

North Los Angeles County Regional Center
Vendor Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

March 3, 2022

Present: Committee Members

Jodie Agnew-Navarro, Orli Almog, Erica Beall, Kimberly Bermudez, Catherine Carpenter, Bob Erio, Sharoll Jackson, Dana Kalek, Alex Kopilevich, Don Lucas, Daniel Ortiz, Kevin Shields, Jennie Moran, Nick Vukotic

Staff Members

Ruth Janka, Evelyn McOmie, Arpi Arabian, Dr. Michael Fernandez, Fred Rockwood, Cathy Robinson-Learn, Jennifer Williamson, Lizeth Chavez, Alan Darby, Chantelle Crown, Cristina Preuss, Donna Rentsch, Gabriela Eshrati, Josie Dauglash, Kirsten Fitzpatrick, Marlene Vargas, Silvia Haro, Venus R.Khorsani

Public

Approximately 85 Service Providers also participated on the Zoom call.

Administrative

Richard Brown – Minute Solutions
Shelley Hash – Interpreter

Absent: Olga Reyes, Kenny Ha, Suad Bisogno, Committee Members

I. Call to Order & Introductions

VAC Chair Sharoll Jackson called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. and welcomed committee members, and guests. Staff Liz Chavez confirmed a quorum via roll call.

II. Public Input

Wilda W. Tillman thanked NLACRC for the quality and scope of the content posted to their website in support of Black History month. Lois Kalmick announced the availability of a new app for autistic children that offers content with various levels of complexity. Nick Vukotic invited interested providers to contribute information or training resources to the development of an educational series which will address a wide range of medical and non-medical topics of interest to the community.

Victoria Berrey announced the availability and timing of new information-sharing workshops being presented by Family Focus Resource Center in English and Spanish and that efforts were being made to have these workshops recorded and posted to a YouTube channel. Yue LI announced the availability of early intervention services for autistic children from Comprehensive Autism Related Education (CARE) Inc. Jim Francis reported that a Self-determination community-centered planning session had been scheduled for March 7th, followed by a Committee meeting scheduled on March 17, 2022, at 6:30 p.m.

III. Consent Items

A. Approval of Agenda

Ruth asked that a discussion of the Department of Rehabilitation checklist be added to the Agenda under Committee Business 9.E.

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

B. Approval of Minutes from the February 3rd Meeting

M/S/C (J.Moran / N.Vukotic) To approve the minutes from the February 3rd Meeting as presented.

IV. Executive Director's Report (Ruth Janka)

Ruth addressed the following topics in her update report to the Committee:

- The status of five pieces of legislation of interest to the NLACRC community and its vendor partners. ARCA's support for each of these measures was confirmed.
- Evolving changes in COVID-19 precaution requirements. Vendors are strongly advised to review the requirements set forth by each county's public health unit that remain in place for healthcare and educational settings.
- The first tranche of new rates for the purchase of services (PoS) will take effect April 1, 2022. Some retroactive payments may need to be made. PoS rates may change as service codes are aligned with providers
- ARCA and the Lanterman Coalition are advocating for the next rate increases to take effect as of July 1, 2022. Vendor partners will be asked to send each of their elected representatives a personalized version of ARCA's template letter in support of this position.
- ARCA is working to remove barriers to access by seeking sponsors for the annual fees currently being paid by families to participate in two of its programs.
- Recruiting efforts to fill vacant positions are accelerating. Staff attrition and the effect of onboarding and initial training for new staff on ready access to NLACRC services are ongoing concerns.

- NLACRC currently has the highest intake rate in the state.

Harry Bruell confirmed that DDS was aware of staffing issues related to the return to a traditional service delivery model and that advance notice of decisions or actions would be given prior to implementation.

In response to questions and concerns from Committee Members and the service providers in attendance, Ruth Janka stated that:

- NLACRC had not yet received formal notification regarding changes to the provision of alternative services or a requirement to return to the traditional service delivery model.
- Until an update is provided, vendors should continue to deliver services as per the approved ISP or IPP.
- Maintaining the continuity of service as the traditional delivery model replaces the alternative model is a concern. The availability of day staff to provide services in a traditional model is unknown at this time.
- In the absence of a DDS directive, schools will decide which model will be used to deliver approved services.

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

Alan gave an overview of the organization's current year financial position and confirmed that:

- Public meetings on Purchase of Service (POS) rates had been scheduled for March 10, 2022, from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. and March 15, 2022, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- Los Angeles County minimum wage requirements may be viewed on the NLACRC website.
- The auditor had provided an unqualified opinion on the draft audited financial statements received by the Finance Committee.

VI. Chief of Program Services Report (Cristina Preuss)

Cristina addressed the following topics during her update report to the Committee:

- Recruiting for vacant positions is ongoing. Candidates for the vacant parent/family support specialist positions have been identified and interviewed.
- The DEI Policy Steering Committee had made progress during the three meetings held on January 22, February 24, and March 24.
- Staff training on implicit bias and micro-aggression has been scheduled.
- The Disparity Committee is seeking new members and is addressing issues related to early start referrals.
- Community Services is partnering with USC to provide in-home vaccination services to consumers. Dr. Jesse Weller will be the point of contact for consumers who are referred for support.

- DDS has not yet approved or provided a response to NLACRC’s proposed social recreation service standards.

Silvia Haro commented on the number of participants in the Self-Determination program as well as the status of orientation meetings, support groups available to consumers, and the volunteer Advisory Committee. A vendor encouraged NLACRC service coordinators to include financial institutions as they discuss self-determination plans with the family.

VII. Community Services Director’s Report (Venus Rodriguez-Khorasani)

Venus addressed the following topics during her update report to the Committee:

- Service Access and Equity Grants for the current fiscal year.
- DDS Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) stakeholder meeting scheduled for March 22, 2022, at 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 pm.
- PPE is available. Residential facilities will continue to receive PPE through NLACRC Transportation agencies.
- Rate letters will be distributed via the donotreply@dropbox.com e-mail address.
- Target dates for rate model implementation have been posted online.
- A Regulatory Requirements for Special Incident Reporting & Special Incident Report Writing Workshop will be held March 30, 2022, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- Registration for the Residential Services Orientation (RSO) will end March 4, 2022, with sessions to be held from March 14, 2022, to April 12, 2022.
- NLACRC’s Winter 2022 Open Proposal Period for Residential Service Providers has closed. Proposal evaluation is underway with responses to be sent out by April 1, 2022.
- New mileage rates effective January 1, 2022, for in-home respite workers is posted on the NLACRC website and was e-mailed to 862 providers.

VIII. Legislative Report (Michelle Heid).

The report was made available to the Committee but was not discussed.

IX. Committee Business

A. National Core Indicator Staff Stability Survey Update

Ruth stated that the survey responses were important information to be used in NLACRC’s long-range planning process and encouraged meeting participants to expedite the submission of their responses.

B. Grass Roots Week Update

Jennifer Williamson reported that ARCA will conduct a virtual training session on April 5, 2022, for those who have volunteered to participate in grass roots visits.

C. Annual Jynny Retzinger Award Recommendations -Ruth Janka

Submissions have been received and are being evaluated.

D. System Industry Issues

No issues were presented or discussed.

E. Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) Checklist

Ruth reported that to avoid having case files closed prematurely, work was underway to reduce the number of consumers being referred to DOR before they were ready to be evaluated. Service providers were invited to comment on an initial draft of a checklist that could be used to verify a consumer's readiness to undergo a DOR evaluation.

X. Reports from the VAC Priority Issue Work Groups

A. Early Start (Dana Kalek)

Dana discussed the following topics during her update report:

- As intake numbers continue to increase, the group is addressing known issues with the availability of therapists and support resources.
- Efforts are ongoing to recruit more speech and occupational therapists who will work in an in-home setting.
- The group is discussing issues related to provisional eligibility for children three to five years of age with developmental delays that have not been diagnosed.

B. School Age Services (Cal Enriquez)

Cal reported that recent discussions had centered on the recruiting process, the impact of rate changes on providers, and the evolving public health protocols for COVID-19 that apply to home- and office-based settings.

C. Adult Services (Erica Beall)

Erica discussed the following topics during her update report:

- The impact of recruiting and staffing challenges on service provision as well as the importance and availability of DSPs.
- ASPI is pushing back against efforts to delay the implementation of the revised minimum wage.
- Efforts to provide job coaching and other supports that are not presently covered by the DOR.
- Discussion of group concerns regarding the effect of realigned service codes and rate changes on services provided in 1:1 setting.

D. Legislative Issues and Advocacy (Sharoll Jackson)

Sharoll reinforced the importance of advocacy letters to be sent by vendors to their legislators in support of accelerating the pace of rate increases. Harry Buell reported that a legislative committee hearing on this topic had begun while the Committee meeting was in progress and provided a number to be called by interested parties wishing to provide comment on this issue.

Ruth reminded meeting participants of changes to the 401K requirements for small businesses that will take effect on June 1, 2022 and recommended that Los Angeles County-based vendors review the changes to minimum wage requirements that will take effect July 1, 2022.

XI. Reports on Board Committee Meetings

A. Administrative Affairs (Kevin Shields)

Kevin reported that the preparation of the audited financial statements was complete.

B. Board of Trustees (Sharoll Jackson)

Sharoll reported that the Board would review the strategic plan and the impact of changes to the minimum wage at its next meeting.

C. Consumer Services (Sharoll Jackson)

Sharoll reported on the Committee discussion of methods to decrease the time between program intake and implementation of a consumer's SDP.

D. Government & Community Relations (Sharoll Jackson)

Sharoll reported on the Committee's review of pending legislation and the impact of redistricting in the NLACRC catchment area.

E. Nominating Committee (Bob Erio)

Bob discussed the following topics during the update report:

- Two rounds of interviews were completed.
- The list of nominees for vacant Board and Vendor Advisory Committee positions will be finalized during the Committee’s April meeting.
- Nominees will be presented to the Board of Trustees in May.
- Elected candidates will be seated in July.
- Onboarding and training for newly-elected Trustees and Committee Members will begin no later than August.

F. Strategic Planning (Orli Almog)

Orli discussed the following topics during the update report:

- Status of the agenda for the virtual strategic planning retreat.
- Overview of the strategic planning survey responses.
- Based on a review of HIPPA-compliant redacted data extracted from a random sample of IPPs, there may be instances where the number of IHSS hours assigned may not be appropriately aligned with the consumer’s need for support.

XII. Agenda Items for the Next Board Meeting

Minutes of the March 3rd Meeting

XIII. Announcements / Public Input

Jessica Gould reported that she had been engaged by the Lanterman Housing Alliance to prepare a “plain language” version of its budgetary ask to DDS. Erica Beall invited interested vendors to attend the Adult Services work group meeting on March 7, 2022.

In response to questions from meeting participants, it was confirmed that:

- Due to data security concerns, NLACRC had temporarily stopped sharing staff contact information with service providers.
- Provision of contact information would resume when identifiers that may compromise the secure login to SANDIS are removed.
- Alan Darby is the point of contact for service providers with issues that arise during the transition to the new rates.
- Vendors with billing and liaison issues are encouraged to reach out to Consumer Services and to persist in their efforts to obtain approvals.

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 7, 2022, at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom

XIV. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

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.*