

Alta California Regional Center
Provider Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, March 14, 2024
Minutes

Present:

Lindsey Dyba, Futures Explored,
Inc., Chair
Garrett Broadbent, Creative
Living Options, Co-Chair &
Design. Dir.
James Astorga, F&A Astorga
Care Home
Janet Brandon, A.I.M. &
Associates
Eric Ciampa, UCP of Sacramento
Andrea Croom, INALLIANCE
Bonnie Douglas, Turning Point
Jacquie Foss, STEP
Kate Halecky, Southside
Unlimited
Joe Jaquez, EGACTION
Christa McClure, Tri-County
Respite Care Service
Michelle Ramirez, On My Own
Laleh Sharpe, Maxim Healthcare
Services
Yvonne Soto, DDSO
Carole Watilo, Progressive
Employment

Jessica Knuth
Myra Montejano
Amy Parkin
Vicki Phillips
Michelle Ramirez (CBEM)
Jen Roney
Rennie Saltzman
Jasmine Vollenweider

Staff:

Lori Banales, Executive Director
Iqbal Ahmad, Chief Operating
Officer
Jennifer Bloom, Director of Client
Services
Tracy Brown, Associate Client
Services Director
John Decker, Director of Community
Services
Michelle Duchene, Community
Services & Supports Manager
Jordan Eller, Specialized Services
Manager
Camelia Houston, Director of Intake &
Clinical Services
Mechelle Johnson, Director of Client
Services
Helen Neri, Community
Services & Supports Manager
Rhonda Phillips, Housing Specialist
Jason Scantlebury, LEAD Community
Services Specialist
Carly Shearer, Client Employment
Specialist
Johnny Xiong, Associate Client
Services Director
Lisa West, Executive Secretary

Absent: (* excused)

Antonio Ranit, Antelope Hills
Manor

Visitors

Taylor Berry
Tim DeBack
Maureen Fitzgerald
Angel Garcia
Stephanie Gordon
Daniella Gutierrez
Braydon Holtzinger
ShoaAxum Johnson

The Provider Advisory Committee (PAC) met on Thursday, March 14, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. to discuss: 1) Executive Director's Report; 2) Hashtag Contest; 3) Service Needs Discussion; 4) ACRC Vendor Forum Representative Updates; 5) System Reform and Legislative Updates; 6) PAC Committee Reports; and 7) Announcements/Comments. All present provided self-introductions.

Without objection, Lindsey Dyba made the motion to approve the Provider Advisory Committee meeting minutes of February 8, 2024, as submitted.

1. ***Executive Director's Report***

- Mr. Decker provided a brief overview of the Workforce Initiative Projects that ACRC is involved in.
 - Direct Support Professional (DSP) Training Stipend – service providers have taken advantage of this amazing opportunity for their staff. ACRC has the most participants statewide.
 - Early Intervention Training Reimbursement – from January 30, 2023 through November 15, 2024, Early Start providers may be reimbursed for trainings funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021.
 - Implicit Bias Training Compensation – this training applies to regional center contractors/vendors who are involved in eligibility determinations for regional center services.
 - Coordinated Family Supports Implementation Incentive – currently, ACRC has three fully vendored providers, an additional one in the final stages of vendorization, and another has submitted a letter of interest.
 - Bi-/Multi-Lingual Pay Differential – this program provides a differential to DSPs who can communicate in a language or medium, other than English, as part of their regular job duties.
- Ms. Banales shared that the DSP Collaborative is still going strong. Leinani Walter is the new Executive Director of Valley Mountain Regional Center (VMRC), and Tony Anderson, with the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA), and Ms. Banales had the opportunity to meet with her last week. Mr. Anderson will continue to facilitate this opportunity, and a workgroup will be fine tuning this project prior to it being opened up to every regional center across the state.
- Regional center's Annual Performance Contracts have changed from a calendar year document to a fiscal year (FY) document. The public policy measures are determined by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). ACRC is currently seeking public input to assist us in determining what initiatives and planned activities we want to include in our 2024 Performance Contract. In previous years, the PAC has been instrumental in providing valuable input. The deadline to submit input for the 2024 Performance Contract is May 8th. ACRC has an email address open year-round: performancecontractfeedback@altaregional.org.

- Ms. Banales noted that employment data is not plentiful throughout the state. She believes regional centers should focus on achieving good outcomes for clients served.
- She welcomes any ideas from this committee on how to engage the department to make this document more valuable.
- ACRC plans to host another meeting towards the end of the year to share the updated data for 2024 once we receive approval from DDS.
- The Senate Subcommittee 3 on Health and Human Services Hearing is scheduled for March 21st, beginning at 9:30 a.m. or upon adjournment.
 - Ms. Banales requested service providers to encourage clients/families to testify – it does make a difference and is impactful.
- The Assembly Subcommittee No. 2 on Human Services Hearing was an all-day event on February 28th. The space that was provided was not adequate for all of the individuals that attended the hearing. We had a fair number of individuals that shared positive experiences with their regional centers which countered the ongoing narrative.

2. **Hashtag Contest**

- Ms. Shearer shared that ACRC is holding a hashtag contest for our Employment Social Media Campaign. Hashtags are used in social media posts to draw interest to specific content. ACRC is planning to start using hashtags as we start posting employment opportunities.
 - The deadline for submissions is March 20th.
 - The Client Advisory Committee (CAC) will choose from the options that are received, and then the top favorites will go to Ms. Banales and ACRC's Executive Team for the final decision.

3. **Service Needs Discussion**

- Ms. Watilo attended a vendor orientation that ACRC held for new Service Coordinators (SCs). One of the service providers shared that they could not accept clients into their program if they needed assistance in the restroom while out in the community, and that those clients might be best served in a site-based program.
- Mr. Decker noted that there is a difference between licensed and non-licensed programs. The regional center is able to build-in support to assist individuals with significant support needs in the community. ACRC values the opportunity to offer a wide range of programs for clients/families to choose from.
 - There is movement with Community Care Licensing (CCL) regarding serving individuals with more significant needs. ACRC staff recently met with our local CCL and discussed administering EpiPens in non-licensed settings.
 - CCL needs to provide written guidance on any changes related to approved practices.

- A suggestion was made to have PAC members share with newer service providers how they have adapted to serve people with significant physical support needs over the years at upcoming vendor forums. Also, ACRC may want to consider identifying what is allowed and what is not in specific settings during the vendorization process.
- There are cost differences when serving individuals with higher needs. Fixing the rate study is key to all of this. It would be great to incentivize service providers. Ms. Watilo has heard DDS say that there are ways to layer funding, which would be a nightmare for service providers. Currently, when services are not tailored to the individual, additional support is brought in.
- Ms. Dyba requested, in tandem with ACRC and CCL, that Ms. Watilo, Ms. Halecky and Ms. Foss present at the August 21st Adult Day & Employment vendor forum the creative ways that they are serving individuals in the community. Mr. Decker added that he will invite CCL to the August 21st Adult Day and Employment vendor forum to present on what supports are allowed in site based and community-based settings. After further discussion, the decision was made to table a presentation from Ms. Watilo, Ms. Halecky, and Ms. Foss until after the CCL presentation.
 - This could also be a future training topic.
 - Mr. Decker shared that ACRC, in partnership with Station MD, will soon be hosting service provider trainings that will share information as we move away from the medical model and expand opportunities of serving individuals in the community.
 - We will continue this discussion at the September PAC meeting.

4. **ACRC Vendor Forum Representative Updates**

- The Adult Day & Employment vendor forum was held on February 21st.
 - The group discussed:
 - Requirements for clients exiting a program.
 - 110 staffing support.
 - Productivity based wages – updates and progress.
 - Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) transition and how ACRC is conducting site visits.
 - The DSP Stipend Program.
- The Transportation vendor forum was held on February 28th.
 - The group was updated on the needs of individuals that were registered into the new broker's, R&D Transportation, system.
 - Shared ACRC's supports that are available.
 - ACRC has vendored an additional 11 transportation providers. Staff are working to expand the hours that transportation is offered to clients.

5. ***System Reform and Legislative Updates (ARCA, CDSA, CCLN, CRA, PAVE, DS Taskforce & Workgroups, & Statewide PAC Collaboration)***

- ARCA
 - The Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) is focusing on rate reform.
- CDSA
 - The California Disability Services Association (CDSA) held their Legislative Conference, and it was well attended. Members met with all of California's 120 representatives.
 - Assemblymember Nguyen has had 32 legislative members sign onto her bipartisan letter requesting that the service provider rate increase continue, as slated to begin on July 1, 2024, and not be delayed.
- CCLN
 - California Community Living Network's (CCLN's) Annual Leadership Conference 2024, "Protect the Progress" will be held on April 25th & 26th in San Diego.
 - California Health & Human Services' (CHHS's) first roundtable will be held at this conference.
 - There are five tech breakout sessions; DDS will be in attendance for these.
 - Members met with legislators prior to the February 28th Assembly Hearing to discuss SB 616 (paid sick days accrual and use). They also have had several conversations with DDS to develop a path forward when a staff member exceeds 60 hours, so that providers do not leave themselves open to lawsuits.
 - Assemblymember Nguyen will be reading a resolution on March 21st, recognizing the month of March 2024 as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month; Ms. Banales will be attending.
 - If you cannot attend the March 21st Senate Hearing in the swing space, Ms. Foss encourages service providers to send in their letters of support for the "Don't Delay" movement.
- CRA
 - The California Respite Association (CRA) will be at the Capitol on March 21st.
 - As Mr. Ciampa has mentioned in previous meetings, respite wages are below the state's minimum wage. Jim Knight, with DDS, stated that they are committed to fixing the rate model by July 1st.
- PAVE
 - Dr. Julie Beadle-Brown gave a presentation on outcomes in other states at their last meeting.

- DS Taskforce & Workgroups
 - The Employment Workgroup met and discussed creating customized employment specialized positions. They have established service descriptions; rates will be shared soon. The group continues to advocate for a holistic look at employment services (navigator and career pathways).
 - The Transportation Workgroup is scheduled to meet next week.
 - As a PAC, part of our task is to provide information to ACRC's Board of Directors. We need to make sure that PAC members participate in these workgroups.
- Statewide PAC Collaboration
 - Mr. Broadbent noted that for the past two months, this group brought together members from all 21 regional center PACs to discuss and act on specific issues. In the weeks after the February PAC meeting, the group was notified that some regional centers believe that the PACs do not have regulatory authority to act on issues without the Board's approval.
 - After much discussion, this group will be reconstituted as the "Service Provider Advocacy Coalition", which will provide more opportunities to discuss legislation and take action on issues.

6. **PAC Committee Reports**

- Vendor Relations Committee
 - The group met the day before the last PAC meeting.
 - They developed a short survey to see if the vendor community is utilizing the tools that this committee has already developed. The survey also requests additional topics to engage the regional center in.
- Legislative & Budget Committee
 - This PAC committee will be disbanded, and volunteers are encouraged to join the newly formulated "Capitol Coalition".
 - Please reach out to Ms. Foss, Ms. Dyba and/or Mr. Broadbent for more information.
- Communication & Outreach
 - Mr. Ciampa shared that this group meets on the first Tuesday of every month. Anyone is welcome to join.
 - They initially tested a Google group, and then a Facebook group to serve as a listserv for reaching out to the provider community – both posed issues with providers. Mr. Ciampa has made the decision to move this project to a platform that costs money – Gaggly Mail. He emailed information to PAC members this morning and is requesting that every PAC member register so that any issues can be dealt with prior to the April PAC meeting.

- Once this listserv is up and running, the PAC's Orientation PowerPoint will be updated, and information will also be posted on the PAC's page on ACRC's website.

7. **Announcements/Comments**

- Ms. Fitzgerald shared that ACRC's Annual Purchase of Services (POS) Data Meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday, March 19th, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. She encourages service providers to attend.
- Progressive Employment Concepts is hosting the next HCBS Compliance Workshops on April 18th & 25th. This virtual opportunity will focus on "Cultivating a New Direction; Implementation Strategies".
- DisCo at the Capitol: California Disability Community Advocacy Day inspires, educates, and empowers attendees to become advocates for Californians with disabilities and their families.
 - The DisCo Bash is scheduled for Tuesday, April 9th, from 6 to 9 p.m., at the Ultra Lounge in Sacramento.
 - An Advocacy Day is scheduled for Wednesday, April 10th, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., where those in attendance will hear from special guest speakers and meet with legislators in small groups.
- Mr. Decker shared that Michael Mercado, ACRC's new Deaf & Hard of Hearing Specialist, shared the "Sign of the Week" at last Friday's "Coffee with Community Services." He will also be invited to the next PAC meeting. Melinda Kimball, ACRC's second Deaf & Hard of Hearing Specialist, will be presenting another sign at this week's "Coffee."
- Please send any suggested agenda items to Ms. Dyba for the April meeting.

The next PAC meeting is scheduled on **Thursday, April 11, 2024**. The meeting adjourned at 11:26 a.m.

Lisa West
Executive Secretary

cc: ACRC Board of Directors
Lori Banales