

North Los Angeles County Regional Center
Vendor Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

January 6, 2022

Present: 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 - **Committee Members**

Absent: Olga Reyes, Jenni Moran, Nick Vukotic

Ruth Janka, Dr. Jesse Weller, Evelyn McOmie, Arpi Arabian, ~~Arsho Garlanian~~, Stephanie Margaret, Dr. Michael Fernandez, Cheryl Blizin, Fred Rockwood, Cathy Robinson-Learn, Jennifer Williamson, Liliana Windover, Lizeth Chavez, Alan Darby, Stephanie Margaret, Nancy Salyers– **Staff Members**

Approximately 90 Service Providers also participated on the Zoom call.

Also Present: Seth Tanner – Minute Services; Lucy Paz, Interpreter

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Sharoll Jackson called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. No introductions were made.

II. Public Input

- Alex Kopilevich from K&L CARE thanked Suad Bisogno for continuing to provide updated information on pandemic protocols. Finding staff in the midst of the pandemic and navigating the fluid legal guidelines continued to be a challenge.
- Craig Escude introduced himself as a family physician with IntellectAbility, (website ReplacingRisk.com). They provide training, services and supports to reduce risks to providers within the health care and wellness sector including screening tools, action steps, and E-learning courses.
- Deionna Gipson; iconhealthsolutions@gmail.com, 562-659-0950, service code 896; stated that Icon Living Services, vendored with Lanterman Regional Center, was seeking clients who needed a supportive living services agency.
- Dr. Havaughnia Hayes-White, service code 805, introduced herself as a new vendor serving consumers in the Antelope Valley. Evelyn McOmie, the Community Services Director for NLACRC, shared her contact information and stated that she can help with forms and services within the regional center.

- Victoria Berrey shared information in the chat window about the Family Focus Resources Center schedule of workshops and support groups.

III. Consent Items

A. Approval of Agenda (Page 2)

M/S/C (S. Bisogno/D. Lucas) To approve the agenda as written.

B. Approval of Minutes from the November 4th VAC Meeting (Page 3)

M/S/C (K. Shields/E. Beall) To approve the minutes from the November 4th Meeting as presented in the packet.

IV. Executive Director's Report (Ruth Janka)

A. Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Audit

NLACRC has been selected to participate in an audit of the DDS by the California State Auditor. The scope includes the Department's oversight of regional centers included training, caseload ratios, and monitoring of service providers, board responsibilities, communication (agendas/minutes), vendorization, IPP services and outcomes, and timeliness to individuals served. In order to protect the integrity of the audit process, any findings disclosed to regional center staff in the course of conducting the audit are confidential until the California State Auditor publishes their report.

B. State/Local Updates

State minimum wage increased effective January 1, 2022. Los Angeles County was at \$15/hr. or \$14.25/hr. if a business employs 25 or fewer persons. Negotiated rate adjustment requests were due to NLACRC by March 1st. Set rate adjustment requests should be made to the department. An Early Start Personnel Development Webinar Series on Cultural Humility, including the availability of continuing education units for various clinical disciplines, will be held January 11th through April 26th via DDS.

C. Covid Statistics

The surge in new hospitalizations and positivity rate of 22.5% as of 1/3/22. LA Care Health Plan facilities, a MediCal provider, are now requiring proof of COVID19 vaccination before entrance. The boosters for Covid-19 are now mandatory for regional center and service provider staff; timelines for doses and eligibility for boosters and applicable weekly testing requirements were provided. Discussion included alternative access for vendor/NLACRC consumers who were not fully vaccinated.

Further discussion touched on individual rights for consumers versus government mandates for service providers and the resulting risk to service providers. Plans for mitigation were discussed including layers of protection, respiratory protections in the new OSHA rules, antibody testing, and addressing those concerns with staff. A sample religious waiver can be obtained at DRamos@nlacrc.org. Personal protective equipment (PPE) should first be sought from local sources and then can be requested from NLACRC.

NLACRC has reduced staff to being on-site one day per week through February.

D. Non-COVID Related

Vendors are encourage to take the upcoming Strategic Thinking Survey to provide input for the Center's next Strategic Plan.

DDS has accepted the Center's FY20-21 Caseload Ratio Plan of Correction, required due to caseload ratios exceeding the statutory limit.

Michele Marra, Chief Organization Development Officer has submitted her retirement notice after 18 years with the Center.

The Center's Performance Contract FY 2020-2021 Year-End Report is to be submitted to DDS in February and posted in April.

Foundational training for diversity, equity, and inclusion was completed for all staff. The next round of training will include implicit bias and micro-aggressions. Further plans were underway to support the initiative.

V. Chief Financial Officer's Report

Alan Darby said that the C-2 allocation totaled \$1,798,820 with operations at \$1,648,820 and POS at \$150,000. The IRS milage rate increased as of January 1, 2022, including a slight increase to 58.5 cents/mi. For business use, a 2.5-cent increase, and 18 cents/mi. for medical and qualified active service members, a 2-cent increase.

VI. Chief of Program Services Report

Dr. Jesse Weller shared the report highlighting that Shelly Briggs was the new Risk Assessment Supervisor. In order to implement the new offerings, the Camp, Social and Non-medical therapies outreach plan and associated service standards had been

revised and were pending Board approval to be submitted to DDS for expedited review. These were to be highlighted during a February 2022 Town Hall. Requests were being reviewed and approved individually pending the framework.

The Provisional Eligibility Program via the Lanterman Act program provided 3–4-year-old children access to needed services without an eligibility diagnosis. They require reassessment by the 5th birthday. Cathy Robinson-Learn was the provisional eligibility unit supervisor.

The Vaccine hotline continued to provide support to home-bound consumers. Self-determination had 80 participants at the start of the year. Claudia Wegner had started a monthly support group for family members of consumers in the self-determination program. Allocations for self-determination had been provided via executed contracts to various SDP vendors for implementation, coaching and resource fairs.

Monthly support groups were reviewed with specific times and locations.

VII. Community Services Director’s Report

Evelyn McOmie shared EVV resources to which respite service providers, supportive living, personal assistance, and homemaker services need to align by January 1, 2022. Sign-ups were available via DDS website as of January 1st. Links to FAQs were posted in the chat. Regarding the Burnes Study (HMA), reform was currently occurring in the validation stage (4th role-out). Rates and ratios were being verified for impacted service codes including those that had been “collapsed”. Discussion included how the transitions created confusion as the old and new codes were paired up.

As other services were impacted, further information for service code rates and ratios would be sent in “News You Can Use” blasts and posted on the NLACRC website.

The Winter 2022 proposal period was to be published to NLACRC’s website on January 17th with a deadline for submissions on February 25th. Resource development was hosting an informational application conference regarding open proposal requirements. Times and links were posted on the website.

PEP (Provisional Eligibility Participation Program) designs, parameters and procedures would be sent out to vendors to engage EarlyStart 3-4 year-old consumers as appropriate. The links and information were posted in the chat.

New ARM rates were shared and would be reflected in the February Billing period. IRS mileage rate increases were shared.

Bi-annual compliance forms were due. The information was posted into the chat with a request to update the information. Evelyn walked through the steps to accomplish those updates and changes. In-home respite providers were reminded that evaluations were due. 69 services had no billing over the past two years, and if there was no-use, the accounts were to be closed pursuant to the two-year non-activity window.

Providers were instructed to follow holiday closures as in their program designs. NLACRC website had information, as posted in the chat, on service and transportation providers.

Quality assurance information was shared with further access encouraged via CCL. Special attention was given to Pin 21-52-ASC, legislation regarding adult and senior care facilities that required real-time, audio-visual communication technology be made available specifically for consumer use per AB665. Further, the legislation provided for exemptions to report Covid-19 outbreaks via AB654. The detailed information was in the chat.

VIII. Legislative Report

Michelle Heid posted a link to the written report in the chat and reviewed the legislative session committee with highlights for new legislative committee chairs, calendar and bills taking effect January 1st, housing, climate change, COVID-19 and health care. The budget surplus for the year start was \$31B.

Jim Fraizer resigned effective December 21, 2021. Capital Annex renovation to be completed in 2023, and legislative offices had moved to a swing space.

Fun Fact: The 800 lbs. Bronze Grizzly Bear purchased by Gov. Schwarzenegger was moved to the Swing Space. It was also known as “Bacteria Bear”. Do wash after touching it!

The Legislative calendar was shared. The Governor’s January Budget was to be released on the 10th of January. The bill introduction deadline was February 18th. Michelle Heid posted the overview of the 2021-22 Service plan, the DDS spending plan, and the rate reform five-year phase in schedule. The California Office of Emergency Services Office of Access and Functional Needs released guidance focused on greater opportunity and equity for future vaccine rollouts and similar

events. DDS rate adjustments slide decks were posted to the website. The DDS DS Task Force met on December 17th to summarize workgroup outcomes with information posted on their website. They are to meet monthly through July.

Electronic Visit Verification rollout details were shared. The Disability Thrive Initiative concluded in December, yet resources remained available. SSI Cost of Living Increase rose by 5.9% in December, and SSP grant increases are pending. CalTech detailed summary regarding the Home and Community-Based Settings Final Rule was shared. The Legislative Analyst's Office produced a MediCal and DDS report showing that increasing MediCal enrollment would increase State cost, but provided alternative recommendations.

Special Education Funding models, evaluation framework, and considerations were published on December 17th by LAL. Several bills had been proposed in January to modify funding flows to special education students. The California Citizen's Redistricting Commission report and maps were released. Seven new districts in the state had been recommended that cross previous boundaries. CMS granted DHCS approval of the Cal-Aim initiative to transform and strengthen MediCAL.

DDS released an animated film regarding the options for Early Start via YouTube. Disney Theme Parks updated their Disability Access Service Pass, which was available via the link. ARCA hosted a public webinar regarding employment goal resources. The recording is available from the December 9th presentation. The Office of Emergency Services released a toolkit and preparedness guide for persons with disabilities. The California Budget and Policy Center released a video and information on the budget process.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a version of the Back Better Plan with investments in HCBS in the amount of \$150B over ten years. The bill was in the Senate with hopes of a vote at the end of January. California's HCBS Spending Plan was approved by the Federal Government on 1/5/22.

IX. Committee Business

A. Revised Critical Calendar (Page14)

The Board has aligned the VAC member application deadline with the board member application deadline. VAC Member Recruitment Update

Requests for submission were sent and applications were received by December 15th. Three vacancies will be open for FY22-23, and 5 applications had been received. The Board will elect new VAC members in May.

B. System Industry Issues

1. CalOSHA Emergency Temporary Standards (Page 16)

Suad Bisogno shared how the standards would impact vendors including close-exposure quarantine times. Alona Yorkshire posted the link to those rules, which started 1/14/2022, and presented two possible exemption paths. Discussion included the purposes of the standards, the barriers to apply them to the vendor workforce, and possible recourse to allow services to continue. A key recourse involved fit testing at a cost of \$30/year/person and N95 maintenance costs.

Information is coming from CalOSHA, not via the Department of Public Health, so exemptions had not been provided as needed. It was noted, however, that those in greatest need end up not having assistance. **Action Items: Ruth Janka** to raise this unique impediment to NLACRC vendors on the ARCA agenda. **Reports from the VAC Priority Issue Work Groups**

A. Early Start (Dana Kalek)

Dana Kalek reported that the group last met in November 2021, and noted an increase in Early Start referrals. The work-group discussed disbanding the return to work meetings and focus on priority issues. The group was slated to meet next on January 20th to revisit goals.

B. School Age Services (Cal Enriquez)

Cal Enriquez, cenriquez@accreditednursing.com, shared that the group was to meet next Tuesday to discuss CalOSHA issues and respite. Individuals were invited to participate on the 11th of January and then the 1st Tuesday of every month thereafter at 9:30 am.

C. Ault Services (Suad Bisogno & Erica Bell)

Suad Bisogno reported that the workgroup met on January 3rd. The older adult aging specialist was asked to join in the next meeting. The group discussed the booster mandate, CalOSHA rulings, employment advancement for people with disabilities, and DOR / DDS service system opportunities.

Erica Beall recapped housing advocacy and legislative tools to bring newer members up-to-date on how to accomplish the outcomes desired.

Suad invited any interested in assisting the Adult VAC group to email her at Suad@irioc.or.

D. Legislative Issues and Advocacy (Sharoll Jackson)

Sharoll Jackson spoke of the staffing shortages and rate changes between self-determination and other resources. The key needs were for vendors to continue communicate with the Regional Center and for the Regional Center to provide for as much flexibility as possible to mitigate impacts and increase staffing options.

X. Agenda Items for the Next Board Meeting

A. Minutes of the January 6th Meeting

XI. Announcements / Information Items

A. Next Meeting: Thursday, February 3rd, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

Erica Beall opined the possibility of triggering cost adjustments via Title 17 Section 57920 of Title 17, California Code of Regulations regarding unanticipated rate adjustments for DDS set-rates (the regulation does not apply to negotiated rates). Action: Ruth Janka to research.

XII. Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted, Seth Tanner, Minute Services and revised by Cheryl Blizin