

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

February 3, 2022

**Present: Committee Members**

Jodie Agnew-Navarro, Orli Almog, Erica Beall, Suad Bisogno, Kimberly Bermudez, Catherine Carpenter, Cal Enriquez, Bob Erio, Sharoll Jackson (Chair), Dana Kalek, Alex Kopilevich, Kenny Ha, Don Lucas, Daniel Ortiz, Kevin Shields, Jennie Moran, Nick Vukotic

**Staff Members**

Ruth Janka, Dr. Jesse Weller, Evelyn McOmie, Arpi Arabian, Arsho Garlanian, Stephanie Margaret, Dr. Michael Fernandez, Fred Rockwood, Cathy Robinson-Learn, Jennifer Williamson, Liliana Windover, Lizeth Chavez, Alan Darby

**Public**

Approximately 85 Service Providers also participated on the Zoom call.

**Administrative**

Dolly Sharma – Minute Services  
Shelley Hash – Interpreter

**Absent:** Olga Reyes, Committee Member

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**I. Call to Order & Introductions**

VAC Chair Sharoll Jackson called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. and welcomed committee members, and guests.

Staff Liz Chavez confirmed a quorum via roll call.

**II. Public Input**

No input was received.

**III. Consent Items**

A. Approval of Agenda (Page 2)

Chair elected to forgo item 10 Reports from Priority Issue Work Groups to provide time for break-out groups. Agenda item 9.A, National Core Indicator Staff Stability Survey, was amended to reflect Josh Sudarma as the presenter from the Department rather than Jason Francisco.

**M/S/C** (J. Moran/K.Shields) To approve the agenda as amended.

B. Approval of Minutes from the January 6<sup>th</sup> VAC Meeting

**M/S/C** (D.Kalek / S.Bisogno) To approve the minutes from the January 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting as presented.

**IV. Executive Director's Report** (Ruth Janka)

Reviewed proposed legislation including Senate Bill 882 by Senator Eggman, which proposes an advisory council under the Department of Justice to evaluate training for peace officers regarding their capacity to interact appropriately with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental health conditions. Senate Bill 58 would mandate local programs to provide suicide awareness and prevention training to students and teachers at the beginning of the school year with best practices identified by the state. Assembly Bill 682 by Senator Bloom would provide density bonuses to housing developers that agree to construct a given number of housing units for moderate, low, and very low income tenants and would prevent minimum unit size requirements. Assembly Bill 741 by Bennett advocated that local governments craft discharge plans for individuals with mental illness exiting jail.

Lastly, DDS is proposing an amendment to Early Start regulations to include assistive technology and health service consultations in the definition of early intervention.

Other upcoming actions include implementation of service provider rate increases. These are effective April 1, 2022, and the Department is working to have all rates set by then.

Highlights from the Governor's budget included a projection from DDS that California will serve 407,634 individuals by the fiscal year 2022-23. The budget proposes a total of \$12.4B in funding showed ongoing support for policy issues

including service provider rate reform, minimum wage increases, bilingual pay differentials for direct service professionals, workforce training development, regional center emergency coordinators, reduction of case-load ratios, the provisional eligibility program for Early Start and Early Start to School transition assistance, Medicaid provider enrollment support, communication assessments for the deaf, and a 3-year pilot program focusing on career readiness for those transitioning out of Work Activity Programs.

The department is also working on the development of the quality incentive program where performance measures include: early intervention, workforce capacity, employment, prevention, compliance with HCBS requirements, service access for equity, choice and satisfaction, and person-centered planning.

Regarding COVID19, metrics in LA County are trending downward. The booster mandate timeline for healthcare workers is extended to March 1<sup>st</sup>. Due to the surge in COVID19 positivity in January, NLACRC staff are working remote except for business essential personnel and staff who elect to work onsite. DDS has extended directives without significant changes. Clarification was provided regarding the Supreme Court ruling, which established that the administration could not require private entities to implement the vaccine mandate.

The board has brought forth concerns from the community regarding access to IHSS services; the Center is considering creating a centralized email for issue submission, to gather information and advocate for improvements. Request that any vendors aware of problems with IHSS come forward with information. Of note, the Family Focus Resource Center is holding a three-part training series regarding IHSS in both English and Spanish in April. The series will be recorded and available on the FFRC website.

NLACRC warned providers that a private entity has attempted to obtain confidential consumer information from a service provider; and notified all that the Center has not contracted with an entity to conduct surveys. Providers were advised of potential

phishing attempts. On the other hand, the well-publicized strategic thinking survey is closing Friday, and those that had completed it were thanked. Finally, as for staffing, 26 vacant CSC positions and 47 vacant non-case management positions were extant; with turnover continuing to be an issue. Lastly, an announcement regarding Michele Marra's retirement was made.

#### **V. Chief Financial Officer's Report (Alan Darby)**

Alan Darby overviewed expenses through December and year-to-date (YTD).

- December: Total \$54.2MM, POS \$49.7MM and OPS \$4.5MM.
- YTD through December: Total \$309MM
- Projected expenses: \$687MM, POS \$620MM, OPS \$66.9MM

The original budget was \$720MM for a surplus of \$40MM. The reasons for the surplus include frontloading for rate changes and COVID-driven generosity on the part of DDS. Many regional centers had surpluses.

NLACRC extended the lease at the office in Santa Clarita for another ten years and secured another two suites of additional space, for a total of 38,000 sq. ft. Purchase of Service check runs for February and March were reviewed with invoices due February 21<sup>st</sup> and March 22<sup>nd</sup>, respectively. The final vendor billing deadline for FY 20-21 was February 6<sup>th</sup>. 1099NECs were mailed out to all relevant service providers in January.

The 2021 minimum wage increase request spreadsheet templates were completed and available. The IRS standard mileage reimbursement rate change, as of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2022, for physical management service providers, transportation service providers, and in-home respite agencies was +2.5 cents to 58.5 cents/mile. Finally, research into a new accounting firm was wrapping up as required by California's five-year cycle regulation.

## **VI. Chief of Program Services' Report (Jesse Weller)**

New placement supervisor position had been released in order to support a centralized placement model. Shelly Briggs was introduced as the new risk assessment supervisor. Ms. Briggs shared her background in ICF, day-programs, and supportive employment.

Via the DEI initiative, all staff had completed training to help build a common and shared language around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. In March, implicit bias and microaggressions training was scheduled. The DEI policy steering committee has launched and is drafting policy for approval at the June Board meeting. Service standards for camp, social recreation, and non-medical therapies were submitted to DDS, and their response is pending. Likewise, service access and equity grants were awaiting DDS's decision.

NLACRC was partnering with Public Health and USC to meet our community's COVID-19 vaccine and booster needs. A request from the Board for any data to help define the needs that the community had regarding COVID. A quarterly residential interagency provider meeting convened and discussed billing, the placement process and referrals. Dr. Weller invited any interested vendors to join those discussions.

The Self Determination Program had 80 individuals completely enrolled. Two Participant Choice Specialists are being hired to support both self-determination and participant directed services. The Board Trustee liaison has changed to Rosie Sigala. The local volunteer advisory committee (LVAC) is working with Disability Voices United to train on person-centered principles. The next LVAC Meeting will be held on February 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm. Orientation and information meetings continued monthly as did support groups. Upcoming dates were disclosed.

## **VII. Community Services Director's Report (Evelyn McOmie)**

Reminder for vendors to provide updated insurance and license information. Further, Ms. McOmie asked that vendors provide any alterations in visitation, testing

requirement and/or vaccine requirements to families and case management. Links to Community Care Licensing PINs were added to the chat regarding adult and senior care licensed sites' emergency and disaster planning. CCL requested updated LAC61OD, requiring regular training and drills, transportation, communication, evacuation, and shelter plans. Other information was shared regarding visitation waivers for adult and senior care sites, COVID-19 in children's residential settings for children's services licensed under CCL, and booster guidance for adult and senior care pursuant to the public health order.

Legislative changes impacting adult and senior care included AB665 regarding internet service and AB654 regarding COVID-19 reporting. Evelyn McOmie reminded vendors of the RSO (residential services orientation) window between March 14<sup>th</sup> and April 12<sup>th</sup> and of open vendor enrollment to March 4<sup>th</sup> and invited participants to become service providers. Virtual DSP classes were being offered. The open proposal cycle for Winter was open until April 1st.

DDS updated the CAL EVV website with live-in caregiver and attestation forms and onboarding information. DDS announced a rate-model implementation discussion for transportation providers on Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> of February. DDS also updated the SDP individual budget development and certification tool and individual-spending plan FAQs. Wage adjustment information was added to the chat. DS 1891 forms expired on 12/31/21. March 31<sup>st</sup> was the deadline for in-home respite providers' annual program emails. Per trailer bill 136, the Uniform Holiday Schedule was sunset; providers should follow their program designs for dates and transportation. Service provider application information via NLACRC's website was being visually updated.

The Department of Public Health was providing 30-day supplies of EPG for residential service providers, which was to hopefully be distributed via transportation. Service providers were reminded to support and facilitate vaccine and booster shots. Contact information was shared.

### **VIII. Legislative Report** (Michelle Heid).

Legislative report and link to report was shared in the chat. Highlights included several legislators indicating that they would be leaving, including Senator Fraser. Reviewed redistricting and term limits impacted many of those decisions, as assemblymembers (State Legislature) must reside within the area they represent. Contrary to Congresspeople, this specifically meant that L. Freidman and A. Nazarian would be running against each other in District 44. Tom Lackey would run against Thurston Smith for District 39. Final maps were certified on December 27<sup>th</sup>. This would impact the catchment area, and links for maps showing the changes were included in the report. Antelope Valley, previously Assembly District 38 and Senate District 21, was now split between Assembly Districts 34 and 39 and Senate District 23. Santa Clarita was covered by Assembly Districts 21 and 23, and was now to be represented by District 23. San Fernando Valley changes were extensive, and Michelle Heid encouraged review of those changes and her notes.

The new bill deadline was February 18<sup>th</sup>. Highlights and links from the proposed budget, \$286.9B, and the legislative calendar were included in the report. Primary elections were June 7<sup>th</sup> and general elections in November. Information was included on those who intended to run for which positions.

DDS COVID-19 directives were included in the report. The DS Task Force reviewed the Governor's budget and its impact on regional centers. The Task Force also provided updates on self-determination updates. DDS Stakeholder events for quality incentives, RC performance measures, and employment were held, and dates of future meetings were shared. Each workgroup was recorded and was available on the DDS website. Links to Early State videos were included. The emergency preparedness guide was released by the Department of Rehabilitation and Department of Emergency Services. California's Budget Policy Center released information on the budget process.

ARC's Public Policy Conference on Development Disabilities was virtual with sales starting March 1<sup>st</sup>. On January 4<sup>th</sup>, the Federal Center for Medicaid and

Medicare conditionally approved California's HCBS Spending Plan, and links were included in Michelle Heid's report. DHDS provided status updates and overviews for CalAIM waivers. Restored camp and social recreation opportunities were detailed in a webinar from Disability Rights California. CalHHS's Annual Letter provided vision on a healthy California going forward from the pandemic. Resources from the State Council on Developmental Disabilities were shared. A webinar on SB639 and sub-minimum wage employment change efforts via legislative action was published by the Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center. An upcoming webinar via the National Academy for State Health Policy and the Family Caregiver Resource Center was scheduled for February 8<sup>th</sup> was on the direct health care workforce. PPE and COVID vaccination resources were available.

## **IX. Committee Business**

### **A. National Core Indicator Staff Stability Survey – Josh Sudarma, DDS**

Josh Sudarma presented plans for use of a national survey to gather data on the direct support professionals (DSP) workforce. The survey, tailored for California's needs, was to launch via email in April. One survey per agency would collect quantitative benefit, employment length, human resource policy and payroll data to evaluate the impact of initiatives and provide insight into possible improvements within the DSP field. Goals included decreasing turnover and vacancies in life-impacting services. Confidential, aggregate results would create a baseline to help compare future data, inform recruitment and retention efforts and drive vendor self-awareness. Josh Sudama asked for word-of-mouth assistance to promote the survey.

### **B. VAC Member Recruitment Update – Ruth Janka**

Four applications going through the interviewing process being conducted by the Nominating Committee for the three vacancies that would open at the end of the year.



C. Sign-up sheet for Grass Roots Week (April)

Michelle urged the VAC members to participate in conversations with legislators to support the NLACRC community. Training was February 15<sup>th</sup> to prepare for those visits with state legislators. ARCA would offer added training in April.

D. Annual Jynny Retzinger Award Recommendations -Ruth Janka

Ruth shared Ms. Reizinger's success in and legacy of advocacy as well as a Board member. Nominations are being solicited and asked to be sent to boardsupport@nlacrc.org. Virtual presentation and award will be done for the individual selected.

E. Rate Adjustments pursuant to CCR, Title 17, Section 57920 – Ruth Janka

Information provided on how to request rate changes for qualifying community-based day programs.

F. Open Issues for Discussion

No issues were forthcoming.

**X. Reports from the VAC Priority Issue Work Groups**

Deferred for Break-out Groups to meet at a different date

A. Early Start (Dana Kalek) – March 17<sup>th</sup>

B. School Age Services (Cal Enriquez) – March 1<sup>st</sup>

C. Ault Services (Suad Bisogno & Erica Bell) – March 7<sup>th</sup>

D. Legislative Issues and Advocacy (Sharoll Jackson) – March 14<sup>th</sup>

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

Minutes of the February 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting

**XII. Announcements / Information Items**

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022 at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom

The strategic thinking survey has been extended to Saturday, February 5<sup>th</sup> at midnight.

**XIII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

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Submitted by:

(\*) *Lizeth Chavez*

Executive Admin. Assistant

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