

North Los Angeles County Regional Center
Vendor Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

August 3, 2023

Present: Suad Bisogno, Jaklen Keshishyan, Alex Kopilevich, Andrea Devers , Masood Babaeian, Vahe Mkrtchian, Octavia Askew, Lisa Williamsen, Sharon Weinberg, Daniel Ortiz, Dana Kalek, Elizabeth Alvarez, Catherine Carpenter, Jodie Agnew-Navarro, and Erica Beall–
Committee Members

Ruth Janka, Hailey Lauderdale, Donna Rentsch, Kimberly Johnson-McNeil, Liliana Windover – **Staff Members**

Michelle Heid - Legucator, Dolly Sharma -Minutes Services, Alicia Turner - Jay Nolan Community Services and approximately 57 Service Providers- **Guests**

Absent:

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Suad Bisogno, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:34 am.

The Committee Members introduced themselves to the group.

II. Public Input

Victoria Berrey, from Family Focus Resource Center, shared that there is a new 2-prt series on the IPP process that will be offered in English and Spanish in August and September. An Early-Start Support group will have a meeting scheduled later in August via Zoom and in-person meetings are being planned as well. The Armenian Parent connection is a new group that will be starting in September 7th. Details will be included in the next *News You Can Use* issue. Monthly IEP Trainings will commence in September. Victoria also noted that there is a surplus of face shields and masks that was received during the pandemic. Anyone who is in need of masks or face shields are welcome to call FFRC to arrange pickup.

Alicia Turner introduced herself as a Rehabilitation Services Supervisor with Jay Nolan Community Services. She shared information regarding an Employment Soft Skills Training that will help prepare consumers from ages 18-24, prepare for employment. The first Cohort will take place in Fall 2023, the 2nd cohort is being planned for the Winter of 2024 in Mission Hills. More information can be found by emailing: knavarro@jaynolan.org Information was also given related to the Uniquely Abled Academy (UAA) Robotics Programming Program. This joint venture with JNCS, University of Southern California and College of the Canyons. The Open House for the program will take place on Tuesday, August 8th at 6pm and August 15th at 6pm. This program prepares individuals with autism who have a high school diploma or GED, to take on a manufacturing career and focused job training in Robotic Programming.

III. Consent Items

- A. Approval of Agenda
M/S/C (M. Babaeian/D. Kalek) To approve the agenda as presented

- B. Approval of Minutes from the June 1, 2023 Meeting
M/S/C (A. Kopilevich/D. Kalek) To approve the Minutes as presented. The motion passed with abstentions from the following: Please notate names of new VAC members who were not present at June 2023 meeting

IV. Executive Director's Report - Ruth Janka

Ruth reviewed the report as presented in the packet. Highlights include:

Whistleblower Complaint

It was noted that an anonymous Whistleblower Complaint was received by NLA. The complaint is being investigated and the allegation includes the discrimination of African-American consumers for authorization of services. Ruth assured that NLA is taking this complaint very seriously and is currently being investigated. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Masking Requirements

Ruth stated that anyone who works directly with an individual or in the family home is considered a healthcare worker. As of August 1, L.A. County continues to order that the required masking of healthcare workers will remain in effect until otherwise noted.

Trailer Bill Language

Parents are no longer required to participate in the Behavioral Intervention Program in order for NLA to fund the. Early Start Service, although there are benefits to doing so. For social recreation, camp, and nonmedical therapies, centers are forbidden from making people first exhaust IHSS, exchange respite (or other service) 14hours, or have copays. DDS can issue directives for these services, including providing them as participant-directed services.

Employment Access Incentive Payments

Service providers may claim QIP Employment Access incentive payments for individuals who attained competitive integrated employment on or After July 1, 2022. To claim, providers must complete a form and submit to DDS, and attest to accuracy. Incentive amounts are as follows: \$500 for 4 consumers achieving CIE for 30 consecutive days, and \$1,000 for continued employment for 6 months; \$500 per consumer exiting a Paid Internship Program (PIP) and achieving CIE for 30 consecutive days, and \$500 for continued employment for 6 months; \$500 per consumer exiting sub-minimum wage employment and achieving CIE for 30 consecutive days and \$500 for continued employment for 6 months.

Regional Center Performance Measures (RCPM) Program Equity and Cultural Humility, Service Coordinator Competency in Cultural and Ethnic Diversity

NLA has submitted a training plan to DDS and is awaiting approval; meantime, quarterly training dates are being coordinated across the agency.

Recruitment

July 5th new hires included 7 Consumer Services Coordinators (3 Bilingual Spanish), 1

Accounting Specialist, 1 Executive Administrative Assistant – Board, 1 Information Technology Specialist, 1 Administrative Assistant, 1 Community Services Specialist. July 17th new hires included 3 Consumer Services Coordinators (1 Bilingual Spanish), 1 Floater Specialist, and 1 Public Information Specialist. Ruth shared data related to open CSC vacancies:

San Fernando - 75

Antelope Valley- 38

Santa Clarita Valley- 13

The data is currently being reformatted to include the most efficient information; the Committee requested a way to sort vacancies by department to identify holes that are causing delays. There were questions raised in regards to having CSCs return to the office more than 3 days per week. Currently, new CSCs are in a 90-day training period where they are onsite. After that period, they are in-office 3 days per week and then work remotely outside of that. NLA has had issues with CSC candidates and new hires who are hesitant to return to the office, given the post-COVID workforce.

Retention

Recent retention activities include the provision of an employment incentive, a “Loyalty Award”, to all staff employed as of 6/23/23. All employees with less than a full year of service received \$500, employees with a full year of service as of 5/31/23 and less than 2 years of service received \$1,000, and employees with 2 or more full years of service as of 5/31/23 received \$1,000 plus \$175 per each full year of service.

Tuition Reimbursement Program

NLA is implementing the Tuition Reimbursement Program for eligible employees to continue their education to enhance services received by consumers, increase their subject matter expertise and support career advancement. The program will be promoted on the employee intranet site, the employee ADP portal, and all newly hired staff will be informed as part of their orientation. Participants are eligible for up to \$10,000 each fiscal year for up to three years and must agree to work no less than one year for each year of tuition reimbursement received; following the last year of reimbursement. Participants must agree to repayment or partial repayment of the tuition reimbursement if concurrent or postgraduation work requirements are not completed.

Vendored Advocacy Assistance Services

July Townhall “Transitioning to Adulthood” which will include the topics of employment, housing, advocacy assistance, and generic resources. The townhall will be held on Thursday, July 27th via Zoom. The Center’s website includes a “Generic Resource” webpage with information regarding California Children’s Services, Child Care Resource Center, Department of Mental Health, Department of Rehabilitation, Head Start, In-Home Supportive Services, Independent Living Center of Southern California, LA County Services, MediCal, and Supplemental Security Income. Each entity has a “hot link” that takes you to their website for additional information.

Coordinated Employment Supports Pilot Program

DDS will be launching a Coordinated Employment Supports Pilot Program, similar to the Coordinated Family Supports Program; this program will be available to individuals graduating

from high school or transitioning out of a Work Activity Program (sub-minimum wage program).

V. Chief Financial Officer's Report – Vini Montague

Vini reviewed the report as presented in the packet. Highlights include:

Projected D-2 Allocation: \$946,720,714

June Monthly Expenditures: \$70,149,652

Projected Annual Surplus: \$107,323,622

NLA received a preliminary allocation cash advance. This is in the amount of \$651,000,000 and will allow NLA to meet financial obligations without tapping into the line of credit for the month of August.

eBilling will have a scheduled downtime on Saturday, August 19th to install an upgrade. The service is expected to be down for a few hours that morning.

VI. Chief Consumer & Community Services Officer Report – Donna Rentsch

Donna presented the report on behalf of Evelyn McOmie. She reviewed the information as presented in the packet. Highlights include:

Adult Aging Specialist Position

This position has been filled and will report to Gabriela Eshrati in the Antelope Valley office but will have the ability to float to other offices as needed.

Consumer Advisory Committee

The NLA CAC is seeking participation for those interested in contributing. Jose Rodriguez is the liaison who can be contacted for those who would like more information.

POS Approval Pilot Update

New POS approval process is live, there were 5,638 POS' approved by Supervisors. By the end of August, all supervisors will be approving POS; within their scope. Additionally, the exception process is being reviews to accommodate requests.

CIE/PIP

Community Services Manager has emailed Service Providers with CIE and PIP POS authorizations in the system to reconcile it to ensure it is appropriately reflecting incentives for those who have been placed at job sites/internships. Vendors are being asked to submit their excel sheet to Venus at their earliest convenience.

Supporting Students with Intellectual Disabilities

DDS has allocated \$710,000 in a grant to establish and support postsecondary education pilot programs for students with intellectual/developmental disabilities. California State University Northridge is one of the 6 campuses that will be sharing the grant from DDS. Information is being shared with consumers who could benefit from this program.

VII. Community Services Director's Report – Kimberly McNeil Johnson

Kimberly reviewed the report as presented in the packet in lieu of Arsholous Garlanian. Highlights include:

Percentage of Rate Adjustment used for Wages and Benefits for Direct Care Staff. Starting January 1, 2023, providers that received a rate increase must use a percentage for staff wages and benefits. DDS has posted an online tool showing the required percentage applicable to each service.

2023 DSP Workforce Data Collection: Survey: NLACRC will notify agencies that completed the survey and identified to receive the incentive payment.

NLACRC Vendor Fair

We will host an in-person Vendor Fair on September 26 & 27th SFV & October 5th in AV office. Registration information is forthcoming. Octavia Askew pointed out that the October 5th meeting will conflict with an upcoming VAC meeting, as both are in-person. Kimberly will confirm this information and will report back to the VAC if there is a resolution.

HCBS Compliance

NLACRC continues to work with Service providers to validate HCBS compliance. Our HCBS Specialist will schedule site visits to review Validation and Remediation plans submitted by Providers. Additionally, a 1:1 consultation will be provided for programs with Remediation plans.

2023 Service Provider Upcoming Training:

Person-Centered Thinking: Certificate Program- through Mains on August 9 & 10th (in-person)
Open Futures Learning: providing self-guided learning modules to aide our vendors and their staff with a broad range of online courses.

Reimbursement for Early Start Provider Training

One-time, time-limited funding for early intervention service providers training.

Reimbursement is available for 1) cost of training fees and/or 2) staff time to attend training.

Submit your request for funding to Resourcedevelopment@nlacrc.org. The Deadline to submit reimbursements is September 30th.

VIII. Legislative Report - Michelle Heid

In the interest of time, the report was not reviewed but was presented in the packet.

IX. Committee Business

A. Committee Goals, Priorities and Workgroups for FY 2023-24

There are currently 3 workgroups, the Committee decided to continue with the same workgroups for FY23-24. After the next Adult Workgroup Meeting, it will be determined if the Adult Workgroup needs to be further broken down.

Ruth shared recommendations for priorities from the Consumer Services Committee to assist the VAC in guiding their priorities:

1. Propose strategies for increasing access to services in the Center's communities, including participation in alternative nonresidential services delivery.
2. Address disparities by developing strategies to increase POS expenditures within families of color.
3. Propose and advocate for reduced caseload ratios that will result in effective service coordination for unique populations such as self-determination and consumers/families who are not accessing the services authorized in their Individual Program Plans (IPPs).
4. Monitor progress in the implementation of the center's self-determination program.
5. Monitor service delivery for compliance with Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver, statutory and regulatory requirements.

After discussion, the Committee was able to identify a few subareas where there is a need. These include, ICF, Transportation, Residential Services or other services impacted by HCBS. The Adult Services Workgroup will discuss further on how to best facilitate the needs that the VAC wants to address.

The priorities will be outlined by the Adult Services Workgroup at their September meeting and will be presented to the VAC for discussion, vote and approval at the September Committee Meeting.

B. Annual VAC Orientation – Ruth Janka

Ruth reviewed the information as presented in the packet:

1. Review Policies & Procedures

The Vendor Advisory Committee is responsible for designating a committee member to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees; this person also serves as chairperson of the Vendor Advisory Committee. It is also responsible for providing advice, guidance, recommendations, and technical assistance to the board in carrying out its mandated duties.

2. FY 2023-24 VAC Meeting Schedule including in-person meetings

The Vendor Advisory Committee shall meet at least quarterly. The quarterly meetings shall be scheduled for a full year following seating of the members each year. A copy of the 23 scheduled meetings will be provided to the Board of Trustees. Other meetings may be scheduled and called by the chairperson of the committee. The VAC at NLA meets 10 months out of the year, typically on the 1st Thursday of the month and with dark months in July and December.

Suad proposed in-person meetings 3 times out of the year, rotating different NLA locations. Ruth will confirm with IT on the ability for each location to facilitate hybrid

meetings. It was tentatively decided to have the October 5th Meeting in Antelope Valley, January 4th, 2024 in San Fernando Valley and March 7th, 2024 in Santa Clarita Valley.

M/S/C (S. Weinberg/A. Kopilevich) To approve the revised meeting schedule as revised

3. FY 2023-24 VAC Roster & Terms

In order to be a Vendor Advisory Committee member in good standing, a person must be a vendor, or a board member or employee of a NLACRC vendored program. A change in board membership, employment status or vendor status may affect the person's eligibility or representation. Any such change must be reported in writing immediately to the Board of Trustees for its consideration. If a member misses three consecutive meetings, or five meetings in a one-year period, he/she shall be considered to have resigned from the Vendor Advisory Committee.

4. Review Action Log for FY 2022-23

This information was reviewed as presented in the packet. This log will be updated with the most recent information.

C. Back Up Chair for September Meeting

Suad will not be in attendance for the next VAC meeting and Jodi Agnew-Navarro will be leading the meeting in her absence.

D. Support Recruitment for Consumer Advisory Committee

Jodi Agnew-Navarro noted that there were only a few consumers who attended the recent Board Dinner. She learned that there has been a challenge in recruiting for the CAC. The Committee is being asked to pass along information to any consumer they feel may be able to contribute to the Consumer Advisory Committee. The meetings are currently held on a monthly basis in Chatsworth but there are capabilities for Zoom attendance.

E. Ken Lane Memorial Senior Health Fair

The development of a health fair event for aging adults is in its infancy and those who are willing to help are encouraged to email Suad Bisogno.

F. Back to Basics – Message to BOD

Suad shared this memo that has been drafted for the NLA Board to drum up support and to request resolutions to authorizations that still need approval. The Committee is being asked to review the memo and to vote on presentation at the next Board Meeting.

X. Committee Work Group Reports

A. Early Start Services - Dana Kalek
There are no updates to report.

B. School Age Services -Cal Enriquez
There are no updates to report.

- C. Adult Services - Suad Bisogno & Erica Beall
There are no updates to report.

XI. Board Committee Reports

- A. Administrative Affairs - Andrea Devers
There are no updates to report.
- B. Consumer Services -Erica Beall
Erica shared that there are some contracts that were approved that will help alleviate needs.
- C. Government & Community Relations -Jodi Agnew-Navarro
There are no updates to report.
- D. Nominating -Suad Bisogno
The Committee had a special meeting to discuss term renewal.
- E. Strategic Planning - Daniel Ortiz
There are no updates to report.

XII. Review of Meeting Action Items

- A. Send the LA County Masking Requirements Letter to VAC Members (Board Support)
- B. Send information regarding the other 5 campuses participating in the DDS Postsecondary Education Grant to the VAC (Donna Rentsch)
- C. Include the Community Services Director Report in future meeting packets for the VAC (Board Support)
- D. Review other meeting dates/options for October 5th Vendor Fair/VAC Meeting that are currently scheduled for the same time/date (Kimberly McNeil Johnson)
- E. Updated priorities to be presented to the VAC for approval and presentation to Board (Suad Bisogno)
- F. Confirm the capability for each office to host hybrid meetings with IT (Ruth Janka)
- G. Revise the action log to include the most updated information to the Committee (Board Support)

XIII. Agenda Items for the Next Board Meeting

- A. Minutes of the August 3rd Meeting
- B. Critical Calendar FY 2023-24

XIV. Announcements/Public Input

- A. Next Meeting: Thursday, September 7, 2023 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: September 21, 2023 at 9:00 am (via Zoom)

B. School Age Services (Cal Enriquez)

For meeting schedule and information

Contact: Cal Enriquez – cenriquez@accreditednursing.com

Next workgroup meeting: August 8, 2023 at 9:30 am (via Zoom)

C. Adult Services (Suad Bisogno & Erica Beall)

For meeting schedule and information

Contact: Suad Bisogno - Suad@irioc.org

Next workgroup meeting: September 5th at 11:00 am (via Zoom)

XVI. Adjournment

Suad adjourned the meeting at 12:07 pm.

Submitted by:

(*) *Elizabeth Alvarez*

Executive Administrative Assistant

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