

**Report on Public Meetings
Regarding Disparity in the Purchase of Services**

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Saturday, March 18, 2017

Monday, March 20, 2017

Wednesday, March 22, 2017

Westside Regional Center (WRC) held four (4) public meetings for our community to:

- Learn about the statistical disparity in the purchase of services (POS) during Fiscal Year 2015-2016;
- Help identify barriers that might prevent members of the community from gaining access to services;
- Provide strategies to reduce or eliminate these barriers and help improve access to services;
- Learn about Westside’s Fiscal Year 16-17 Equity Plan to promote equity and reduce POS disparities;
- Gather feedback from the community on needed children and adult services for the development of Request for Proposals (RFPs).

Bilingual (English and Spanish) notices of the Public Meetings were posted on the WRC website on February 14, 2017 and were also sent to service providers, clients, and families. At every public meeting, materials were provided in both English and Spanish, with simultaneous translation of the presentation into Spanish by professional interpreters. Limited childcare was also available on the 15th, 18th, and 22nd meeting dates, given advanced notice. Or, to attend a meeting, parents were able to request up to 4 hours of additional respite hours via their service coordinators.

All four public meetings discussed disparity data on caseload by ethnicity, ethnicity by age, residence type by ethnicity, authorized expenditures by ethnicity by age, clients living at home per capita authorized services, services utilized by ethnicity, and clients with No POS services by ethnicity.

Carmine Manicone, WRC Executive Director, reviewed and explained the statistics that were provided by DDS concerning Annual Purchase of Services Expenditures for Fiscal Year 2015-2016. Emphasis was placed on POS disparities among the African American and Hispanic population when compared to their White counterparts. Carmine presented to the community the barriers that were identified by various stakeholders at two public forums, on August 10, 2016 and August 16, 2016. These were barriers identified as preventing families from receiving services. The community stakeholders also provided input on strategies to reduce these barriers that tied in with Westside’s proposal to promote equity and reduce POS disparities.

Summaries of all public meetings are as follows:

Meeting #1

The first public meeting was held on **Wednesday, March 15, 2017** at 6:00PM in the Danneker Boardroom at 5901 Green Valley Circle. Forty-three people were in attendance, consisting of:

- 5 parents/family members
- 21 WRC staff
- 8 clients
- 4 board members
- 2 client facilitators
- 1 Disability Rights of California staff
- 7 community members

After the presentation, the meeting was then opened for comment/questions. Comments were provided in both English and Spanish displayed on an easel for the audience to review.

WRC staff also answered questions and addressed concerns for individual family members.

The following questions and comments were received:

Questions from the community:

- What happens to the money not used that is authorized?
 - The state gives us an annual budget for Purchase of Service (POS). Typically, WRC has not had a surplus of POS dollars at the end of our fiscal year.
- How can parents track/know that service coordinators are receiving trainings identified in the plan?
 - Part of our disparity plan is to develop a dashboard that we will embed onto our WRC website so that the community can track the progress of our goals.

Community comment on potential barriers:

- Mentioned that there are barriers due to:
 - lack of information
 - A community stakeholder suggested holding public forums as an opportunity to provide information and to discuss concerns. Westside is currently holding monthly Equity Task Force meetings that are open to the public and always provide an opportunity for public comment.
 - lack of support
 - parents are interested but service coordinators/counselors are not supporting them [parents] in accessing services
 - a need for equal support from all service coordinators who will listen to their needs and be involved in wanting to help their family
 - parents rely on other parents for help instead of their service coordinators
 - everyone needs to know the same information (WRC staff, Service Coordinators) as misinformation causes confusion

- the need for service coordinators to stay longer at house visits in order to build a relationship with their client and immediate family, not just an “all-business” attitude
 - A community stakeholder suggested reducing caseload size to assist in SC ability to communicate more with parents of clients and share resources

Question to the community:

- What are the services that are needed?
 - Public housing
 - Anonymous call line

Meeting #2:

The second public meeting was held on **Saturday, March 18, 2017** at 6:00PM in the Danneker Boardroom at 5901 Green Valley Circle. Twenty-five people were in attendance, consisting of:

- 12 parents/family members
- 3 WRC staff
- 2 clients
- 2 board members
- 1 Disability Rights of California staff
- 5 community members

After the presentation, the meeting was then opened for comment/questions. Comments were provided in both English and Spanish displayed on an easel for the audience to review.

WRC staff also answered questions and addressed concerns for individual family members. Several WRC Staff stressed the need for parents to inform their Service Coordinators or Program Managers about any problems that occur, immediately when it occurs. And for Service Coordinators to inform and encourage their families/clients to always speak up about anything and not fear retributions.

The following questions and comments were received:

Community comment on disparity data/proposal:

- Are we prepared to serve that paradigm shift in population?
- 100% of the community should be served, not just the African American and Hispanic population
- Parents want to remind people that the Black and Hispanic community want to keep their adult children home and that they shouldn't be punished for doing so but instead rewarded for doing so and saving money
- Request to upload the Disparity Proposal onto the WRC website
- Do all regional centers receive the same amount of POS dollars and accommodations?

- No, it based on the amount of clients RCs serve and their needs.
- Parent: “We want to be part of the solution.”

Community comment on potential barriers:

- Community member urged the need to make service coordinators accountable for 100% of families
- Community reinforced the need to provide families with as much information as possible
 - “We don’t know, what we don’t know”
 - Request for an Automatic Call System to alert parents of meetings, events, workshops, and trainings
- Community requested from WRC to schedule meetings and trainings that work with parents work schedules

Question regarding parent legal status:

- Regional Centers do not ask about or track the legal status of clients or families.

Question to the community:

- What are the services that are needed?
 - Weekend services from vendors and services in underserved and under resourced communities
 - Parents want stipends to choose who takes care of their own children
 - Parents want services to be in-home rather than at the community

Meeting #3:

The third public meeting was held on **Monday, March 20, 2017** at 10:00AM in the Danneker Boardroom at 5901 Green Valley Circle. Fifty-six people were in attendance, consisting of:

- 29 parents/family members
- 15 WRC staff
- 0 clients
- 3 board members
- 2 Disability Rights of California staff
- 7 community members

After the presentation, the meeting was then opened for comment/questions. Comments were provided in both English and Spanish displayed on an easel for the audience to review.

WRC staff also answered questions and addressed concerns for individual family members.

The following questions and comments were received:

Community comment on disparity data/proposal:

- Community request for these slides to be posted on the website
- Parent advocate stated that “Parents shouldn’t be penalized for keeping their children at home and saving the RC money but should be given the resources to further help their children at home.”
- Parents would like to be included in the planning and implementation process of the proposal
- In regards to the cultural competency training strategy, parents would like to educate the service coordinators on how to effectively communicate with them and how to work together as a team
- In regards to client/parent satisfaction surveys, they would like take a survey to provide WRC with feedback immediately after an IPP and another to see how old or new services are working out for them

Community comment on potential barriers:

- Parents stated a lack of communication between service coordinators and parents of clients concerning the appeal process and the services that Westside offers
 - Carmine responded: We have a list of services that Westside offers, according to age group, posted on our website and we have those lists printed out here today for everyone. He also reminded attendees that you can’t find all solutions simply by looking at a list; that services are based on assessed needs through the IPP process. He also suggested that, “Informed parents are powerful parents.”
- Parents stated that they feel service coordinators are not prepared enough to address their needs or have the confidence to answer their questions or calm their worries and suggested having more in-depth trainings for staff to address this issue
- Parents stated that they don’t speak up because they feel that they might burden staff with their questions or worries or burden them with learning about the appeal process. They are fearful of hurting their feelings with their disagreements and held a belief that their service coordinators should be “all-knowing.” After hearing so many “no’s” for request for services, they feel discouraged to continue seeking services.
- Parents requested for a protocol to alert families when SCs are out sick, on vacation, on leave, or even informing them of their changing schedule or availability.

Community comment on additional training/workshops:

- Parents would like additional workshops on Transitions, information on vendors and what to expect after receiving services, the process for gaining conservatorship of their child before they become a legal adult, how to prepare themselves for IEP meetings and how to request for an advocate to be there with them.

Question to the community:

- What are the services that are needed?
 - Social recreation programs during the winter and summer seasons

Meeting #4:

The fourth public meeting was held on **Wednesday, March 22, 2017** at 6:00PM in Mychal's Learning Place at 4901 W. Rosecrans Ave. Twenty-three people were in attendance, consisting of:

- 9 parents/family members
- 10 WRC staff
- 0 clients
- 1 board member
- 2 client facilitators
- 1 Disability Rights of California staff
- 1 State Council on Dev. Disabilities staff
- 1 community members

After the presentation, the meeting was then opened for comment/questions. Comments were provided in both English and Spanish displayed on an easel for the audience to review.

WRC staff also answered questions and addressed concerns for individual family members.

The following questions and comments were received:

Community comment on disparity data/proposal:

- A parent suggested partnering with churches to hold trainings, group meetings, and events. Have churches invite WRC into their community centers.
- Community outreach through ethnic media groups
- SCDD training and events. If you have 10 people who are interested, they will come to you.

Community questions for WRC:

- How do I get information on transition services? Who is expected to provide this information?
- How does RC reach out to families who are not accessing services?

Community comment on additional training/workshops:

- Parents suggested a workshop for parents on Adult clients rights: how information is shared with the family members without conservatorship
- Parents suggested professional development workshops for WRC Staff on understanding how families make decisions as well as a workshop to train service coordinators on services and how to share that information with their families/clients

Question to the community:

- What are the services that are needed?
 - Social Skills
 - Lack of social skills groups in Lawndale and Hawthorne areas.
 - Need for groups that can meet everyone's needs
 - Transportation to services



Final Public Comments:

Parents, community members, board members, and state council members thanked Carmine and WRC staff for being open to discuss difficult subjects, for holding multiple meetings, providing food and most of all, for stating that WRC recognizes that there are disparities and identifying those barriers in order to promote equity and increase access to services.

Strategies Used for More Effective Outreach

1. WRC held 4 public meetings—two mid-morning (10:00AM) at the WRC Office and LA Speech and Language Therapy Center (re-located meeting due to a sink hole incident) and two in the evening (6:00PM) at the WRC Office and Mychal’s Learning Place.
2. WRC held the Saturday event to attract more working families.
3. WRC posted the Notice of Public Meeting on the WRC website in both English and Spanish on February 14, 2017 to provide early notice.
4. WRC provided limited childcare on the 15th, 18th, and 22nd meeting dates, given advanced notice. Or, to attend a meeting, parents were able to request up to 4 hours of additional respite hours via their service coordinators.
5. WRC Community Services staff sent the Public Notice to all vendors on distribution lists and encouraged service providers to continue outreach to their clients and family members. Mychal’s Learning Place and LA Speech and Language Therapy Center hosted two public meetings at their location as well as called or emailed their clients and respective families to inform them of the public meetings.
6. WRC Family Resource and Empowerment Center printed the Public Notice and disseminated it to family’s visiting the center, provided copies for facilitators to give out during their support group meetings, promoted the public meetings at outreach events, and emailed the Public Notice to their distribution list.
7. WRC Client Services staff provided outreach to clients and family members on their caseloads.

Follow-up to input received from the WRC Community Proposed Strategies:

1. WRC Equity Task Force committee will meet the last Wednesday of every month in the Danneker Boardroom and welcomes the WRC community’s input on how to continually promote equity and reduce disparities.
2. In order to reduce potential barriers identified by the community, our Fiscal Year 16-17 Equity Plan includes:
 - a. Cultural Competency Training (CCT): These trainings will help equip employees to effectively work with diverse groups of families and children. This CCT will target service coordinators, program managers, support staff, directors, board members, and vendors.

- b. Improve Website and Media Message: Make WRC's website user friendly and accessible in multiple languages. Funding will also be used to develop videos and web publications in Spanish.
- c. Culturally Sensitive Parent-to-Parent Training Model: A parent-led program that seeks to reduce racial and ethnic disparities for individuals and families through the provision of materials, trainings, advocacy, outreach, and community building activities. Transportation and childcare will be provided.
- d. Increase Translation Services: Focuses on increasing use of interpreters and developing written materials and translating them into multiple languages. WRC bilingual staff will review materials to ensure accuracy.
- e. Enhanced Case Management: To provide “Enhanced” case management services for the target population which would conceivably improve access to services by paying special attention to clients receiving the lowest, per capital service expenditures.
- f. Develop RFPs for Community Services: Culturally competent and bi-lingual children and adult service providers will expand services to our underserved/under-resourced communities within WRC catchment area as well as provide access to transportation.
- g. Develop Self-Assessment Tools for Clients, Families, and Providers: WRC will monitor, track data, and oversee improvement cycles of POS disparities via a Dashboard as well as develop assessment tools such as a client satisfaction survey and perform ongoing assessments of its service delivery.
- h. RFP for Bilingual Therapists: Increase the number of bilingual occupational, physical, and speech therapy providers who provide in-home services in our underserved areas as well as access to transportation.
- i. Spanish Publications Development Expansion: Develop written publications in Spanish, including documents about the intake process, services, rights under the Lanterman Act, appeal process, etc.

WRC will continue to support, educate, and serve all people with developmental disabilities.