

North Los Angeles County Regional Center

Vendor Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 7, 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, Don Lucas, Kevin Shields, Nick Vukotic

Staff Members

Dr. Jesse Weller, Evelyn McOmie, Arpi Arabian, Arsho Garlanian, Stephanie Margaret, Dr. Michael Fernandez, Fred Rockwood, Cathy Robinson, Jennifer Williamson, Liliana Windover, Lizeth Chavez, Alan Darby, Omar Gonzalez, Michele Marra, Silvia Haro, Natalia Langarica, Silvia Haro, Gabby Eshrati, Victoria Berrey, Marlene Vargas, Cristina Preuss, Elisa Hill

Public

Approximately 80 Service Providers also participated in the Zoom call.

Administrative

Dolly Sharma – Minute Services
Shelley Hash – Interpreter

Absent: Kenny Ha, Jenni Moran, Daniel Ortiz

I. Call to Order & Introductions

VAC Chair Sharoll Jackson called the meeting to order at 9:32 am. Liz Chavez confirmed a quorum via roll call. Sharoll welcomed VAC members, committee members, and guests.

II. Public Input

Kevin Shields asked if anyone was interested in joining a consortium to help the people at North LA County Regional Center.

Erica Beall asked those present to contact their representative to support HR 4779 to recognize the Direct Support Professionals Act.

Jodie Agnew-Navarro shared that Cal Tech is conducting a virtual webinar, as the in-person event was canceled due to Covid. So instead, there will be a webinar with their keynote speakers and law enforcement.

Victoria Berry, Family Focus Resource Center, shared several events in April, including a workshop about autism and sexuality. She also shared that the Family Focus Resource Center will work with North LA to put on virtual transition resource fairs.

III. Consent Items

A. Approval of Agenda (Page 2)

Jesse Weller asked to move Evelyn's report first because she needed to leave early.

M/S/C (K. Shields/A. Kopilevich) To approve the agenda as amended.

B. Approval of Minutes from the March 3rd VAC Meeting

M/S/C (A. Kopilevich / K. Bermudez) To approve the minutes from the March 3rd Meeting as presented in the packet.

IV. Community Services Director's Report (Evelyn McOmie)

Evelyn McOmie announced DDS has upcoming office hours for the CALed database for EPG distribution vendors and should contact David Ramos at dramos@NLACRC.org. Residential facilities will continue to receive PPE. She notified the attendees of CCL PINs noted in the chat and updated the group on home care resources for COVID positivity cases.

Evelyn shared there will be a P&I Training Wednesday, April 27, from 10 am – 12 pm. She announced NLA was awarded funding for 5 out of 7 Provider Concepts for HCBS Compliance through DDS. NLACRC has received funding for the CPP/CRD plan for FY 21-22, with a tight deadline for these awards. NLACRC received \$200,000 for a startup for two specialized residential facilities for male residences and encouraging applications. They will only have the awards posted for four weeks to complete vetting and interviews. In addition, she announced NLACRC has published social recreation camps and non-medical requests for vendors and encouraged applications.

The regional centers have been awarded funds for the Lending Library Pilot and will be announcing this shortly. They will be able to lend iPads, iPad, and laptops. RC directed it has requested a technology sub code at the state load to continue provisions to those in need.

She shared that accounting is working on Batch 1 and 2, and rates will be available in May. Batch 1 includes service codes 062, 073, 097, 109, 111, and 680. Batch 1 and 2 recipients will be receiving a drop box email with the rate verified. Batch 3

and 4 are still waiting to receive the final rate. She shared that after the last VAC, they received final rates, and they identified errors such as the standing rate not being accurate, which impacted the next rate. Regional Centers needed to perform quality control to ensure providers get accurate rates. Batch 3 was submitted last week, and Batch 4 will be sent this week. More information is forthcoming.

Suad Bisogno asked what to do about billing. Evelyn McOmie shared Batch 2 codes or 055 and 063 codes and clarified that billing is reflected in the system in May. She cannot guarantee yet as they are waiting for DDS. Service codes 505, 510, and 515 will have rates, but the timeline is TBA. She assured it will be She shared Batch 3 will include 108, 113, 115, 116, 117, 605, 620, 805, 875, 880, 882, 883, 896. Batch 4 includes 475, 612, 615, and 620. Group B includes 113 Residential, 900, 901, and 905, with rates TBD. These rates were included in the chat as well.

Dana Kalek asked about when Batch 3 will be available. Evelyn is hoping to get Batch 3 by next week. Billing for April will be normal, and there will be an update at the next VAC. She clarified that accounting is broken down by service code, and the rates are attached to the service codes. Every eligible vendor will have a 25% difference in their rate that is tied to their service code. Evelyn McOmie encouraged those with questions to contact DDS and she will have more information for the next meeting.

Action Item: Evelyn McOmie will investigate how billing is seen on the vendor's end.

V. **Executive Director's Report** (Jesse Weller)

Dr. Weller reported on behalf of Ruth Janka. He shared a high-level overview of proposed legislation, including AB2378 for tax credits for businesses and SB 870 regarding RC eligibility for individuals up to ages 22 and traumatic brain injury. ARCA is supporting this bill if amended to address median rates and provide for start-up funding to support the expansion of needed services.

Dr. Weller shared that the DDS RC Performance Measures workgroup is looking at Service Access and Equity, Early Intervention, Workforce Capacity, and Employment. There are draft performance measures for each area being discussed at the state level and incentive funding to be available to regional centers if objectives are met.

ARCA's legislative priorities were reviewed and include modernizing the core staffing formula and repealing the Annual Family Program Fee and Family Cost Participation.

SB882 will create an advisory council to improve interactions with law enforcement and individuals with intellectual disabilities.

ARCA's system priorities include rate reform at the state level, inclusive communities, integrated employment opportunities

The State Council is currently facilitating community conversations about phasing out sub-minimum wage programs. Dr. Weller shared that information to access SCDD's community conversations is located on the state council's website.

Dr. Weller shared that COVID positivity rate in Los Angeles County, according to the LA County Department of Public Health is up .67% at a 7-day average, and current hospitalizations are at 321, with a reduction from last week. Dr. Weller gave an update on masking rules and eligibility for booster vaccines and assured that NLACRC will work to help provide access to vaccines.

Dr. Weller remarked that North LA was awarded 90,000 in a Service Access & Equity grant for a workforce and employment specialist to help increase employment opportunities for consumers.

NLACRC is developing a policy on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with the Board. NLACRC has also conducted training on implicit bias and microaggressions for all staff; almost all staff are trained. There will be ongoing training, with training on the LGBTQIA+ community in the fall.

The California State Auditor's office is auditing North LA and is examining all areas of operation and will be wrapping up in the following few dates. Information is forthcoming.

There are 681 authorized positions with 609 filled and 32 vacancies in service coordinator positions. He announced that Clarence Foster is the new Chief HR Resource Officer.

The Town Hall on March 17 was a success for the Early Start team. There will be a Town Hall on Camp, Social Recreation, and Non-Medical Therapy Services on April 27. There will be a schedule for Town Halls until the end of the year.

Dr. Weller ended his report on up-to-date consumer statistics, noting to date, NLACRC served 30,844 individuals, including 4,593 individuals in Early Start.

S. Weinberg asked for clarification on the mask mandate in residential areas. Jesse Weller asked what other residential directors on their practices. Jesse replied that it is for those who have staff. Kofi Jones replied that any locations staff and individuals are required to wear masks unless they are in their private rooms. Kimberly McNeill added if service providers only work with that one individual, they do not have to mask. Venus Rodriguez added social workers coming into the home would need to wear masks.

Action item: Jesse Weller will follow up with more information.

VI. Chief Financial Officer's Report (Alan Darby)

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

- o December: Total \$56.2MM, POS \$51.3MM and OPS \$4.7MM.

- YTD through February 2022: Total \$416.9MM, POS 378.4MM, and OPS 37.5MM.
- Projected expenses: \$688MM, POS \$620MM, OPS \$66.9MM
The original budget was \$727.8MM 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.

Additional Check lines will continue this month, and there will be more in May and June. In addition, NLACRC tax returns will be presented at the April Board meeting, and information will be posted on the website.

Alan Darby reiterated that Batch 1 and 2 would be ready for billing soon and encouraged questions.

VII. Deputy Director's Report (Jesse Weller)

Jesse Weller announced staffing updates and noted the team had completed interviews for the Placement Supervisor. They promoted Santos Rodriguez to the Enhanced Service Coordination Supervisor. Parent Mentors have reclassified their title to Parent and Family Support Specialist and NLACRC is recruiting for 2nd and 3rd positions.

North LA's Service Standard for Camp, Social Recreation and Non Medical Therapy Services has been approved by the department, and that these services can be accessed as family support or for social skills development. Camp is also available for the purpose of daycare. There will be more information on this at the Town Hall meeting. NLACRC also has issued a Request for Vendorization of these services. There is an additional Service Standard revision to include the Provisional Eligibility program and a new 45-day Intake timeline for individuals found not eligible for services that return to Intake with additional assessment information. The revision has been sent to the department for approval, an update will be provided once the department responds.

There is a Virtual Resource Fair at Antelope High School. Details were provided in the chat.

Lastly, he noted that the Regional Centers must perform activities to support families and consumers for health and safety waivers for non-English speaking consumers.

NLACRC has 98 individuals in the Self-Determination Program; local volunteer advisory committee meetings are ongoing, the third Thursday of each month. The next committee meeting is on April 21, and interested individuals are encouraged to attend. In addition, monthly support groups meet regularly, information regarding the meetings and support groups can be found on the Center's website.

VIII. Legislative Report (Michelle Heid).

Michelle Heid presented the legislative report and shared the report link in the chat. Highlights included that all bills have been introduced for this year. In addition, she shared the budget requests and echoed Dr. Weller's comments, including modernizing the core staffing formula, accelerating the provider rate reform, and repealing family fees. Friday, March 11, was the due date for candidacy in the primary election on June 7. She remarked on the legislative calendar and shared voter registration deadlines are approaching. In addition, there is a special election to fill Kamala Harris' seat.

She shared updates on senators running for election. Due to redistricting, they will be gaining a new Senator, Ben Allen. Many current legislators are up for reelection to run in new districts. North LA will be getting a new assembly member in their district and will welcome new relationships. Assemblyman Azarian will not be running again and will make a bid for LA City Council. They will continue to have 11 districts. There is information available in the report. The DDS Task Force will meet on April 19. She noted many meetings had been canceled, and more information is available on the website.

Michelle Heid announced there is a new DDS Early Start Newsletter. In addition, April 26-28th will be the ARC's Virtual Developmental Disability Public Policy Conference, and highly recommend guests to attend.

There were no questions.

Michelle Heid remarked on the success of the grassroots meetings, received positive feedback from congress members, and noted support for bills SB882 and AB2378.

IX. Committee Business

A. Employment Break-Out Group - Michele Marra

Michelle Marra shared that NLACRC has an updated recruitment and selection policies and wished to be mindful of employment opportunities for consumers. She shared NLACRC HR Staff would like to join the Employment Break Out Group to review openings at the Center. Suad replied that the next meeting is on May 2 and will focus on housing and employment can be covered in the July meeting. The information was placed in the chat. Suad shared job carving will be helpful to the community. The invite to the July meeting will be sent to the Center's new Chief Human Resources Officer, Clarence Foster.

B. Solicitation of Interest for VAC Chair Position

Sharoll asked for applicants interested in the VAC Chair position to apply by emailing Liz Chavez. Voting will be done at the May meeting.

C. Jynny Retzinger Award Update

Sharoll will put together a ballot of nominees and send emails to committee members for votes. Submissions will be due Friday, May 6, close of business. The award will be presented at the June VAC meeting.

D. Open Issues for Discussion

Sharoll asked about the comfort level of meeting in person while masking. S. Weinburg shared she would like to meet in person. Michelle Heid shared that she would prefer to remain virtual or be in a hybrid meeting as attendance has risen. Kofi Jones agreed to in-person meetings with a virtual option. Sharoll Jackson suggested having a quarterly meeting in-person with a hybrid option.

Evelyn McOmie shared the department has rolled out guidance for those with issues with the rate calculation. Regional centers will be the first to review these, and there will be a form posted on the website and sent by email. Group B in Batch 4 includes FHA and SRF rates that will come out before the CCH and the EBSH rates, but this will be the last batch received by Regional Centers. They will be receiving Batch 3 next week.

Erica Beall asked how the North LA strategic planning service providers are represented in the process. Sharoll Jackson shared that vendors, board members, and consumers are on the committee. Jesse Weller shared there were surveys sent to solicit feedback as well. Erica Beall also suggested a get-together twice a year on the VAC business.

Sharoll Jackson shared the Breakout groups have their invites and interested individuals should reach out to Liz. The workgroups include Early Start Services, School-Age Services, Adult Services (includes Employment Group), and Legislative Issues and Advocacy.

X. Agenda Items for the Next Board Meeting

A. Minutes of the April 7th Meeting

XI. Announcements / Public Input/Information Items

A. Next Meeting: Thursday, May 5, 2022, at 9:30 a.m.

XII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

Submitted by:

(* *Natalia Langarica*

Executive Admin. Assistant

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