

North Los Angeles County Regional Center  
**Consumer Services Committee Meeting Minutes**

July 20, 2022

**Present:** Andrew Ramirez, Brian Gatus, George Alvarado, Jordan Feinstock, Nicholas Abrahms, Rocio Sigala, Sharmila Brunjes, Erica Beall – Committee Members

Liliana Windover, Lizeth Chavez, Robert Dhondrup, Malorie Lanthier, Vini Montague, Jazmin Zimmerman, Clarence Foster Ruth Janka, Evelyn McOmie, Santos Rodriguez, Gabby Eshrati, Cristina Preuss, Jennifer Williamson, Dr. Jesse Weller, Dr. Michael Fernandez, Evan Ingber– Staff Members

Ana Quiles, Leticia Garcia, Lillian Martinez, Ricardo Martinez, Jennifer Koster, Nancy Gallardo – Interpreter, Jasmine Barrios-Minutes Services - Guests

**Absent:** Cathy Blin, Gabriella Herrera

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**I. Call to Order & Introductions**

Ruth Janka called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm in lieu of a Committee Chair, who is yet to be decided.

Lizeth Chavez took attendance; a quorum was met.

**II. Public Input**

No public input

**III. Consent Items**

A. Approval of Agenda – (Page 2)

**M/S/C** (A. Ramirez/ B. Gatus) To approve the Agenda as presented.

B. Approval of Minutes of May 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting – (Page 4)

**M/S/C** (R. Sigala / N.Abrahms) To approve the May 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes as presented. Due to not being present at the last meeting, new Committee Members for this FY abstained from the vote. This includes: A. Ramirez, B. Gatus, J. Feinstock and S. Brunjes

**IV. Committee Business**

A. Volunteer to Serve as Committee Chair – Ruth Janka

Ruth began the meeting by giving a brief overview of the duties of the Chairperson for the Committee. The duties include conducting Committee Meetings, being the point-of-contact for the Committee for agenda items determined by NLA Staff and reporting applicable items on behalf of the Committee at Board Meetings. It is the duty of the Committee to vote on a Chairperson for this FY. Ruth asked for volunteers who would be interested in serving as Chairperson.

**M/S/C** (J. Feinstock / A. Ramirez) To postpone the open discussion for volunteers and vote for Chairperson until the end of the meeting for a better understanding of the process and what the position entails. The motion passed and Ruth Janka will conduct the meeting in the interim.

B. Annual Committee Orientation – Ruth Janka

At the beginning of each board year, Committees are presented with an annual Committee Orientation that outlines a few key points about Committee processes as presented in the packet.

1. Policies and Procedures (*Page 13*)
  - a. The Committee meets on a monthly basis for 10 months out of the year. There are 2 months out of the year, June and December where there is no meeting. The Agenda for each meeting is determined by NLA Staff and is reviewed with the Committee Chairperson.
2. Bylaws Statement (*Page 15*)
  - a. The duties of the Consumer Services Committee are to review and recommend standards and policy consistent with the needs of regional center consumers with regard to: 1) Services such as consumers' rights, case management, health, physiological and community development and 2) services provided by agencies outside of the regional center.
  - b. The Committee shall select its Chairperson, a quorum shall consist of 50% of the members and the term of members is set at 1 year.
  - c. Bylaws require that any motions, votes or actions conducted at the meeting are done by Committee Members only. Board Members who are not on the Committee are able to attend meetings and participate in discussion on agenda topics, but are not able to make motions or vote. Meetings are also open to members of the public; however, the public may not make motions, may not vote and can not participate in agenda item discussions outside of Public Input sections which are designated at the beginning and end of each meeting.
3. Core Values for Policy Development (*Page 17*)
  - a. Policies will empower consumers and family members to advocate on their own behalf
  - b. Will facilitate consumers to obtain the highest level of independence
  - c. Will foster and encourage individual choices
  - d. Will reflect a commitment to proven state-of-the-art services
  - e. Will support families in caring for consumers at home if needed
  - f. Will promote full participation in education, work, living arrangements, leisure and social activities
  - g. Will recognize consumer's civil rights and to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of the magnitude of the individual's developmental disability.
4. Board Audit Section (*Page 18*)
  - a. This document identifies 4 areas to help the Committee run effectively. These areas include knowledge, skills, dangers and a list of questions for the Committee to determine if the standards are being met to be effective as a group. Ruth reviewed these areas as presented in the packet.
5. Committee Approved Critical Calendar (*Page 19*)
  - a. The Critical Calendar identifies the items that are to be reviewed by the Committee and when. It also identifies the Board Audit questions that will be answered that month.
  - b. Each Committee is assigned an NLA Staff Member who will oversee and

determine agenda items. Dr. Jesse Weller is assigned to this Committee, who will review the Agenda with the Committee Chairperson each month.

C. Committee Priorities for next FY Discussion – Ruth Janka (*Page 23*)

Ruth reviewed the priorities that were determined for FY 2021-22 as presented in the packet. It is up to the Committee to determine if these priorities should continue for this FY, to expand the current priorities or to change the priorities. The content of the priorities originates from recommendations from NLA Staff, Board Members and Committee Member themselves. Data is collected in real-time and is presented to the Committee to demonstrate efficiency or identify opportunities for growth.

Rocio Sigala stated that the priorities from last year are still relevant and should continue for this year as well. The Committee was encouraged to review the data that is presented in the packet and that will be discussed in tonight's meeting in order to decide what priorities should be for this year. The priorities will be finalized at the next Committee Meeting pending review by Committee Members.

D. Discussion on Enhanced Service Coordination Unit - Dr. Weller/Santos Rodriguez

Regional Centers are required to implement an Enhanced Service Coordination model with a ratio of 1 Service Coordinator for every 40 individuals for up to 240 consumers. This model supports consumers who have Purchase of Service (POS) less than \$2,000 or individuals who have no services at all and attempts to connect individuals to services.

Santos Rodriguez introduced himself as the current Supervisor for the Enhanced Service Coordination Unit. He has held this role since March 2022 and prior to that, served as a CSC with the Transition Unit in the San Fernando office. He has a Master's degree in Social Work and has been working diligently with a staff of 6 Specialists. Data was received from DDS on criteria for identifying individuals who are eligible for this program. The goals of the unit are to collect the data, to also identify barriers that limit service access and disparities in the catchment area, to increase POS expenditures and to support families as they walk through this process.

DDS identified 8,000 consumers that were identified as eligible. This includes 4,800 individuals at the San Fernando office, 2,800 at the Antelope Valley office and 755 at the Santa Clarita office. Identified individuals are sorted by School-Age, Transition-Age and Adults and are then pulled at random through an equitable system to begin addressing the individuals that meet this threshold. . Once complete, the caseloads are selected by language needs at each office.

As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, there are 137 consumers who have fully transitioned to Enhanced Services with a goal of 240 by the end of the year. A curriculum has been developed that will support the Specialists and the families on accessing services based on their needs. A questionnaire was created to have a dialogue with families to identify those needs and to get to know them at the start of the program and surveys will also be conducted at the beginning and end of the program to measure growth from the beginning to the end of the program. Specialists are available to assist families in English, Spanish and Armenian based on data determining languages spoken by families with low POS expenditures.

Dr. Weller will assist in developing a communication strategy for this program on the NLA website as a reference for the program itself, eligibility criteria and information on meeting the Enhanced Service Coordination Unit team.

- E. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Consumer Diagnostic Report – Dr. Weller (Page 24)  
This report identifies the number of individuals who have the following:
- Intellectual Disabilities
  - Autism
  - Cerebral Palsy
  - Epilepsy
  - Other - any disability that renders the individual substantially handicapped.
  - Early Start 1 – individuals currently in the Early Start Program
  - Early Start 2 – Lanterman-eligible Early Start program individuals
- In the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter (April 1, 2022 – June 30, 2022), there was a total of 29,386 individuals. This does not include Intake numbers, DC, pending transfers, Enhanced Case Management, etc.
- F. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Consumer Diagnostic Report by Age – Dr. Weller (Page 28)  
Dr. Weller reviewed this information as presented in the packet. This measures the same criteria as above, but categorizes individuals by age groups. This report only includes Lanterman-eligible individuals from ages 3 to 65.
- G. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Consumer Intake Report – Dr. Weller (Page 29)  
This report shows individuals who are coming into the system and are being assessed to receive services. For the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, there were 1,005 Lanterman Intakes and 786 Early Start Service Intakes for a total of 1,791 individuals.
- H. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Exceptions Report – Dr. Weller (Page 30)  
This report lists exceptions, which are unique needs that have come up for individuals that were not anticipated and require additional staff, services and/or costs. These additional costs are tracked and reported out on a quarterly basis. Each need that requires an exception will go through a process to determine approval, denial or the use of an alternative way to meet the need. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, there were 84 total exceptions that were approved, 0 exceptions were denied and 0 exceptions required alternative solutions.  
It was noted that Camping Services, Social/Recreation Activities, Educational Services and Non-Medical Therapies are not going through the exception process at this time. They have been listed on the report as a placeholder in the event that there are approved exceptions outside of the service standards.
- I. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Appeals Report FY21-22 – Dr. Weller (Page 32)  
This report reflects the number of appeals filed on Notice of Actions that have been sent for the Quarter. Notice of Actions (NOAs) are given to families when an individual is not eligible for services or when there is a disagreement related to a service request. The NOA outlines the individuals' rights to appeal the decision. For the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, there were 549 NOAs sent out and 27 appeals filed in response for a total of 4.92% of NOAs being appealed. Of the 27 appeals, 18 were filed in regards to Service Requests and 9 filed in regards to Eligibility Determination. The report also contains the outcomes of the appeals as determined by the Fair Hearing Process.
- J. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Appeals/ NOA Reports by Ethnicity/Age, etc. FY 21-22 – Dr. Weller (Page 36)  
This report tracks the appeals sent to Fair Hearing by ethnicity and office location. Dr. Weller reviewed as presented in the packet. It was also noted that NOA Reports categorized by Ethnicity and Location are also available and the data is being tracked, however, the report was not included in the packet. Dr. Weller will email this report to Committee Members for

review.

The Fair Hearing Process is being reviewed and rehailed on a state-level to make it more easily accessible for families to know and to understand their right to appeal and how to navigate the Fair Hearing Process.

Rocio suggested a list of Service Access and Equity Grant Recipients be sent to consumers to provide them with access to information that will help them understand the process or to reapply for services that were previously denied. Dr. Weller will look into the resources that can be given to consumers in regards to this issue.

K. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 4731 Report – Dr. Weller (*Page 37*)

This report shows Consumer's Rights Complaints that were submitted to NLA. It contains the date that the complaint was received by NLA, the date that the proposed resolution was sent to the consumer, the subject matter of the complaint, how the complaint was resolved and the determined root cause of the complaint. NLA monitors and investigates the complaints. Corrective action plans and trainings are given and notated if it is identified that NLA missed a step.

Leticia Garcia noted that this report was part of the State Auditor's Report finding that Regional Centers were not providing adequate oversight for resolving Consumers' Rights Violations. Leticia proposed this as a potential priority for the Committee this year. She also suggested the complaints be listed in chronological order. Of 72 complaints, 60% were found to have no violation identified, 15% were identified as out-of-scope and 23% were listed as training being given but does not specify who was trained and what training was provided. Ruth stated that the California State Auditor's Report audited DDS and the report that was released in June 2022 and included NLA on a list of 3 Regional Centers that did not complete investigations within the statutory timeline and that DDS failed to provide guidance and oversight related to 4731 Complaints. The format that is presented in the packet is required by DDS. More information about the nature of the violations can be provided to the Committee as well as the trainings provided to staff. The goal is to expedite the correction of any issues and to prevent the reoccurrence of a previous violations in the future. Ruth would like to have Dana Lawrence, NLA's Fair Hearings Manager, to come to a future Committee Meeting to provide more details and insight into this report.

L. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Community Resource Development Plan Report – Dr. Weller (*Page 45*)

This report shows individuals who reside in Developmental Center facilities. It was noted that there is no one who resides at the Fairview, Lanterman and Sonoma Developmental Centers as those facilities are now closed. The report also shows recent developments for Developmental Centers that are currently in progress. Dr. Weller reviewed these statistics as presented in the packet.

M. Purchase of Service Annual Report – Ruth Janka (*Page 47*)

Ruth gave a summary of certain components of this report due to time constraints. DDS and Regional Centers are required to compile data in a uniform manner regarding POS authorizations, Utilizations and Expenditures by Age, Race, Ethnicity, Primary Language, Disability and Residence Type. NLA takes this data and is looking at disparities for individuals based on those categories to identify barriers to access services.

Public meetings are required to present this data and to solicit feedback and recommendations from the community on this issue. Each year, DDS is presented with this report and the strategies that were created in response to the data to increase service access and equity, to encourage participation from the community and to reduce disparities.

N. Self-Determination Program Report – Dr. Weller (Page 238)

Dr. Weller reviewed the report as presented in the packet. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, there are 513 participants that have completed Orientation, 154 certified budgets and 116 participants that have fully transitioned into SDP with approved spending plans and active SDP IPPs. The report also breaks down this information by ethnicity, monthly participants attending Orientation by month and Monthly Budgets Certified.

NLA has been allocated funding for 2 Participant Choice Specialists allocated to Antelope Valley office (both secured with a tentative start date in August 2022) and 1 position allocated to San Fernando Valley (position filled). Monthly Orientation and Information Meetings will continue monthly in both English and Spanish.

SDP Local Volunteer Advisory Committee will meet next on August 18, 2022 from 7:00pm to 9:00pm. The Governor has extended the modifications that were previously in place regarding the Bagley-Keene Act which will allow members of the SDP Advisory Committee to return to virtual meetings.

Rocio stated that the SDP Advisory Committee would like to set up a meet-and-greet with the Board and/or the Consumer Services Committee. Dr. Weller will determine what will work best and reach out to Rocio to discuss further.

O. Monthly Consumer Competitive Employment Report- Vini Montague (Page 243)

Vini Montague introduced herself as the Interim Chief Financial Officer for NLA. She reviewed the report as presented in the packed. This report reflects the number of consumers who are employed. The information is broken down by Residency Type/Age Group and Ethnicity/Age Group. There is a total of 2,114 consumers who are employed.

The report also contains a section that shows consumers who are not employed, broken down in the same categories. There is a total of 13,650 consumers without employment.

The report contains an additional section that shows a comparison from the current month to the previous month of consumers with and without employment, categorized by Ethnicity and Residence Type.

P. Purchase of Service Data Monthly Report – Dr. Weller (Page 247)

The Committee previously requested this report include POS expenditure by Category to be familiar with the different types of Service Codes and a forecast for expenditures. It was also determined that Service Code 405 was phased out in 2011 due to Participant Directive Services taking over this code. More information is needed to be disseminated surrounding Participant Directed Services to consumers.

There was a question in a previous meeting in regards to what is being done to track surplus in a particular Service Code and what can be done with that money. The information will continue to be tracked and reported out at Committee Meetings.

Ruth stated that reports are currently being generated to present POS Expenditures categorized by Ethnicity and Diagnosis for the top 10 Service Codes that will be presented at the next Committee Meeting

Q. Camping/Social Rec. Outreach Plan Status Update – Dr. Weller

Dr. Weller reviewed a few key points related to the status of this Outreach Plan. The plan seeks to make the community aware of the availability of camp, social recreational, education services and non-medical therapies in a variety of ways. They include:

- Dissemination of Electronic Information in English and Spanish
  - News You Can Use, Social Media, NLA Website, Peachjar, etc.

- Dissemination of Physical Informational Copies in English and Spanish
    - Flyers at clinics/health centers, community/rec centers, libraries, community colleges, places of worship, etc.
  - NLA Service Coordinator training
    - Train staff on roles in discussing available service during routine program planning meetings
  - Providing Community awareness and promotion
    - Announcement of Committees at all public meetings and self-advocacy group meetings.
    - Announcements/coordination with advocacy and support groups
  - Additional Actions
    - Town Halls
    - Updated IPP Agreement Forms
    - Update new staff Orientation materials for Family Support Services and Service Standards
    - Update new service standards on NLA website once adopted by the Board and approved by DDS.
- R. Workforce Employment Specialist Project Plan Update – Dr. Weller (*Page 251*)  
Dr. Weller reviewed this plan as presented in the packet. There was a grant for 1 full time Workforce & Employment Specialist to help support and increase the total number of consumers to obtain and maintain competitive employment and internship opportunities. There is a promising candidate who is interviewing on Friday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> to potentially fill this role.
- S. IHSS Status Update – Ruth Janka  
The Community Services department has surveyed the Independent Living Skills agency regarding their capacity to provide assistance in accessing IHSS. 32 providers indicated that they are able to provide assistance. The next step is to review the program design to validate that providers are able to provide support with IHSS and other resources. After validation, communication will be sent out to staff and the community regarding this process. Evelyn McOmie stated that Case Management should be receiving training and information about this communication by the end of August.
- T. POS Expenditure Data Reports – Ruth Janka (*Page 253*)  
A sample report has been presented in the packet. Future reports will include summaries regarding POS Expenditure data by Location, Service Code and Residence Type and will be included at the next meeting. POS Expenditures by Ethnicity and Diagnosis are planned for future reports but will not be available by the next meeting due to data integrity issues.
- U. Transfer Process Updates – Cristina Preuss  
This process became effective on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Any consumer who is transferring to another Regional Center will have a letter sent to their home as well as an email if there is an email address available. The letter/email will contain information about the consumer's new center including contact information for the Transfer Coordinator.  
NLA has been selected to give feedback and recommendations to DDS on the new state-wide database. Feedback will be given to DDS regarding any areas where there is data needed that NLA's current systems do not support. This will improve and prevent delays in the Transfer Process.

- V. Process to Contact NLA Personnel Update – Dr. Weller  
NLA has been working on issues around contacting Service Coordinators and what can be done if the Service Coordinator cannot be reached. A step-by-step guide for families has been developed regarding the below steps.
- Step 1: Contact your Service Coordinator by Phone/Email
  - Step 2: If still pending follow up, contact OD Specialist
  - Step 3: Contact a Manager
- After staff has completed training on this process, the NLA website will be updated with the information to ensure better communication and transparency for consumers.  
Ana Quiles recommended adding all of the relevant contact information for the case worker onto the initial letter that is sent to families or finding another way to communicate this with families. If the Service Coordinator is not known, the OD would be the next point-of-contact. The ETA for dissemination of this information is July 25<sup>th</sup>.
- W. PEP Report/Day Care Family Member and Day Care Paid Family Update – Dr. Weller  
Information on these services were addressed under Item P.
- X. Service Access and Equity Award/Community Based Organization Project Updates – Dr. Fernandez  
Dr. Fernandez gave a quick overview in the interest of time. There were 9 organizations that were awarded for various projects to help support NLA. In August, meetings will be held with the award recipients to discuss their services. At the September Town Hall Meeting, these organizations will present information about support they provide. Updates will be given by awardees on a quarterly basis for updates and will maintain contact with Parent and Family Support Specialists and Consumer Advocate on collaboration efforts.  
The awardees were listed as: Autism Society of Los Angeles, California Hands and Voices, California Tribal Families Coalition, Children’s Hospital LA, Disability Voices United, Integrated Community Collaborative (ICC), Korean American Special Education Center, Soho Shinali Sister Project and USC Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles.
- Y. COVID-19 Family Support Services Status Update – Dr. Weller  
At previous committee meetings, there were many discussions surrounding challenges with internal processes in regards to communication about COVID-19 Family Support Services. Due to a backlog that prevented timely re-assessments, there will be an additional extension for anyone who is not able to be assessed in July. The extension will continue until August 31, 2022 to allow sufficient time for families to connect with their service coordinators and the new program planning.  
Communication will be sent out to the community to inform them of the extension and letters will be sent to families that have not been able to be reached to attempt to connect with them. Information regarding the Family Support Assessment Tools along with resources about available services will be attached to this communication to help prepare families with the information they need.  
Ana Quiles suggested providing requests for services for consumers when they are both in school and out of school as opposed to waiting until the consumer has ended or started a school year. She also suggested having more workshops from Parent Support Specialists to families on how to prepare for IPP Evaluations. Dr. Weller stated that the team will brainstorm ideas for Ana’s suggestions.
- Z. Revisit of Committee Business Item A: Volunteer to Serve as Committee Chair – Andrew Ramirez  
Andrew Ramirez volunteered to serve as the Committee Chairperson.



**M/S/C** (J. Feinstock / B. Gatus) To approve Andrew Ramirez as the Consumer Services Committee Chairperson.

**V. Deputy Director Report – Dr. Jesse Weller**

The Inclusion, Equity and Diversity Policy is now on the NLA Website, this will continue to be a growing section, Dr. Fernandez would like to include a newsletter with topics related to Inclusion, Equity and Diversity.

Town Hall: July 21<sup>st</sup> at 1:30 pm. Individuals who are being served by NLA will be giving their perspective on employment.

Disability Voices United has a five-part training program, the Emerging Leaders Program. This program gives self-advocates and family advocates the skills needed to take leadership positions in their communities and states as well as advocating for systematic change. Interested parties must be able to attend all five sessions from 4:30pm to 6:30pm on the following Tuesdays: September 13<sup>th</sup>, September 27<sup>th</sup>, October 11<sup>th</sup>, October 25<sup>th</sup> and November 8<sup>th</sup>. An Information Session will be held from 5:00pm to 6:00pm on Monday, July 25<sup>th</sup>.

Implicit Bias Training is being coordinated to take place in August 2022 for all NLA staff pending DDS approval.

AV Seed and Grow - Special-Needs Backpack Event will be held Sunday, July 31<sup>st</sup> from 10 am -12 pm at Prime Desert Woodland Preserve in Lancaster. Jennifer Koster suggested discussing the purchase laptops in future years for school-age consumers who might not be able to afford one on their own. Dr. Weller stated this discussion will be added as an agenda item for the August Committee Meeting.

Groups: Alianza de Hombres – Tuesday, July 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.  
Cafecito Entre Nos – Thursday, July 14<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am

**VI. Board Meeting Agenda Items**

The following items were identified for the Committee’s section of the next Board Meeting agenda:

- A. Minutes of the July 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting
- B. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Consumer Diagnostic Report
- C. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Consumer Diagnostic Report by Age
- D. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Consumer Intake Report
- E. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Exceptions Report
- F. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Appeals Report FY21-22
- G. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Appeals/ NOA Reports by Ethnicity/Age, etc. FY 21-22
- H. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 4731 Report
- I. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Community Resource Development Plan (CRDP) Report
- J. POS Expenditures by Category Report FY 21-22

**VII. Announcements / Information Items / Public Input**

- A. Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 17, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

No Public Input

### **VIII. Adjournment**

Ruth Janka adjourned the meeting at 9:44 p.m.

Submitted by:

(\*) *Lizeth Chavez*

Executive Administrative Assistant

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