

North Los Angeles County Regional Center
Vendor Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

January 4, 2024

Present: Suad Bisogno, Alex Kopilevich, Kimberly Bisokey, Lisa Williamsen, Andrea Devers, Octavia Askew, Bill Wood, Sharon Weinberg, Rosa Rivera, Jodie Agnew-Navarro, Anahit Nanyan, Geri Sue Cox, Erica Beall, Daniel Ortiz, Kimberly Johnson-McNeill, Anna Sargsyan, Verena DeMuro, Vahe Mkrtchian, Jaklen Keshishyan, Dana Kalek, Erica Beall – **Committee Members**

Ruth Janka, Vini Montague, Evelyn McOmie, Gabriela Esharti, Ashalous Garlanian, Victoria Berrey – **Staff Members**

Michelle Heid - Legucator, Hannah Aldeen -Minutes Services - **Guests**

Absent: Cal Enriquez, Masood B., Donna Rentsch

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Suad Bisogno, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

II. Public Input

Public Input was given.

III. Consent Items

A. Approval of Agenda

M/S/C (A. Kopilevich/S. Weinberg) To approve the Agenda as presented.

B. Approval of Minutes from the November 2, 2023, Meeting

M/S/C (J. Agnew-Navarro/S. Weinberg) To approve the Minutes as presented.

IV. Executive Director's Report – Ruth Janka

NLACRC Human Resources Report

Ruth Janka presented the Human Resources Report as presented in the packet.

Sharon Weinberg asked if the remote services applied to IPPs or if they were required to be in person. Ruth Janka stated Remote IPP is allowed through June 30, 2024, but they can be in person as well. That distinction should be made with a person-centered approach.

Action Item: The VAC packet will be sent to the committee members as requested.

Suad Bisogno stated the DSP training stipend payout had an expected timeline. Ruth Janka deferred to Vini Montague which will be addressed in her report.

Alex Kopilevich noted the rates would increase in January and he asked if they would receive additional Purchase of Service forms in relation to that increase. Ruth Janka deferred to Vini

Montague or Arshalous Garlanian.

Suad noted sent gift to Ruth on behalf of VAC. Ruth Janka thanked the committee and said it was very nice.

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

Vini Montague addressed the DSP training stipend timeline stating that weekly reports show the completed courses and the associated vendor. If there is a delay, she stated she can follow up on those accounts. The stipend is processed based on the vendor's preference for online payment or check.

Vini Montague stated that 1099 forms for 2023 were being prepared and will be mailed out by the January 31 deadline. The IRS increased the mileage reimbursement rate from \$0.655 to \$0.67 per mile effective January 1, 2024. Any impacted rates will be reflected once approval is received from DDS.

The 2024 check run schedule was not yet posted on the website but would be by the following day. The Annual Statements of purchase and service payments were mailed out the previous week. FY 2021-2022 will be closed out soon and the deadline to submit billing is February 6, 2024.

A new Accounts Payable Supervisor was hired and was going through training and working with the team. A new position was added to resolve and escalate outstanding authorization issues and the position was filled through internal promotion of Johnathan Estrada. His email will be shared once he has completed training.

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

Evelyn McOmie stated lead CSC trainer positions were still open. Case management training was being updated. 27 trainings on will be added to the EMS Learning Catalog by the end of the month. Person-Centered IPP training was launched, and long-standing staff were now taking that training. Work on the IFSP training manual for Early Start staff was underway and it would be launched by the end of Spring. Onboarding Parent training, which will be provided virtually and in person, was in the works and the pilot will begin in February.

The introduction of new supervisors and specialists was tabled for the next in-person meeting. All supervisors and specialists hired in the last 6 months will attend the meeting to meet the community. A strong management team is important as NLACRC expects to have 1,000 employees in 2024.

Sharon Weinberg asked if information would be shared about the Prevention and Wellness Stipend. Evelyn McOmie deferred to Arshalous Garlanian who would address this during her report.

Sharon Weinberg asked if the Person-Centered training incentive stipend course for \$500 was released or when it would be released. Arshalous Garlanian stated the team was finalizing the

payment method and the community will be informed once it was completed.

The committee congratulated Evelyn McOmie for her promotion to Deputy Director.

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

Arshalous Garlanian stated the DSP Stipend payment questions could be directed to vendorincentiveprograms@nlacrc.org. DDS will host a webinar for the DSP program on January 9 from 3-4 pm.

The Quality Incentive Program Workforce Survey collection, with a one-time incentive payment, was available for those who qualified. Those who completed the survey and are awaiting payment will be sent a notification on when the payment will arrive. Any additional questions can be sent to contact&compliance@nlacrc.org

On-site reviews of HCBS settings had begun as a part of the HCBS Final Rule Monitoring and Collective Action initiative. The visits seek to confirm the validation forms and remediation forms that were completed the year prior. If vendors are not in compliance, a remediation effort using existing corrective action plans and sanctions will be established. All reviews must be completed by August 31, 2023. For any questions or concerns, the HCBS office hours are provided every Thursday at 2pm.

A variety of different trainings are being provided to the community to bring them into compliance including:

- Person-Centered Training – April & May
- Tom Pomeranz Save the Date – March 25-27
- Open Futures Learning – self-guided online course

The Compliance Corner has additional information on rate changes, DDS set rate or negotiated rate changes, vendorization maintenance, and vendor support forums. To address the question about rate reform and rate increases, there had not yet been a change to the date which is July 2024.

A series of workshops will be provided for Employment services. CalAble accounts will be provided with 2 workshops in January and 1 in February. An 8-week Soft Skills Training Program will be held through DDS. On January 11, an SSI Ticket to Work Program explanation will be held.

Resource Development. RSO Registration, which is a 5-week course, will start on January 22. The open proposal period will be published on January 15. To request additional details on the programs listed in packet, contact resourcedevelopment@nlacrc.org. Managed care will be rolled into Medi-Cal managed care. EVV office hours are available. See the packet for additional details.

VIII. **Legislative Report** – Michelle Heid

Michelle Heid stated that budget season will begin when the Governor releases the budget,

including rate increases, on January 10, 2024. There will be a \$68 billion deficit, so solutions are needed to address this challenge. Assembly members in odd districts are up for re-election and will begin campaigning soon. Political changes are expected to come in the Assembly. The budget committee was divided into the Human Services Subcommittee and the Health Subcommittee, so new chairs would be assigned soon. The Assembly reconvened on January 3rd and the will conclude in February. Minimum wage increases are expected to impact the community, but NLACRC relies on the state for those increases, so more details will come as they are made available. All of the Senators and Assembly Members were listed in the packet. Candidates will be updated as they make announcements.

The Lanterman Coalition prioritized their policies, which is what NLACRC had been advocating for. The DDS Task Force only met a few times in 2023 but may meet in 2024. An informational webinar on workforce initiatives will be held on January 9, 2024. An informational webinar providing an overview on the training stipend program will be held on January 18, 2024. State Council is expected to meet throughout the year. Self-advocacy chats are open. The ARCA webinar series are expected to continue in 2024. Social security benefits cost of living adjustments are expected in 2024. Early Start ICC will host a meeting on January 18th and 19th. The free CalGrows Caregiver Workforce Training is still available. A report on strengthening a self-directed workforce was included in the packet. The Medi-Cal transition will go into effect on January 1, 2024, so providers need to ensure they are in the proper networks. Local legislative events were included in the packet.

Suad Bisogno asked how the DDS system will be impacted by budget cuts. Michelle Heid stated she had not heard anything about budget cuts in their field. Current discussions revolved around potentially accessing state reserves or limiting one-time funding to address the deficit. When the proposal is released, they will have more information.

Octavia Askew asked if ILS and In-Home Services were included in the CalGrows training. Michelle Heid stated she would follow up on the requirements.

Sharon Weinberg asked what resources she could review for updates. Michelle Heid suggested ARC of California, news from NLACRC, legislative updates from martyomodo@cdcan.com, emails from state council, and the summaries that will be presented each month at the VAC meetings.

IX. **Committee Business**

A. System/Industry Issues

Suad Bisogno stated that the Adult VAC working group met and had prepared several questions which she would like to present.

Suad Bisogno asked who was the Adult Aging Specialist? Gabriela Eshrati stated that they were currently recruiting for that position.

Suad Bisogno asked if remote services authorization could be streamlined for providers

that were getting sick. Waiting for authorization for remote services could become a challenge for providers and users when it is only applicable for short periods of time. A subcode is required for remote services that may hinder service to the client. Ruth Janka stated this item would need to be reviewed in more detail.

Suad Bisogno proposed creating a subcommittee to develop language that the VAC would like to share with the future Executive Director, as NLACRC is a vendor community. She suggested that the vendors could prepare what they want to say and the NLACRC staff could approve it. Several committee members expressed interest in preparing a document for the new Executive Director.

Octavia Askew asked for a timeline for hiring the new Executive Director. Ruth Janka stated an executive search firm was contracted to support the recruitment of the new Executive Director, so the work was already underway. The search firm will source candidates, while community feedback will be given to establish goals and priorities for the Executive Director.

Suad Bisogno shared that because there were issues with wage reporting, some providers were led not to pursue competitive integrated employment out of fear that their finances would be impacted. She suggested identifying a wage reporter to support these individuals who were previously negatively impacted. While money management services are available, there was not enough bandwidth to support the issues.

Erica Beall stated people opted out of competitive integrated employment due to fear of losing SSI benefits. More training and information should be shared to reassure families who are afraid of their adult child working. Suad Bisogno stated this was the most frequently cited reason for unemployment, along with the payment issue that raised concern.

Suad Bisogno acknowledged that NLACRC was working to address billing, which had been another large issue.

Suad Bisogno stated that she had previously presented authorization issues to the Board President and the support team to clarify the issue of payment for services rendered. A new position was hired to support vendors who had not received payment, but she asked the committee if they should table the documentation update until the new Executive Director arrives. The committee agree to table this item and prioritize the letter to the Executive Director on behalf of VAC.

Octavia Askew asked if the person who was promoted had his own clients covered. Vini Montague stated that his clients were balanced internally but they were hiring someone to replace that position.

Suad Bisogno requested that an updated staff list be emailed to providers so they know who to contact.

Action Item: Updated supervisors list will be sent to vendors.

- B. DSP Training Stipend follow up – How to include FHA Vendors
Arshalous Garlanian stated that as long as FHA vendors met the requirements in the DDS regulations, then they qualified for the stipend. Early Start staff members that met the criteria identified in the directive, such as providing 10 or more hours or Regional Center funded hours, then they qualify. This was also true for ICFs.

Sharon Weinberg clarified that this request was about how non-W2 employees would receive reimbursement or payment. Support parents work directly with the client 24/7, so they should be able to participate, and it would benefit the system if they were allowed to. Arshalous Garlanian proposed meeting separately to identify a solution for the issue.

- C. Update on VAC Letter to DDS/Legislatures
Suad Bisogno stated that there was a provider community VAC meeting in which a letter to the Legislatures and DDS was signed. That letter had since been updated, so she presented it to the committee. Signatures came from VAC members of all the Regional Centers. The letter will be finalized after the Budget proposal on January 10th. The group had been meeting weekly and Suad suggested other NLACRC members could join. Several committee members expressed interest in joining.

Action Item: Suad Bisogno will share the link for the provider community VAC meeting.

- D. VAC Breakout for ED Search
Suad Bisogno stated that NLACRC will be hosting a stakeholder workgroup to discuss the Executive Director job description and find important themes for the role. The workgroup will be held on January 25, 2024, at 1 pm and work group representatives will be asked to attend. Dana Kalek and Erica Beall confirmed they were able to attend.

Action Item: Board support will send a link for the Executive Director discussion to the work group liaisons.

- E. Open Issues for Discussion
None at this time.

X. **Committee Work Group Reports**

- A. Early Start Services - Dana Kalek
The next meeting will be held on January 18, 2024. Overall, referrals to the program had increased. New CSCs and training were discussed in November as well. Evaluations and assessments were discussed along with the importance of being more in person as needed to generate better outcomes.

- B. School Age Services - Cal Enriquez

Ute Escorcia spoke on behalf of the School Age Services workgroup. The last meeting was held on Tuesday, January 2. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 6, at 9:30 am. Anyone interested in joining the work group should contact Cal Enriquez. At the last meeting, they discussed finding a new liaison, NLACRC leadership, and the new Executive Director. The new Authorization Vendor Portal is expected to reduce billing issues and time to begin services. There is still outstanding billing which makes it difficult for vendors to pay their staff and for consumers to continue service. It was also suggested to review Covid protocols for serving remotely while vendors are sick as there is no current protocol.

- C. Adult Services - Suad Bisogno & Erica Beall
Suad Bisogno stated she had already addressed the work group work under system industry issues. There were no additional comments.

XI. Board Committee Reports

- A. Administrative Affairs – Andrea Devers
The next committee meeting will be held in February.
- B. Consumer Services - Erica Beall
The committee met on November 15, 2023. The NLACRC Service Standards were reviewed. Updates were given on the subjects of intake data, the appeals report, the disparity report, and other data sets as included in the packet. There was also discussion about the Lead CSC training model, IPP training manual, training for onboarding parents, internal assessments, POS updates, etc.
- C. Government & Community Relations – Jodie Agnew-Navarro
The committee discussed plans for 2024 including grass roots legislative visits and training for individuals with IDD for voting and advocacy. Dates to invite legislatures were still being established, but the meetings will be held in a hybrid format.
- D. Nominating - Suad Bisogno
The Nominating Committee transitioned into a Recruitment Committee that meets weekly and has been working to secure the firm that will hire the next Executive Director.
- E. Strategic Planning - Daniel Ortiz
The last meeting was held in November. Results on the Kinetic Flow satisfaction survey will be available on Monday. Leticia Garcia was elected as the Committee Chair. More updates are expected at the next committee meeting.

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, 2024, at 9:30 a.m.
- B. Committee Attendance

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 (via Zoom).

- B. School Age Services (Cal Enriquez)
For meeting schedule and information
Contact: Cal Enriquez – cenriquez@accreditednursing.com
Next workgroup meeting: TBD (via Zoom).

- C. Adult Services (Suad Bisogno & Erica Beall)
For meeting schedule and information
Contact: Suad Bisogno - Suad@irioc.org
Next workgroup meeting: TBD (via Zoom).

XVI. **Adjournment**

Suad adjourned the meeting at 11:19 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.*

