet with legislators.

The teams typically consist of individuals served by regional centers, parents, vendors, and North LA staff. The goal is to have a constituent of the legislator on the team. Members interested in participating are requested to respond to the board support email expressing their interest. Trainings will be provided to familiarize participants with key points.

Suad Bisogno clarifies that there are two grassroots events: one in Sacramento on April 1 and 2, and the other involves local visits where teams consisting of providers, board members, consumer representatives, family members, and North LA staff meet with legislators. Suad emphasizes the importance of in-person visits but acknowledges that virtual visits may be considered if necessary.

The committee also seeks vendors with larger facilities to host community training events in April or May. Members interested in hosting such events are encouraged to reach out to board support.

There's a discussion about how participants will be assigned to teams. The suggestion is to have all committee members auto-assigned to teams, and if there are scheduling conflicts or preferences, they can communicate that. Jodie Agnew-Navarro raises concerns about auto-adding people due to different schedules. The decision is to assign committee members to teams manually, and coordination will be done to ensure everyone is assigned to a suitable team.

**M/S/C** (E. Beall/O. Askew) To approve that all VAC members will be part of the legislative

grassroots subcommittee signups.

C. Annual Jynny Retzinger Community Service Award Recommendations

Jenny Rett singer Community Service Award, an honor bestowed by North LA to recognize outstanding service providers or individuals in the service provider community. Suad Bisogno provides information about the award and mentions that last year, Erica was celebrated, and the year before, Harry from Path Point received the recognition.

The committee is requested to submit any recommendations for this year's award. No specific deadline is mentioned during the discussion, but it is suggested that committee members send their recommendations to board support. The emphasis is on recognizing individuals who contribute to legislative efforts and work behind the scenes to stabilize the system, and it doesn't necessarily have to be the leader of an organization. Erica mentions the importance of acknowledging those who handle logistics and contribute to legislative efforts.

Suad encourages committee members to email their recommendations as soon as possible, mentioning "Jenny Retsinger Community Service Award" in the title of the email.

**Action Item:** Recommendations for the Jenny Retsinger Community Service Award should be submitted to board support and tracked.

D. Open Issues for Discussion

The first item for discussion is regarding the review of the Vendor Advisory Committee (VAC) schedule. There is a consideration of whether the next meeting, scheduled for March, will be in person, particularly in Santa Clarita. However, Kimberly Visokey informs that the decision was made at the last executive committee meeting not to have any more in-person meetings for the remainder of the fiscal year due to unresolved tech issues.

Suad expresses disappointment and curiosity about the decision, and Kimberly mentions that the tech issues are the primary reason for sticking to virtual meetings. Suad agrees to table the discussion and potentially seek clarity from the executive team in the future.

Additionally, Suad highlights the upcoming turnover in committee members, including himself and Erica, who will be terming out. There is a need for new committee members and a committee chair. Suad inquires whether someone outside the VAC but interested in chairing the committee could be considered during the interview cycle, and Cristina Preuss suggests discussing this with the executive board to navigate any potential bylaw restrictions. Suad emphasizes the importance of bringing in new committee members and mentions the ongoing process of updating bylaws to allow for a substitute chair. She encourages those interested in contributing to the committee to express their interest.

Octavia Askew shares information about a certified social skills teleconference for providers, hosted by UCLA peers for an adults training seminar, catering to various professionals working with young adults with social challenges. Octavia offers to share the details in the chat for interested parties.

**X. Committee Work Group Reports**

**A. Early Start Services - Dana Kalek**

Dana shares both positive and negative developments. On a positive note, intakes for the early start program have been increasing monthly, with nearly 5,000 Infant Development Program (IDP) clients referred to North LA in 2023. This indicates positive outreach to vulnerable children in the community who need services.

However, Dana also mentions an upcoming audit by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) for North LA, focusing on issues related to the natural environment and the locations where services are being provided. Compliance with these standards is crucial for all vendors.

One significant ongoing issue discussed is the challenge of billing insurance versus billing the regional center. To address this, a new group of early start vendors called "Early Start Equal Access" has been formed. The group aims to discuss and propose solutions to this billing issue. Dana highlights the group's intention to meet with Christina, Evelyn, and Arshu to present their proposals after further discussions.

The group is also focusing on improving natural environment metrics, and Dana expresses concerns about the proposed budget by the governor. The rate increase for early start vendors, which has been put on hold, could significantly impact those who have already made staffing decisions based on the expected increase. Dana assumes that the committee is actively addressing these issues from various angles.

Dana concludes by inviting early-start vendors to the next meeting scheduled for February 15, encouraging their participation in these important discussions.

**B. School Age Services - Cal Enriquez**

During the meeting, Cal Enriquez shared updates and feedback from the stakeholder feedback meeting for the executive director at North LA that he attended. The meeting took place on January 2nd, and Cal mentions that the next meeting is scheduled for February 6th.

Cal expresses that the stakeholder feedback meeting went well, with many participants, including Dana, providing valuable input. He notes that the moderator, a woman from an agency, was fair and facilitated the discussion effectively. Cal emphasizes the importance of supporting the new executive director and mentions that despite the challenging times, the community is optimistic.

Dana agrees with Cal's assessment, stating that the feedback provided in the meeting



was valuable in outlining what the community hopes to see in the new executive director.

Suad Bisogno appreciates the positive feedback and notes that it was essential for the vendor community to provide input during the recruitment process for the new executive director.

C. Adult Services - Suad Bisogno & Erica Beall

The Adult Services workgroup did not meet during the reported period, but the next meeting is scheduled for the 1st Monday in March.

XI. **Board Committee Reports**

A. Administrative Affairs – Andrea Devers

The Administrative Affairs committee did not have a representative from North LA present at the meeting, and Suad suggested tabling the discussion on their updates.

B. Consumer Services - Erica Beall

There was no meeting this month, as they meet every other month

C. Government & Community Relations – Jodie Agnew-Navarro

Jodie Agnew-Navarro mentions that they covered the host request and volunteer sign-ups for legislative grassroots in Sacramento. The committee is also working on a virtual town hall scheduled for February 22nd from 6 to 7:30 PM. Michelle is working on securing legislators or their staff for the event, and two confirmations have already been received.

Jodie highlights that the community legislative advocacy training is in progress, and they are seeking vendors to host the training. Additionally, a candidates' forum is planned for the fall. She concludes her report, and Suad Bisogno adds that the registration link for the virtual town hall will be shared in the chat.

**Action Item:** Committee members are requested to sign up for the legislative grassroots subcommittee.

D. Nominating - Suad Bisogno

Suad Bisogno reports that they met this week. They are working on finalizing the alternative chair position, which will be discussed further at the next meeting. The committee has also addressed the late notifications for the VAC committee applications, ensuring that reminders were sent out earlier this week. They plan to have the alternate chair draft approved and submitted to the board at the next meeting. Additionally, potential interviews for the Vendor Advisory Committee (VAC) are scheduled for the next meeting. Strategic planning is mentioned as another item on the committee's agenda.

E. Strategic Planning - Daniel Ortiz

Daniel Ortiz reports on the Family Voice Committee's meeting held last month. The

meeting primarily focused on reviewing the Kinetic Flow survey results conducted for parents and families. The survey received responses through various channels, including online, SMS, text messages, and live telephone interviews, totaling 208, 2425, and 662, respectively. The committee aims to compile and share the key insights from the survey, and they plan to meet again in February to continue their discussions.

**XII. Review of Meeting Action Items**

- A. Vendor Advisory Committee Action Log

**XIII. Agenda Items for the Next Board Meeting**

- A. Minutes of the November 2nd Meeting

**XIV. Announcements/Public Input**

- A. Next Meeting: Thursday, February 1<sup>st</sup> 2024
- B. Committee Attendance (Page 41)

**XV. Committee Work Group Information:**

- A. Early Start Services (Dana Kalek)  
For meeting schedule and information  
Contact: Dana Kalek - dkalek@cdikids.org  
Next workgroup meeting: **TBD**
  
- B. School Age Services (Cal Enriquez)  
For meeting schedule and information  
Contact: Cal Enriquez – cenriquez@accreditednursing.com  
Next workgroup meeting: **TBD**
  
- C. Adult Services (Suad Bisogno & Erica Beall)  
For meeting schedule and information  
Contact: Suad Bisogno - Suad@irioc.org  
Next workgroup meeting: **TBD**

**XVI. Adjournment**

Suad adjourned the meeting at 11:18 a.m.

Submitted by:

*Kimberly Visokey*

Executive Administrative Assistant

*(\* The majority of these minutes are taken from the Minutes Service submission and reviewed/edited as presented herein by NLACRC staff.*



