

Alta California Regional Center  
Provider Advisory Committee Meeting  
Thursday, July 8, 2021  
Minutes

**Present:**

Eric Ciampa, UCP of  
Sacramento, Inc., Chair  
Michelle Ramirez, On My Own,  
Co-Chair & Design. Dir.  
James Astorga, F&A Astorga Care  
Home  
Janet Brandon, A.I.M. &  
Associates  
Garrett Broadbent, Meristem  
Andrea Croom, INALLIANCE  
Bonnie Douglas, Turning Point  
Lindsey Dyba, Futures Explored,  
Inc.  
Joe Hernandez, Aveanna  
Healthcare Services  
Joe Jaquez, EGACTION  
Jessica Knuth, Reach Adult  
Development  
Monique Migdol, Tahoe  
Community Integrations  
Robin Rhoades, Southside  
Unlimited  
Adam Ruggles, Medstar LLC  
Laleh Sharpe, Maxim Healthcare  
Services  
Yvonne Soto, DDSO  
Peter Stirling, Serenity Respite  
Services  
Paul Traglio, Kadiant  
Carole Watilo, Progressive  
Employment

**Absent:** (\* excused)

Jacquie Dillard-Foss\*, STEP  
Ed Doonan, LIFE, Inc.  
Sergio Pinto\*, BEST Consulting,  
Inc.  
Antonio Ranit, Antelope Hills  
Manor  
Joy Scott\*, Tri-County Caregiver  
Relief

**Visitors**

Nick Abela  
Jody Bailey  
Breeanne Burris  
Vikie Cole  
Terry Corey  
Susie Davies  
Maureen Fitzgerald  
Sonya Fox-Watson  
Kate Halecky  
Braydon Holtzinger  
Christine Ibia  
Jennifer Jones  
Susana Magana  
Christa McClure  
Michelle L. Ramirez  
Jen Roney  
Nicky Schluep  
Stan Schmidt  
Kathleen Short  
Hannah Thompson  
Jasmine Vollenweider  
Katherine Wallen

**Staff:**

Lori Banales, Executive Director  
Iqbal Ahmad, Chief Financial Officer  
John Decker, Director of Community  
Services  
Camelia Houston, Director of  
Intake & Clinical Services  
David Lopez, Client Advocate  
Jean Onesi, Manager of Community  
Services  
Olivia Procida, Manager of  
Community Services  
Lisa West, Executive Secretary

The Provider Advisory Committee (PAC) met at 9:34 a.m. on Thursday, July 8, 2021, by Webex/teleconference to discuss: 1) Board Update; 2) Executive Director's Report; 3) CA Budget and Legislative Update; 4) COVID-19 Impact Discussion; 5) Subcommittee Reports; and 6) Announcements/Comments. All present provided self-introductions.

**Without objection, Robin Rhoades made the motion to approve the Provider Advisory Committee meeting minutes of June 10, 2021 as submitted.**

## 1. **Board Update**

- Ms. Ramirez noted that the Board does not hold a Board meeting in June.
  - As announced, Lori Banales has been named ACRC's new Executive Director.
  - The Board has decided to start the Strategic Planning process.

### *\*New Executive Director Introduction*

- Ms. Banales shared her history with the ACRC and working with our clients. She began her career working for a service provider, working with adult clients. In 1994, Ms. Banales transitioned to ACRC as a Service Coordinator (SC) and had a caseload of clients, school age through the life span. She then became a Client Services Manager for a Children's Unit. In 2005, when ACRC was going through some tumultuous times, the two interim Executive Directors asked her to join the Executive Management Team (EMT) as the interim Director of Client Services, Children's Division. That position became permanent and after 14 years, she became the Director of Client Services and then was named ACRC's Deputy Executive Director.
- Her vision moving forward is to build strong community engagement, with input from clients, families, service providers, and other community partners.
- Because of increasing opportunities for clients that we serve, ACRC staff (from EMT to the Leadership Team to line staff), will have the joy of seeing dreams come true.
- One of Ms. Banales' priorities is to have a healthy relationship with the PAC and the entire service provider community. The job as a leader is to identify any roadblocks that might exist. She would like to facilitate a discussion at an upcoming PAC meeting so that we can start working to enhance our relationship.
  - Mr. Ciampa expressed appreciation for Ms. Banales' visionary thinking.
  - Ms. Ramirez believes that because Ms. Banales is data driven, like PAC members, she will be able to lean on service providers to answer any questions that she might have as she moves forward in her new position with ACRC.

- Ms. Banales reminded everyone that the PAC can create meaningful, planned activities around focused areas through collaboration with ACRC's Board of Directors with the assistance of Ms. Ramirez, as the PAC's representative to the Board. Once the Board establishes a Strategic Plan, we can work together for great outcomes.

## 2. **Executive Director's Report**

- Ms. Banales shared that we have seen an uptick in positive COVID-19 cases with one service provider. We have three clients in serious condition; all of which declined vaccinations. Seven direct service professionals (DSPs) from one Supported Living Services (SLS) provider have also tested positive. Ms. West reports to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) every COVID positive individual (clients, DSPs, and regional center staff). The pandemic is not over. We must safely engage with the clients that are served by ACRC. Staff are continually reaching out to clients/families to find out their vaccination status, so that this information can be entered into SANDIS; DDS is tracking this information.
  - Mr. Decker shared that ACRC has resources that we can tap into for in-person visits to client's homes so that they can get vaccinated.
  - Ms. Banales wants to make sure that every client has the opportunity to make an informed decision about vaccinations. We need to work together to stress the importance of them.
    - Service providers and regional center staff have had these conversations with clients.
- With all of the funding that is coming into our statewide service system, a suggestion was made for the group to once again engage in conversations about reinventing service options for our clients.
  - Ms. Banales has invited service providers to attend the Self-Determination Advisory Committee (SDAC) meetings so that they are a part of the discussions about new opportunities through the Self-Determination Program (SDP).
    - The SDAC/Service Provider Ad-Hoc Committee held their first meeting. Karen Mulvaney has agreed to Chair these meeting, with ACRC Associate Directors Jennifer Bloom and Tracy Brown assisting.
    - During the initial meeting, a suggestion was made for service providers to create a one-page description of what services they may be able to offer clients who are in SDP.
- There are two initiatives that ACRC launched prior to Ms. Banales applying to be ACRC's new Executive Director.
  - Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) – the Blueprint has been available, but the Roadmap is now out and is posted on ACRC's website. SCs will have meaningful discussions with

clients/families and ACRC will create trainings and Individual Program Plan (IPP) documents so that prevocational skills can be met in education. Clients can be ready for a job once they exit the school system.

- Coordinated Future Planning – ACRC is creating a taskforce that will be working on this issue. We have received several applications from clients, families, service providers, advocates, ACRC staff. Individuals will be notified today if they were chosen. The taskforce will share information with ACRC’s Board of Directors, the Client Advisory Committee (CAC) and the PAC. The group will be seeking ongoing public input. This is also posted on our agency’s website.

### 3. **CA Budget and Legislative Update (ARCA, CDSA, CCLN, DS Taskforce, Lanterman Coalition)**

- CA Budget
  - The State submitted their proposal for the American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding to the federal government, but then pulled it back and requested additional time.
    - Ms. Banales understood that the administration and the Department of Finance had great concern about utilizing one-time funding in this year’s budget. There still is an opportunity to submit to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) the state’s plan, but what we were envisioning (new housing opportunities, assistance with caseload ratios, etc.) will not be part of it.
  - SB 639 (Durazo) Minimum wages: persons with disabilities. This bill is out of committee and has moved to appropriations; it would appeal sub-minimum wages.
- Legislative Update
  - ARCA
    - Ms. Banales shared that the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) has been advocating for additional funding so that regional centers can hire SCs in order to meet the annual mandated caseload ratios. A lot like the rate study, we have to plan for quality outcomes to support an increase. Regional centers will be held accountable. Based upon ACRC’s case counts, we should receive 45 to 55 new SC positions by July 1, 2022.
    - For regional centers, the UFS system is quite antiquated, and the number of individuals that are required to keep this system up and running are dwindling. DDS is working to update this system.

- The restoration of social recreation and camp, which were suspended in 2009, are included in the budget. Ms. Banales noted that we need to be careful to ingrate not isolate people into these services moving forward.
- The budget also includes:
  - The sunset of the 8.2% increase for Early Start Specialized Therapeutic Services, Independent Living Services (ILS), and Infant Development Programs. These increases will remain in place.
  - Provisional eligibility for children three to four years of age. Instructions on how regional centers will uniformly implement these services are being developed.
  - The Performance Incentive Program – a few regional centers will be piloting this with input from community partners.
  - Each regional center will receive Participant Choice Specialists (number assigned to be determined), a deaf services coordinator (who will provide consultation to Planning Teams), and a Disaster Preparedness Specialist. DDS will receive a Disaster Preparedness position, as well, and this individual will link the teams across the state.
- CDSA
  - The budget agreement will include an ongoing \$1.2 billion to phase in the rate study provider increases over a five-year period. Ms. Dyba will send the implementation language out to the group.
    - When the rate study was first released, the cost to fully fund it was estimated at \$1.8 billion.
    - By April 1, 2022, DDS must implement a rate increase for service providers that equals one-quarter of the difference between current rates and the fully-funded rate model for each provider.
    - DDS will create a quality incentive program in order to improve client outcomes, service provider performance, and the quality of services. The proposed quality measures or benchmarks must be provided to the Legislature on or before April 1, 2022.
    - Effective July 1, 2025, it is the Legislature's expectation that rates be uniform within service categories and adjusted for geographic cost differentials, including differentials in wages, the cost of travel, and the cost of real estate.

- Ms. Dyba reminded everyone that there is always advocacy to be done – this is a powerful tool at our disposal.
- DS Taskforce
  - Meetings are scheduled for August.

#### 4. **COVID-19 Impact Discussion**

- If ACRC decides to draft a notice about the importance of vaccinations, service providers would like to use it to engage individuals that are still vaccine hesitant.
- ACRC staff are now referring interested individuals to various vaccine opportunities throughout our catchment area. Our agency has a special relationship with the UC Davis MIND Institute for vaccine clinics for individuals with autism.
- For those of you that are concerned about the uptick in positive cases, Mr. Decker encourages you to speak up. All of the guidance that has been released was based upon a certain prediction of where the state was heading during the current pandemic. We must encourage vaccinations. Sacramento County has the capability of assisting with in-home visits. ACRC staff can also support clients with options in outlying counties. At the end of the day, you, as service providers and business owners, need to make sure all of the security measures are being followed.
- It does appear that alternative services and remote services will be in place throughout the end of the calendar year. Service providers are encouraged to be creative, but understand that there are limitations that need to be considered. Start with having discussions at Planning Team Meetings if a client seems to be the perfect candidate for an innovative, pilot service. Service providers have an unprecedented opportunity with the alternative service model that is in place right now.

#### 5. **Subcommittee Reports**

- Vendor Relations
  - Ms. Dyba will be taking over as Chair of this subcommittee.
  - They met with ACRC staff and discussed how Community Services and service providers can work more collaboratively.
  - Mr. Decker created a “cheat sheet” to show what the role of the Community Specialist is.
  - The group is looking into possibly establishing a “Service Provider Agreement”.
- Proposed Committee Restructure
  - The Committee Chairs met and began discussing what the focus of the PAC’s Strategic Planning process should be.

- They also restructured the PAC's current subcommittees/workgroups. Mr. Ciampa shared their vision for standing committees.
  - Part of the expectation is that each member will attend at least one of the standing committee meetings. Each committee will have a list of goals to focus on.
  - Also, based upon their service code(s), the member will be expected to attend specific ACRC's Vendor Forums.

**Without objection, Janet Brandon, made the motion to approve the new proposed PAC committee structure as presented.**

- New PAC Application
  - Ms. Rhoades will be retiring on November 24, 2021. She is resigning as a PAC member, so that her Manager, Kate Halecky, can replace her at the table.
    - Ms. Halecky has met all of the requirements; the Outreach Committee is recommending her for membership.

**Without objection, Laleh Sharpe made the motion to invite Kate Halecky to the September PAC meeting so that her application for membership can be addressed.**

6. ***Announcements/Comments***

- No announcements or comments were shared.

The next PAC meeting is scheduled on **Thursday, September 9, 2021**, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. The meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

Lisa West  
Executive Secretary

cc: ACRC Board of Directors  
Lori Banales