

**Provider Vendor Advisory Committee
Regional Center of the East Bay
Meeting Minutes Friday, November 8, 2024**

Call to Order:

At 9:35 AM, Geneva Carlos-Valentino welcomed attendees.

Minutes Approval and Discussion:

Geneva mentioned that PVAC did not approve the meeting minutes for September during the October 2024 meeting, so September 13th, 2024, and October 11th, 2024 meeting minutes were each approved by voting members.

Regional Center/State Report – Lisa Kleinbub, Executive Director

Lisa's shared the following with attendees:

- Starting in January 2025, all regional centers will be using the same IPP (Individual Program Plan) template and providing training to staff and the community on the changes.
- The regional center is preparing for a Medicaid waiver audit by the Department of Health Services and Department of Developmental Services in February 2025. They may be requesting updated paperwork from providers whose clients or programs are being audited.
- The state is working on a Master Plan for Developmental Services, with committees meeting to develop a draft proposal by March 2025. This plan aims to increase federal reimbursement and ensure robust and sustainable services.
- Providers need to verify their information in the service directory by November 29th, 2024 in order to receive the 10% quality incentive payment in January 2025. Lisa acknowledged the issues providers are facing with the verification process and encouraged them to document their experiences and email the provider directory email to help the regional center follow up with DDS.

Action Item I: Membership Vote

Geneva Carlos-Valentino introduced Sarah Trail, Administrator for Connected Living residential program, as someone who had expressed interest in joining PVAC as a voting member. She asked Sarah to provide some background on herself and her areas of interest.

- After Sarah's introduction, Geneva called for a motion to approve Sarah Trail as a new voting member. Lindsay made the motion, and Anthony seconded it.
- With the majority of voting members approving, Sarah Trail was welcomed as the newest voting member of PVAC.
- Geneva also mentioned that Jamie Renton had left her position, so there were now additional open positions on the membership roster that they would be looking to fill, particularly in the categories of transportation, children/infant services, and support services.

Regional Center Staff Reports – Steve Robinson

Steve shared the following with attendees:

- Service Provider Directory:
 - Providers need to register in the service provider directory by November 29, 2024 to be eligible for incentive payments.
 - There have been issues with providers not receiving verification emails or the emails going to the wrong people. Steve acknowledged these issues and advised providers to document their experiences and email the provider directory email to help the regional center follow up with DDS.
- Rate Implementation:
 - Regional centers need to update rates under current service codes by January 1, 2025.
 - By March 31, 2025, regional centers need to input new service codes and rates based on the alignment of each provider's services with the rate reform.
 - There is an exemption process for providers whose services do not align with the new service codes. This exemption needs to be filed by January 1, 2025.
 - Certain service codes will be discontinued as of March 31, 2025, and providers will need to transition to the new service codes by that date.
 - Chelsea Kalbaugh provided additional clarity on the service code changes and timeline.
 - For the service codes that will require an exemption, providers need to request the exemption by December 31, 2024. The regional center doesn't have the exemption form from DDS yet, but they will

send it out once available. Providers can continue using those service codes during the exemption approval process.

- For the service codes that are being discontinued, providers can continue using those codes until March 31, 2025, and then they will need to transition to the new service codes.
- Any client who has an IPP or IFSP using one of the discontinued service codes will need to have those updated by December 31, 2025.
- Chelsea also clarified the benchmark rates that are posted on the DDS website, explaining that those are not the actual rates providers will receive, but rather used to calculate the 50% rate increase that providers are getting in January 2025."

Michael Minton shared with attendees:

- HCBS Online Platform:
 - The regional center is creating an online platform to teach DSPs about the HCBS rules and regulations.
 - EBI is the contractor creating this platform, and they are seeking feedback from providers on HCBS certification struggles to help shape the content.
- Upcoming Trainings:
 - There is one more family training on the HCBS final rule scheduled for December 4th.
 - The regional center will be deciding on training dates for January through March 2025 in December.
 - Peer-to-peer trainings are ongoing, and the regional center is appreciative of providers opening their doors for these sessions.
 - The regional center is open to developing additional trainings for providers on specific issues or challenges they are facing.

Regional Center Board Report—Geneva Carlos-Valentino

Geneva reported to attendees:

- The RCEB Board of Directors met on October 28th, 2024.
- There were public comments at the beginning of the meeting from union members regarding high caseloads and lack of support for regional center staff. They noted that caseloads were unsustainable and negatively impacting employees.
- The Board reviewed the fiscal year 2023-2024 audit report with the auditors. This was scheduled to be presented to the Budget and Finance Committee this month.
- The regional center received an allocation of \$93 million for participant services in fiscal year 2024-2025, which is a 19% increase from the previous year. This includes funds for minimum wage adjustments and service provider rate reforms.
- The operations budget saw an 86 million increase, primarily for staffing and operational expenses.
 - Health benefit expenses increased by 31% due to rising insurance costs and an expanded workforce.
 - General liability insurance also rose by 30%.
- There were policy and legislative updates, including the regional center's commitment to hiring 150 additional positions to help reduce caseloads and reach state-mandated ratios.
- The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee reported on progress made, but members expressed a desire for more concrete policy updates and consistent application across the organization.
- The Strategic Planning Committee reviewed a draft of the regional center's strategic plan, and the board was encouraged to provide feedback, especially on performance metrics and success indicators.

State Council on Developmental Disabilities Report—Sheriden Nicholau

- Sheraden mentioned that Governor Newsom had convened a special session of the California legislature starting on December 2nd.
 - This special session will focus on safeguarding California values and fundamental rights in the face of the incoming federal administration.
 - The Attorney General and Governor have outlined urgent priorities to be defended during this special legislative session, including protecting civil rights, reproductive freedoms, climate action, and immigrant families.
- Sheraden provided upcoming meeting dates for the State Council:
 - The next State Council Self-Advocates Advisory Committee meeting is on November 18th at 1:30pm via Zoom.
 - The next full State Council meeting is on November 19th at 10:30am via Zoom.
 - The next State Council Bay Area Regional Advisory Committee meeting is on December 4th at 5:30pm in Concord.

- Sheraden mentioned that they have struggled to find accessible meeting locations in Contra Costa County in the evenings, and thanked the regional center for providing the meeting space in Concord.
- Sheraden invited anyone with accessible meeting spaces that could host the State Council Bay Area Regional Advisory Committee to reach out.
- Lastly, Sheraden shared that the Statewide Self-Advocacy Network member from the Bay Area is still looking for a paid part-time facilitator to support their leadership responsibilities. Sheraden encouraged interested parties to let them know.

Alameda County Developmental Disabilities Council – Ben Chen

No report.

Contra Costa County Developmental Disabilities Council – Vi Ibarra

No report.

East Bay Legislative Coalition Report – Mike Pereira

Mike Pereira stepped in for Will Sanford to provide the legislative update on behalf of EBLC (East Bay Legislative Coalition):

- Mike provided an overview of the recent federal and state elections. He noted that it appears the Republican party will have control of both houses of the U.S. Congress, though the final results are still being certified.
- At the state level, Mike discussed some key local races that were of interest to the EBLC, including:
 - The state senate seat for District 7, which looks to be won by Mayor Jesse Arreguin
 - The state senate seat for District 9, which Tim Grayson is the front runner to hold
 - The assembly seat for District 15, where Anna Marie Fuentes appears to be the winner
- Mike shared that the EBLC held four separate events in October, including two reverse town halls and two candidate forums focused on these local legislative races. They had good community turnout and were able to engage with 8 out of 9 elected offices and legislative aides.
- Looking ahead, the EBLC is planning their annual legislative town hall/breakfast event, which is scheduled for Friday, January 31st from 10-11:30am. They are still determining if this will be a virtual or in-person event.
- Mike noted that California is still projected to have a budget revenue shortfall this year, so the EBLC will be closely watching the Governor's proposed budget in January and engaging in related advocacy efforts.

Service Provider Equity Subcommittee Report – Marcie Hodge

- The Service Provider Equity Subcommittee meets on the 4th Fridays of each month from 1:30pm to 3:00pm.
- In their last meeting, the subcommittee finalized the ombudsman language and Marcie met with Lisa to get those details finalized so they can get that information out soon.
- The subcommittee also takes in information related to challenges vendors face, whether with timely payments or getting different services for their clients.
- They are tracking a list of these challenges faced by vendors and consumers in order to help resolve the issues.
- Marcie provided her email in the chat and invited anyone interested in joining the equity steering committee to email her to be added to the listserv and get the meeting details.

Day Providers Subcommittee Report – Mike Pereira

- Mike acknowledged the uncertainty and issues that were discussed earlier regarding the provider directory, stating that these concerns are happening statewide with other providers as well.
- Mike shared that one of the main things the Day Program subcommittee has been discussing is the rollout of the provider directory and the frustration providers are facing, such as not being able to access the verification links.
- Mike suggested that it would be really beneficial for providers if they could receive some formal notification from DDS that they have met the quality incentive payment (QIP) standard, so they have that assurance.
- The subcommittee has also been discussing the conversion of service codes and the need for more clarity on the directives from DDS regarding that process.
- Mike reiterated the request made earlier for a dedicated presentation or discussion forum where providers can get more information and ask questions once the details on service code changes are available from DDS.
- Mike noted that the subcommittee covers issues beyond just day programs and encouraged anyone interested to participate in the weekly provider Zoom calls and troubleshoot sessions on Wednesdays at 2pm

HireAble Subcommittee Report – Donna Feingold

Donna mentioned that HireAble recently switched their structure, as was mentioned at the October 2024 meeting presentation.

- Last month, HireAble was able to provide a no-cost community training on the CalABLE program.
 - Donna had hoped to do another training before the end of the year on SSI and how it impacts SSI, SSDI and other public benefits, but due to the limited time left in the year, she plans to schedule that for early January instead.
- HireAble has started their subscription services, and they now have 20 members. Their first training under the subscription model was in October on career navigation pathways.
 - Upcoming subscription service trainings will cover topics like job coaching and best practices, as well as rolling out some of their other new services.

PVAC Membership Report – Geneva Carlos-Valentino

- Geneva noted that PVAC does not currently have a Secretary
- Geneva explained that they had lost some voting members recently, as Jamie Renton was no longer with her organization, and Eddie Esquiviz had left his position as well.
- Geneva stated PVAC currently has open positions in the categories of transportation, children/infant services, and support services that need to be filled.
- Geneva also noted that Jamie Renton had been in contact with some other potential new members, and Geneva would be reaching out to them as well for consideration.

Public Comment

None made.

Meeting adjourned at 11:07 am.

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