

**NORTH LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGIONAL CENTER (NLACRC)
9200 OAKDALE AVENUE, SUITE 100
CHATSWORTH, CALIFORNIA**

**MINUTES OF THE VENDOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
VIA TELECONFERENCE
JANUARY 9, 2025, 9:30 A.M.**

MEMBERS:

Alex Kopilevich	Chair
Jaklen Keshishyan	
Jodie Agnew-Navarro	
Octavia Watkins	
Masood Babaeian	
Paul Borda	
Andrea Devers	
Cal Enriquez	
Ute Escorcia	
Ricki Macken Chilvers	
Vahe Mkrtchian	
Daniel Ortiz	
Sharon Weinberg	

STAFF:

Angela Pao-Johnson	Executive Director
Arshalous Garlanian	Director of Community Services
Silvia Renteria-Haro	Consumer Services Director
Evelyn McOmie	Deputy Director Officer
Vini Montague	Chief Financial Officer
Belinda Abatesi	Public Information Legislative Specialist
Arezo Abedi	Executive Administrative Assistant
Lindsay Granger	Executive Administrative Assistant

GUESTS:

Sasha Chernik	Recording Secretary, Minutes Solutions Inc
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ABSENT:

Jen Pippard
Lisa Williamsen

1. CALL TO ORDER

There being a quorum present, and adequate and proper notice of the meeting having been given, the meeting was called to order at 9:31 a.m. Alex Kopilevich presided as Chair.

2. COMMITTEE MEMBER ATTENDANCE

Members were asked to identify themselves when speaking or making a motion.

3. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

4. **CONSENT ITEMS**

On a motion made by Masood Babaeian, seconded by Daniel Ortiz, it was resolved to approve the minutes of the Vendor Advisory Committee meeting held on November 7, 2024, as presented. Motion carried.

On a motion made by Jodie Agnew-Navarro, seconded by Masood Babaeian, it was resolved to approve the agenda of the Vendor Advisory Committee meeting held on January 9, 2025, as presented. Motion carried.

5. **ACTION ITEMS**

There were no action items.

6. **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

6.1 **System and Industry Issues**

Many service providers are affected by the rate reforms and confusion about service codes.

6.2 **Service Provider Vendor Training and Mentorship Program Updates**

Alex Kopilevich invited all service providers to join the service provider vendor training and membership program meeting on January 24, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. At the previous meeting, there were only three service providers present. Feedback from newer vendors is especially valuable. The next steps are to create a proposed plan for vendor training and mentorship support, then meet with the regional center and discuss how it could be implemented.

6.3 **Self-Determination Update**

Silvia Renteria-Haro presented an update on the Self-Determination program. As of January 1, 2025, there were 495 participants in the program. Any service providers who are interested in becoming more involved or learning more about the program are advised to attend the local Advisory Committee meetings, which are on the third Thursday of each month. The next meeting will be on January 16, 2025.

6.4 **VAC Member Applications**

ACTION – Lindsay Granger will share the SharePoint folder with applicant information with the Vendor Advisory Committee members via email.

ACTION – Angela Pao-Johnson will investigate whether it is possible to have a private meeting with the Vendor Advisory Committee members only to discuss the Committee applicants.

Generally, the Nominating Committee selects who chooses the Vendor Advisory Committee. It would be beneficial for the Vendor Advisory Committee to provide input towards the decision. The Committee agreed to defer the discussion of applicants to the next Committee meeting, after all members review the applicant information.

Sharon Weinberg noted that it might be difficult to discuss applicants publicly, because they might be present at the Committee meetings. However, the Committee cannot make decisions without a public discussion.

7. REPORT OUTS

7.1 Deputy Director Officer's Report

Evelyn McOmie presented the Deputy Directory Officer's Report.

NLACRC has been monitoring the Hurst fire. Staff are in contact with facilities in the area and are keeping aware of what is open and closed.

SLS (Supportive Living Services) and ILS (Independent Living Services) providers should be hyper vigilant of people who receive intermittent service, as they are most vulnerable because they live independently and often on their own. Providers should call NLACRC if they have trouble reaching a client.

DDS has implemented a standardized IPP (Individual Program Plan) across 21 regional centers. It was expected to be effective as of January 1, 2025, however it is currently still being refined. It is now expected to be available on January 20, 2025.

The vendor portal has 427 vendors which are operational, and 238 in the queue where the vendor has approved Phase 1.

There are vendor focus groups running every other month. The next vendor support group will be in-person on February 20, 2025, at 10:30 a.m. Individuals who signed up will be receiving the information via email.

7.2 Chief Financial Officer's Report

ACTION – Vini Montague will investigate and provide information to Sharon Weinberg regarding the rate increase pertaining to the FHA.

Vini Montague presented the Chief Financial Officer's Report.

The 2025 vendor payment schedules are posted on the NLACRC website under the service provider section.

Rosalina Andrada has been hired as a new revenue supervisor. She oversees the team that handles the consumer trust accounts and is the contact for questions regarding topics such as shared costs for residential facilities.

The rate implementation for vendor rate increases that were effective on July 1, 2024, is currently in Phase 2B. A significant portion of the increases were implemented prior to January of 2025, and the remainder is expected to be implemented by January 31, 2025, including retroactive increase payments. Once all the rates from Phase 2B are implemented, the rates effective January 1, 2025, will be addressed, working in collaboration with Community Services. NLACRC has started to receive the rate spreadsheets from DDS on January 6, 2025, and staff are working at a rapid rate to get them updated in the system. The turnaround invoices will be delayed to January 31, 2025, in order to implement as many rates as possible.

Social Security implemented a cost of living increase for SSI (Supplemental Security Income) recipients. The accounting department is working to update the cost of funds change in the system.

7.3 Community Services Director's Report

ACTION – Arshalous Garlanian will investigate an email sent by Ricki Macken Chilvers and ensure a response is sent.

Arshalous Garlanian reviewed the Community Services Director's Report, highlighting certain items.

NLACRC staff are diligently working through the Phase 3 rate increases of the rate reform. A few workbooks have been received. Community Services is reviewing and validating the workbooks and then preparing the rate letter agreements. There are no exact dates for when providers can expect the rate reform information, as it depends on when the workbooks are received. Community Services is reviewing various directives which have been published and meeting with providers who are impacted. There are office hours specifically for questions on the various directives and what vendors can expect from their vendorization with NLACRC.

The Community Services department is working through the DDS state-wide service provider directory. Vendors should check the directory published on the DDS website to ensure they are on one of the provider lists and email DDS for guidance if not.

Geraldine Orellana is a new staff member. She is an employment specialist who will be focusing on all initiatives related to employment.

7.4 Legislative Report

Belinda Abatesi presented the Legislative Report. There were no legislative bill developments to report, because it is the beginning of the legislative year. The department is closely monitoring new legislative bills and will update service providers as needed.

There were concerns at the previous meeting about how Bill AB1147 would affect providers. Upon review, it was determined that the current design of the bill does not affect providers. NLACRC will continue to monitor the bill's implementation.

7.5 Executive Director's Report

ACTION – Belinda Abatesi and Angela Pao-Johnson will investigate and provide information directly to Sharon Weinberg regarding the implementation of Bill AB3291 on funding for housing for at-risk homeless individuals.

Angela Pao-Johnson presented the Executive Director's Report.

There was a correction in the Case Management section; the vacant cases reduction statistic was over the past year rather than the past 10 months.

There was an addition to the Recruitment section; there are nine new hires scheduled to be onboarded on January 13, 2025.

Alex Kopilevich:

Noted that there were over 60 service coordinators hired and inquired if there are populations where caseloads are being reduced.

Angela Pao-Johnson:

Responded that there are some caseload reductions being observed, however newer coordinators are learning, so it will take time to see the results.

Octavia Watkins:

Inquired when the next Life After Highschool transition-age event will be.

Arshalous Garlanian:

Responded that the Life After Highschool fairs are generally in the spring.

7.5.1 Supporting Consumer Micro Businesses

ACTION – Board Support will send out information about a consumer business forum on the NLACRC website.

Angela Pao-Johnson presented the idea to add a section to the NLACRC website and with links to consumer business websites, highlighting them for gifts and occasions. This would help drive traffic to those businesses. The idea was well received by the community.

8. OPEN TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

8.1 November 13, 2024, New DDS Directives

ACTION – Staff will email an updated NLACRC staff directory to vendors by January 10, 2025.

The office hours for questions about the new directives will be on the first and third Tuesday of each month.

Committee member:

Inquired where to direct questions about service codes.

Arshalous Garlanian:

Responded that providers should contact the RatesQuestions@nlacrc.org email.

Ricki Macken Chilvers:

Inquired what processes are in place to ensure early start and school-age clients are being prepared for their adult futures and employment, with Employment First being such a large initiative.

Evelyn McOmie:

Noted that a main point of the Employment First discussion was to work with families to ensure their impacted children have hopes and dreams. The IEP process in school districts should address the idea of future career building. There needs to be a state-wide effort to change the current mindset. New service coordinators will receive training on how to work with families and parents of impacted children to prepare them for adulthood.

Sharon Weinberg:

Noted that it is difficult to find staff contact information on the new NLACRC website.

Arshalous Garlanian:

Explained that an all-staff directory is emailed to providers quarterly, while the vendor portal is still being streamlined.

8.2 Review Vendor Advisory Committee Applicants

Discussion of the Vendor Advisory Committee applicants has been deferred to the next meeting. There are currently five applicants for the three open positions.

9. COMMITTEE WORK GROUP INFORMATION

9.1 Early Start Services

Jodie Agnew-Navarro reported that the Early Start Service Committee Work Group did not meet in December of 2024. The next meeting is scheduled for January 16, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. via teleconference.

9.2 School Age Services

Paul Borda and Cal Enriquez reported that the School Age Service Committee Work Group did not meet in December of 2024. The next meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

9.3 Adult Services

Octavia Watkins reported that the Adult Services Committee Work Group met in November of 2024, and the next meeting is January 13, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. Belinda Abatesi was invited to join the next meeting to discuss engagement with local policy makers.

10. COMMITTEE WORK GROUP FINAL REPORTS

10.1 Early Start Services

Jodie Agnew-Navarro reported that some of the main discussion topics for the Early Start Services Committee Work Group have been rate reform, qualification guidelines, absences and six-month assessment funding.

There are guidelines about the qualifications an Early Intervention and Child Specialist must have, which might be a challenge for some providers due to the higher cost of higher qualified workers.

An absence is when the family is missing for a scheduled in-home or classroom service. The provider still needs to pay the therapist; however, they do not receive funding for the visit.

There is no funding for time consuming progress reports which therapists and Early Intervention and Child Care Specialists must submit every six months. The Early Start Services Committee Work Group is investigating if it is possible to acquire funding for the six-month assessments.

10.2 School Age Services

Paul Borda reported that some of the topics for the School Age Services Committee Work Group have been about what is working and not working for vendors with the NLACRC. Consistent topics with questions that have to be deferred are rate reform and the DDS and NLACRC portals. One of the goals the work group focused on was increasing participation and engagement within the vendor community. The efforts were successful, and more vendors have joined the work group. The new goal is keeping them attending and engaged.

Cal Enriquez reported that one of the goals the work group has struggled with is making seeking and finding resources for mental health services and support seamless. Accessing those services for clients is difficult, and many struggle to get access to those services due to shortages of specialists and other issues. The work group is also working hard to increase the enrolment in the Self-Determination Program, because there should be a higher participation rate with families.

10.3 Adult Services

Octavia Watkins reported that the Adult Services Committee Work Group discussed local partnership agreements, identified new information and resources to be shared within groups, issues with the Self-Determination Program, increasing access and awareness to the Self-Determination Program, engagement with local policy makers and aging specialists and training needs for adult service providers.

11. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

11.1 Administrative Affairs

Jaklen Keshishyan reported that the Administrative Affairs Committee met on November 21, 2024. Some of the discussion items were the status of the lease, purchase of services, new vendors, financial reports, retention and onboarding of new staff. She noted that instructions to report outstanding authorizations are on the NLACRC website and provided the link in the meeting chat. The next Administrative Affairs Committee meeting is scheduled for February 20, 2025.

11.2 Consumer Services

Sharon Weinberg reported that the Consumer Services Committee met on November 20, 2024. The discussion was focused on the Self-Determination Program. Angela Pao-Johnson and Lori Walker met after this meeting and are in discussion about how the Consumer Services Committee can help with the Self-Determination Program.

11.3 Government and Community Relations

Jodie Agnew-Navarro reported that the last meeting of the Government and Community Relations Committee was in October of 2024, and the next meeting is scheduled for January 15, 2025.

11.4 Nominating

Alex Kopilevich reported that the Nominating Committee met on January 2, 2025. The main priority was discussing the applications for the open Board positions. That Nominating Committee will be meeting every month instead of every second month until the positions are filled. The next meeting will be held on February 5, 2025.

11.5 Strategic Planning

Octavia Watkins reported that the Strategic Planning Committee did not meet in December of 2024. The next Strategic Planning Committee meeting is scheduled for February 30, 2025.

12. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT BOARD MEETING

There were no agenda items for the next Board meeting.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC INPUT

13.1 Next Meeting Location

On a motion made by Sharon Weinberg, seconded by Jodie Agnew-Navarro, it was resolved to change the location of the Vendor Advisory Committee meeting scheduled for February 13, 2025, from the Santa Clarita Valley office to the Chatsworth office. Motion carried.

ACTION – Board Support will change the location of the Vendor Advisory Committee meeting scheduled for February 13, 2025, to the Chatsworth office.

The meeting held on January 9, 2025, was supposed to be held in the Chatsworth office but was moved to teleconference only.

13.2 Training Series

Suad Bisogno announced that the Integrated Resources Institute has a few training series that are being developed in partnership with NLACRC, including a website portfolio training and a training focused on employment.

13.3 Absentee Member

ACTION – Board Support will notify Lisa Williamson that she has resigned from her position via lack of meeting attendance.

There is a Board member who has automatically resigned due to four Board meeting absences. The number of vacant Board positions has therefore increased to four.

14. REVIEW OF MEETING ACTION ITEMS

The following action items were noted during the meeting:

ACTION – Lindsay Granger will share the SharePoint folder with applicant information with the Vendor Advisory Committee members via email.

ACTION – Angela Pao-Johnson will investigate whether it is possible to have a private meeting with the Vendor Advisory Committee members only to discuss the Committee applicants.

ACTION – Vini Montague will investigate and provide information to Sharon Weinberg regarding the rate increase pertaining to the FHA.

ACTION – Arshalous Garlanian will investigate an email sent by Ricki Macken Chilvers and ensure a response is sent.

ACTION – Belinda Abatesi and Angela Pao-Johnson will investigate and provide information directly to Sharon Weinberg regarding the implementation of Bill AB3291 on funding for housing for at-risk homeless individuals.

ACTION – Board Support will send out information about a consumer business forum on the NLACRC website.

ACTION – Staff will email an updated NLACRC staff directory to vendors by January 10, 2025.

ACTION – Board Support will change the location of the Vendor Advisory Committee meeting scheduled for February 13, 2025, to the Chatsworth office.

ACTION – Board Support will notify Lisa Williamson that she has resigned from her position via lack of meeting attendance.

15. NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Vendor Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled on February 13, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. at the NLACRC Chatsworth office.

16. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made and carried, it was agreed that there was no further business to transact; the meeting closed at 11:12 a.m.

DISCLAIMER

The above document 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.

Director

Director

Date

Date