

**Provider Vendor Advisory Committee
Regional Center of the East Bay
Meeting Minutes Friday, July 12, 2024**

Call to Order:

At 9:35 AM, Daniel Hogue welcomed attendees.

Minutes Approval and Discussion:

Daniel welcomed attendees and acknowledged that a quorum had not been met. He encouraged participants to input their names into the chat for attendance, especially for those looking to become voting members. Since a quorum was not met, the approval of the previous meeting's minutes was postponed.

Regional Center/State Report – Lisa Kleinbub, Executive Director

Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Updates

- Lisa began by emphasizing that the new fiscal year had started, and it was a year of some successes for the regional center system, despite it being a tough budget year. She encouraged the community to take pride in the victories they had achieved through advocacy and lobbying efforts, even though there were still challenges ahead.

Rate Increases

- **Advocacy Success:** One of the major victories highlighted was preventing the delay in rate increases. Initially, the Governor had proposed pushing rate increases out by one year, but thanks to the collective lobbying efforts, including demonstrations by service providers and community members, this delay was mitigated. Although the community had aimed for rate increases starting on July 1, 2024, they managed to secure the start of increases on January 1, 2025. This is a significant achievement, as in previous years, the legislature had been less responsive to the needs of the developmental services community.
- **Challenges:** Despite this victory, Lisa acknowledged that many providers still face struggles, particularly around staffing shortages and wage issues, and that while the rate increases offer some relief, there is still much work to do in ensuring that services are fully funded at sustainable rates.

Elimination of Family Fees

- Another key achievement was the elimination of family fees in the Governor's budget. Two specific fees were eliminated:
 - The Family Cost Participation (FCP) fee, which required families to contribute to the cost of respite and daycare services based on income.
 - The Annual Family Program Fee, which charged families not using respite or daycare services a flat fee.
- These fees had been in place since the early 2000s, and family advocacy groups had long lobbied for their elimination, arguing that they were a financial burden, especially on middle-income families in high-cost areas like the Bay Area. Lisa noted that the fees did not generate much revenue for the state but imposed significant hardships on families. Their elimination is a huge relief for families, particularly those using Early Start services, and was seen as a long-overdue victory for the community.

Provider Directory

- Lisa introduced the upcoming Provider Directory, which is tied to the state's Quality Incentive Program. This directory will require all service providers to register, with a deadline of October 1, 2024. She emphasized the importance of this directory for transparency and accountability, as some of the information in the directory will be public-facing, allowing families and individuals to easily search for service providers.
- Providers who do not register will be contacted by Protivity, a contracted agency, and failure to register could impact the ability to receive full rate increases, as the last 10% of the rate increase is tied to quality improvement measures, including directory participation.

Statewide IPP Standardization

- Another significant upcoming initiative is the statewide Individual Program Plan (IPP) standardization. Starting in the next six months, there will be a standardized IPP document used across all regional centers in California. This

will bring consistency to the IPP process, ensuring that all individuals served by the regional centers are subject to the same documentation and procedures, making the service system more uniform across the state.

- **Impact on Service Providers:** Lisa explained that this change might introduce some additional steps and paperwork for service providers and individuals during IPP meetings, particularly around signing forms, but it will ultimately streamline services and ensure that all individuals receive standardized care and attention.

Demographic Data Collection Enhancements

- Starting in January 2025, the state will begin collecting enhanced demographic data about individuals served by the regional centers. This will include detailed questions on race, ethnicity, language, gender identity (with an option to identify as non-binary), and sexual orientation. This new data collection effort is part of a broader initiative to improve services for underserved and underrepresented communities, ensuring that the state better understands the populations they serve.
- For example, the state will now be able to capture indigenous languages that were not previously recognized, such as the Mayan language, Mam, which many immigrants speak from Central America in the Bay Area. This detailed data will help the regional centers better serve diverse populations by addressing language and cultural needs more effectively.

PRESENTATION: RCEB Diversity & Equity Staff: Mariana Varela, Sue Mei, and Millicent Hogue

- Mariana introduced the team of Diversity & Equity specialists, providing an overview of their roles, such as supporting multilingual and culturally diverse communities. The team works on language access, cultural competency, and providing resources for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. They highlighted recent outreach efforts, such as the Deaf Plus conference, and ongoing training programs like cultural humility and implicit bias training for staff.
- Mariana discussed the team's composition and their work to improve access to services for diverse language and cultural groups.
- Sue Mei highlighted the challenges non-native speakers face and efforts to bridge the gap in service access for immigrant and diverse populations.
- Millie shared her work in Deaf and Hard of Hearing services, including collaborations with vendors to improve service provision and communication resources.

Regional Center Staff Reports – Steve Robinson

- **Service Provider Directory:** Steve provided an important update on the Service Provider Directory, an initiative being led by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). This directory is part of the Quality Incentive Program, which aims to enhance transparency and improve service quality across the state. All service providers will need to register for this directory, with an initial deadline of August 15, 2024, for providers to begin the process.
 - DDS has contracted with a company called Protivity to manage the registration process. Protivity representatives will be contacting providers through phone calls and emails to assist with registration. Steve emphasized that these are not telemarketing calls but official outreach from DDS.
 - Providers who have not registered by the deadline will receive follow-up calls and emails from Protivity. After that, regional centers will be responsible for ensuring that unregistered providers complete the process. Steve encouraged providers to respond to these calls and emails promptly, to avoid delays or potential complications.
 - Registration is tied to the rate increases promised by DDS, with the last 10% of the rate increase contingent upon providers completing the registration and meeting Quality Incentive Program requirements. Although the exact amount of the financial incentive was still unclear, Steve stressed that failing to register could lead to a loss of part of the rate increase for providers.
 - He mentioned that certain information in the directory would be public-facing, allowing families and individuals to search for service providers. However, not all provider information will be available to the public. For example, sensitive data like independent CPA audit reviews or rates will remain private.

- Providers should complete registration by October 1, 2024, as it is part of the quality improvement process that influences the full realization of the rate increases. More detailed guidance on this would be provided by DDS soon, and Steve assured the group that RCEB would distribute this information as soon as it was available.
- **Rate Implementation**
 - Steve addressed the postponement of the rate implementation to January 1, 2025, which, although delayed from the community's goal of July 1, 2024, was still seen as a positive development. He acknowledged providers' continued challenges, particularly in day programs and other service areas, as they transition to the new rate structures.
 - There will be changes to the service codes that impact how programs like day services (such as Day Programs and Specialized Therapeutic Services) are billed. Steve mentioned that DDS is still developing the crosswalk to transition old service codes to new ones under the rate implementation. This information is crucial for providers, and while the details were not yet available, RCEB would notify providers as soon as DDS issues clear guidance.
 - Steve recognized the importance of this transition and encouraged providers to remain patient, acknowledging the complexity of the work involved.
- **DSP (Direct Support Professional) Stipends**
 - Steve discussed the DSP Stipend Program, which provides financial stipends for direct support professionals who have completed certain courses. The original deadline for submitting provider agreement forms was June 30, 2024. However, Steve announced that this deadline had been extended to July 31, 2024, allowing more time for providers to submit the necessary paperwork.
 - Providers now have until the end of September 2024 to bill for these stipends. This extension allows those who submitted their forms late in June to still receive the stipends.
 - Steve explained that once RCEB signs the agreement form, providers should receive a confirmation copy through DocuSign.
 - A provider asked about the DSP stipend extension and whether new hires could take the classes and be eligible for the stipend. Steve clarified that new hires would not be eligible, as all eligible DSP staff must have completed their courses by June 30. The classes had to be completed by June 30, 2024.
- **Community Resource Development Plan (CRDP) Survey**
 - Steve introduced the Community Resource Development Plan (CRDP) Survey, which RCEB uses to gather input from the community, service providers, families, and case managers on startup funding needs for new or specialized projects. The information collected from this survey is critical for determining what resources and services are most needed in the community, which RCEB then uses to submit funding requests to DDS.
 - Steve announced that the survey was posted on the RCEB website and that an email would soon be sent to PVAC members and service providers, encouraging them to complete it. He urged providers to return their responses as soon as possible, as DDS had set an initial deadline of August 12, 2024, for the submission of the plan.
 - Steve acknowledged that this deadline was tight and might not be realistic, so RCEB was considering asking for an extension. The CRDP survey is a crucial step in identifying which projects will receive DDS startup funding, and input from the community is essential for prioritizing these requests.
- **Employment Program Payments**
 - Steve mentioned the Quality Incentive Program related to employment capacity incentives. He explained that DDS is still working on validating these incentives and anticipated sending a list of eligible providers to the regional centers in the coming weeks. Once validation is complete, payments will be processed.
- **Questions from Providers:** Craig Rose from VistAbility inquired about coordinated career pathway services and the reporting requirements associated with quarterly metrics. Steve acknowledged that no updates had been provided from DDS on this topic and suggested they discuss it further offline.
- Priscilla Gomez, RCEB Transportation Specialist, raised concerns about transportation services, specifically air conditioning issues in the vehicles used to transport clients. Given the ongoing heatwave, she requested that providers notify her if they noticed any issues with air conditioning so that bus companies could address the

problem promptly. The goal was to ensure that vehicles with non-working AC units could be swapped out for fully operational ones before the afternoon shifts.

- Priscilla also brought up health and safety waivers, urging providers to include specific details when requesting these waivers, especially regarding any potential threats to a client's health and safety. This would allow RCEB staff to better support providers in obtaining the necessary waivers to ensure continued care for clients.

Regional Center Board Report

- **Provider Referral System:** Dan discussed the ongoing development of a new Provider Referral System, which is expected to transform the way service referrals are handled for Supported Living Services (SLS) and Independent Living Services (ILS).
 - This new system will eventually allow case managers or individuals themselves to input their information and service needs into the system. Providers who meet the qualifications and service needs will be contacted through blind referrals. This change will streamline the process by taking the responsibility of finding providers out of the case managers' hands, ensuring that qualified providers are connected with individuals more efficiently.
 - The system is being designed with input from the Service Provider Equity Subcommittee, ensuring that the needs of underrepresented groups are considered in the development of the referral system.
- **Contract Approvals:** Several contracts were approved at the most recent RCEB Board meeting including:
 - Contracts were approved for specialized transportation services, including those provided by EDA 12.
 - Twelve Supported Living Service provider renewals were approved, along with two new SLS providers: Sweet River and Revive.
 - Contracts for 875 transportation services (contracted transportation providers) and 880 transportation services (transportation add-ons for day programs) were approved. However, one transportation provider's contract was shortened to four months due to concerns, and further information is being requested before extending the contract further.
 - A \$1.5 million contract was approved for Saha Thornton Avenue to create seven one-bedroom apartments, two two-bedroom apartments, and one three-bedroom apartment for low or very-low-income individuals, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).
 - Another \$1.5 million contract was awarded to Eden Housing to develop ten one-bedroom apartments dedicated to low-income seniors aged 62 or older, with the housing specifically for individuals with IDD.
- **Strategic Plan Progress Update:** Dan provided a brief update on the RCEB Strategic Plan, noting that the RCEB Board was diligently working to finalize the vision and mission statements. The strategic plan is nearing completion, with final discussions planned for August 2024. Once completed, the updated strategic plan will guide the organization's future actions and initiatives.
- **Executive Director Search:** Dan also provided an update on the Executive Director (ED) search, informing attendees that the Executive Director Search Committee is in the process of reviewing potential search firms to assist with the hiring process.
 - **Community Involvement:** He reassured the PVAC attendees that the search process would include input from the broader community. He emphasized that ensuring different voices within the community are heard during the selection process is a consideration and a priority. The involvement of various community members will help shape the direction and ensure that the next Executive Director is well-aligned with RCEB's values and needs.
 - **Service Provider Equity Subcommittee Recommendations:** Dan mentioned that the Service Provider Equity Subcommittee recommended the creation of a third-party organization to handle provider complaints and concerns. This recommendation was discussed with Lisa Kleinbub, and they are actively working on developing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for this initiative.
 - The RFP process will be presented to the Equity Subcommittee later in July 2024, during their next meeting.
- **Michael Pereira** asked whether the **875 transportation provider contracts** were renewals of existing agreements or if there were new transportation providers approved. Dan clarified that **all 875 contracts** were renewals of existing agreements, with no new transportation providers being added at this time.

State Council on Developmental Disabilities Report—Sheriden Nicholau

No report.

Alameda County Developmental Disabilities Council – Ben Chen

- Ben started by noting that the DD Council's new program year had just begun, as the council operates on the fiscal year (July to June). The council had recently held its annual planning meeting, which helped set the priorities for the year ahead.
- He thanked those who had participated in the planning meeting and the facilitators who helped organize it, ensuring that the council was prepared for the new fiscal year.
- Ben announced the council's new leadership for the upcoming year:
 - Geneva had been appointed as the new President of the Alameda County DD Council.
 - Rachel Longin was appointed as the Vice President.
 - The council also welcomed Janine Rubino Brum as a new board member, adding new energy and perspectives to the leadership team.
- Ben highlighted that the council still had four vacancies on the board. He encouraged service providers, family members, and self-advocates to consider applying for these positions.
 - To qualify for a board position, individuals must live, work, or provide/receive services in Alameda County. Ben invited interested parties to contact him via email, which he shared with attendees through the meeting chat.
- **Community Events**
 - Ben promoted an upcoming event called Safe Kids Day, scheduled for Saturday, July 15, 2024, at the Oakland Arena.
 - Free Shoes and Booster Seats: This event aimed to provide free shoes for students (K-12) and booster seats for low-income families. The event also featured other family-oriented activities and resources.
 - While the booster seat distribution required pre-registration, Ben encouraged attendance as there would be additional activities and resources for families, even if the booster seat registration had filled up.
- The Alameda County DD Council would not hold a regular meeting in August, giving members a brief summer break before reconvening in the fall.
- Ben reminded everyone that the DD Council's board meetings are always open to the public, and they typically include a presentation on a topic relevant to the IDD community. He encouraged both providers and family members to attend the meetings, listen to presentations, and offer comments or feedback. This open format helps the council remain connected to community needs and concerns.

Contra Costa County Developmental Disabilities Council – Vi Ibarra

No report.

East Bay Legislative Coalition Report – Will Sanford

No report.

Service Provider Equity Subcommittee Report – Dan Hogue

Report given during RCEB Board update.

Day Providers Subcommittee Report – Mike Pereira

No report.

HireAble Subcommittee Report – Donna Feingold

No report.

PVAC Membership Report – Jamie Renton

- Due to the lack of quorum, the vote on new members was postponed. Specifically, the committee had planned to vote on bringing in Teresa Nold as a member during this meeting. Unfortunately, without quorum, this vote could not take place, and they planned to revisit the vote at a future meeting, most likely September’s meeting, after the August break. Jamie and Dan expressed their hope that more members would attend future meetings to ensure quorum and allow for the necessary votes to take place.
- Jamie reminded participants that attending at least three PVAC meetings is a requirement before being considered for membership. She encouraged participants to ensure their names were entered into the meeting’s chat for proper attendance tracking. This is important for individuals who are looking to become voting members in the future.

Public Comment

- Attendee “Raquel” asked for clarification on the Language Line service, which was discussed during the presentation earlier in the meeting. This service allows staff to access language interpretation through phone or video for families and individuals who speak languages not commonly covered by RCEB staff, such as Portuguese or Russian.
 - The Diversity & Equity team confirmed that the Language Line is an accessible resource for all staff to use during virtual or phone meetings with non-English speakers, ensuring better communication with diverse communities. This clarification highlighted the importance of language access as part of the RCEB’s commitment to diversity and equity.
- Dan Hogue made a brief mention, following earlier discussions, that the Service Provider Equity Subcommittee is available for collaboration. He invited those who had commented earlier to engage with the subcommittee to help further equity goals for providers, especially those serving diverse communities.
- Dan announced that the next PVAC meeting will be on September 13, 2024, after taking a summer break in August.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:10 AM.

Respectfully submitted for review by Geneva Carlos-Valentino, Co-Chair