



Report on Public Meetings Regarding Disparity in the Purchase of Services

Westside Regional Center (WRC) held three (3) public meetings for our community to:

- Learn about the disparities in the Purchase of Services (POS) data during Fiscal Year 2017-2018;
- Understand the limitations of the data;
- Learn about the barriers that may prevent members of the community from obtaining services;
- Learn about Westside's efforts to increase equity and reduce POS disparities

The public meetings were held on: March 25, March 26, and March 27, 2019. All meetings were held at Westside Regional Center. The meeting on March 25th was an open meeting but was targeted for members of the Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) and other Self-Advocates. Additionally, Westside held a meeting of the Equity Committee of the Board on March 21st. The purpose of that meeting was to solicit discussion from Board members and stakeholders in order to seek input on the presentation and make revisions prior to conducting the public meetings. Twenty-three (23) individuals attended the Committee meeting on the 20th.

Overall, there were a combined total of 70 attendees present at the meetings including representatives from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD), parent support group members and members of the Autism Society of Los Angeles.

Bilingual (English and Spanish) notices of the Public Meetings were posted on the WRC website and were also sent to service providers, clients, and families via Everbridge (automated call) and/or SimpleSend (email). Service coordinators were also invited to share the notices with their clients and families. Parent Leaders from the Parent Empowerment Project (PEP) also encouraged PEP participants to attend the meeting.

At every public meeting, materials were provided in both English and Spanish, with simultaneous professional Spanish interpretation of the presentation. Limited on-site childcare was also available at the March 26th and March 27th meetings given advanced notice. Parents were also able to request up to 4 additional respite hours via their service coordinator to attend a meeting.

Carmine Manicone, WRC Executive Director, reviewed and explained the data provided by DDS concerning Annual Purchase of Services Expenditures for Fiscal Year 2017-2018: services used by ethnic groups, per capita spent by all ages, per capita spent by age groups, per capita spent by residence type (all ages), number of individuals with case management services only versus other POS trackable services, number of individuals in different ethnic groups with case management services only, and number of individuals in different age groups with case management services only across last seven fiscal years. Emphasis was placed on POS disparities among the African American and Hispanic population when compared to their White counterparts. A summary of the data presented is as follows:

- WRC served 10,243* individuals during the reporting period (see data limitations)
- The ethnic distribution of individuals served range from Hispanic (34.2%), White (27.2%), Black/African-American (21.4%), Multi-Ethnic/Other (12.1%), Asian (4.9%), American Indian or Alaska Native (0.1%), and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.1%)



- The languages identified as primary by 30 or more clients in each of the following categories are English (8,194), Spanish (1,867), and Farsi (59)
- During the last reporting period, the population of people served by WRC grew by 536 individuals for Hispanics, 251 for Multi-Ethnic/Other, 193 for Black/African American, 96 for Asian, and 47 for White.
- The vast majority of WRC clients live in the home of a parent or guardian (82.9%) while 9.2% of the adults we serve live independently with supports. Only 5% of individuals served by WRC live in licensed homes or other group settings.
- Primarily due to the increasing cost of housing, WRC's number of individuals living independently increased by only 16 individuals during the last reporting period.
- When comparing services used by ethnic groups by all ages, the average amount of per capita expenditures is higher for Whites (\$25,382) than for Hispanics (\$12,806), Blacks/African Americans (\$22,262), Asians (\$17,670), and Multi-Ethnic/Other (\$15,175)
- A large amount of all WRC authorized expenditures are for adults (ages 22 and up)
- A significant portion of all WRC authorized expenditures are to support out of home living arrangements (e.g. Residential [Group Homes], Independent Living Services, Supported Living Services)
- Based on POS data, 7,808 WRC clients have funded services and 763 do not have funded services/ receive case management only.

The presentations also included a section to inform the audience on the results of our efforts to increase equity and reduce disparities. We provided an overview of Westside's efforts through our Enhanced Case Management project, which included:

- 81 individuals with no funded POS were assigned to Enhanced Case Management
- 56 individuals have received authorized POS services
- 136 POS services have been authorized for: Respite, Social Skills, ILS/SLS, contract funded groups/ services, psychological re-evaluations, etc.
- 59 individuals have been referred for non-POS supports and services
- 250 referrals have been made for non-POS supports and services: IHSS, SSI, medical clinics, mental health, legal services, etc.
- 50 participants have taken part in the educational training which cover topics such as the Individual Program Plan (IPP) process, how to request services through WRC, resources, etc.

We reviewed the results from the efforts of the Parent Empowerment Project (PEP), a collaboration between WRC and the Autism Society of Los Angeles (ASLA), which included:

- 97 families with little to no POS, receiving parent-to-parent support
- 455 services accessed with PEP support such as: 166 regional center services, 169 community services, 68 public services, and 52 Medi-Cal/ Insurance services
- Assisted WRC families in accessing approved regional center services: social skills, respite, specialized supervision, adult day services, Education Support Services, etc.
- Assisted WRC families in navigating, applying and accessing community and public services: IHSS, SSI, Medi-Cal, therapy, housing, mental health, free or low cost clinics, etc.
- Assisted WRC families in obtaining school district accommodations and services



Lastly, we discussed our efforts to increase access to information about services available through the regional center and public services system as well as processes for receiving those services. The following were developed:

- *WRC Services and Supports* brochure by age groups in English and Spanish
- *WRC Intake Process* brochures in English and Spanish
- *WRC Information and Resources Booklet* in English and Spanish
- *WRC Transition to Adulthood Booklet* in English and Spanish
- *Introduction to Westside Regional Center* video series in English and Spanish

Questions, Comments & Responses from all 4 Meetings

The following represents some of the questions and comments raised by those in attendance at the Equity Committee meeting on 3/20 and the public meetings held on 3/25, 3/26 and 3/27.

Questions/Comments	WRC Response
There was a desire for more information about WRC services/supports, intake process, process for accessing services, what to do if you're unhappy with a worker, etc.	We reported that WRC is in the final stages of publishing a curriculum on information and resources that will be available to families and individuals served by the regional center. There will also be handouts on services and supports available explaining the variety of services available for the different age groups. All material will be published in English and Spanish.
Some families reported that they do not hear about trainings, events, meetings, etc. going on at Westside?	WRC has been utilizing an automated call and email system to alert families about WRC hosted events, trainings, workshops, support groups, meetings and much more. We urged families to report their current email and phone information so that we could ensure that they would be notified when an automated call was sent. WRC Staff also reported that, thanks in part to funding through the equity grant, the WRC website has been revamped during the past year and that all of our events, meetings and trainings are published in the calendar section of our website.
We were asked several times about what happens to Purchase of Service (POS) money that is not spent by the regional center.	The state gives us an annual budget for Purchase of Service (POS). We reported that historically WRC has not had a surplus of POS dollars at the end of our fiscal year.
The Self-Advocates expressed their concern over affordable housing and the need for housing resources among adult individuals with disabilities.	We had a lengthy discussion on the challenges of finding affordable housing for individuals who are primarily relying on SSI benefits to pay for rent. The explosion of development in Inglewood and Hawthorne are causing Westside's already expensive housing market to be out of reach for many of the individuals we serve. Many CAC members expressed their concern for their younger colleagues who may desire to move from the family home. They also expressed their willingness to assist with advocacy.



<p>I have not received a call or email from WRC. Why am I not receiving it?</p>	<p>Typically every year a service coordinator (SC) should be updating the client’s CDER during their IPP meeting. Families should make sure to contact their SC right away if their contact information changes. SCs also need to make sure to enter this information correctly onto SANDIS.</p>
<p>We were asked about the group contracts and why that money isn’t tracked in individual POS data.</p>	<p>WRC has several group contracts to provide services such as 24-hour per day crisis services and parenting classes, toilet training classes and other services through Mentor FBS. These services are offered to our families without the need for an individual POS authorization and cannot be tracked in the individual POS data.</p>
<p>We were asked if WRC plans to utilize social media and have a Facebook or Instagram page to share information with the community.</p>	<p>WRC has already re-designed its website and everyone is encouraged to sign-up for our e-newsletters. We are also planning to roll out both a Facebook page and Instagram account by the end of June/beginning of July in order to keep families more informed on happenings at WRC.</p>
<p>What should I do if I have difficulty reaching my Service Coordinator (SC)?</p>	<p>If you don’t receive a call back within 2 business days, you should contact you SC’s program manager (PM) and ask them for assistance. Call the receptionist’s desk and they will transfer your call to the PM. All staff contact information is also now available on the WRC website.</p>
<p>What is the purpose of having the population growth slide in our presentation?</p>	<p>We wanted to be able to inform the community on how the demographics of people being served is changing at Westside. More of our aging population is White while our fastest growing populations are Latino, African American and individuals listed as Other Ethnicity.</p>
<p>There were several questions about who is included in the category “Other Ethnicity” and why it isn’t broken down into more specific ethnicities.</p>	<p>We attempted to explain that the individual regional centers are limited by the categories in our database system and that individuals and families self-select which ethnic group they identify with. In many cases we believe that people who are multi-racial select the “Other” category but we cannot be certain; this is one of the limitations of the data.</p>
<p>Several parents expressed that they did not feel well informed about the Early Start transition process. Who will provide their child’s services once their child turns three? Who can parents communicate with about this transition process, and how can they be better informed.</p>	<p>WRC has been regularly implementing an annual early start transition conference – this year we expanded on that concept and offered a series of Saturday workshops during April and May on the transition from regional center to school services. We also encouraged families to initiate conversations with caregivers earlier and informed families on the school transition meeting that should be held between 30 and 32 months.</p> <p>Additionally, we have developed materials in both English and Spanish that detail many of the transition questions in a more visual format.</p>



During the meetings there was considerable discussion on the barriers that still exist including - language, transportation, childcare, lack of vendors (especially bilingual providers), and vendors going out of business because of rate freezes and median rates that don't allow them to meet local minimum wage requirements. There was also lengthy discussion about cultural preferences motivating utilization of services; finding creative solutions to support families and offering a truly person-centered way of providing services

At the Equity Committee meeting on March 20th and at the public meeting on March 27th there was also spirited discussion that ASLA's Parent Empowerment Project (PEP) should focus on having larger African-American representation among its parent leaders. This is currently being addressed by the WRC Equity committee and ASLA to develop a stronger recruitment and retention plan. Ongoing efforts will continue to be reported to DDS by our Equity project representatives.

Plans and Recommendations to Address Identified Disparities

Social Media Outreach

WRC intends to continue its efforts to increase access to information about services, supports, and resources available at Westside and in the community through our new bilingual (English and Spanish) media platforms: YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. These social media platforms provide an opportunity to empower individuals through ongoing education by promoting our YouTube Channel to watch our new and upcoming educational video series; visit our website for information and access to our newly developed publications; upload live videos of on-site trainings and public meetings; and share important news, reports, and information relevant to stakeholders. The online community can also share positive or negative experiences through our email contact form to help WRC improve as an organization.

Enhanced Case Management (ECM)

The ECM project will be restructuring in order to reach more underserved families. Now that a comprehensive curriculum has been developed, the focus will be in conducting group educational workshops geared towards helping families have a clearer understanding of what the regional center is and how to access services and supports. The workshops will be 3 hours in length and will include a pre-and post-survey to determine a change in knowledge from participants. If a family is interested in a regional center funded service, the ECM team will be able to assist in submitting funded requests. The ECM team may also provide some initial referrals and recommendations to be followed up with their Service Coordinator. If a family identifies a need in accessing a generic resource, they are being referred to the Autism Society of Los Angeles', *Parent Empowerment Project*.

Parent Empowerment Project (PEP)

Westside Regional Center and the Autism Society of Los Angeles (ASLA) will be restructuring PEP in order to reach more underserved families. The PEP team will be focusing primarily on supporting underserved Latino and African American families in the following areas: connecting with the Regional Center; county resources (e.g. Medi-Cal, CalWORKs, CalFresh); California Children Services (CCS); Supplemental Security Income (SSI); In-Home Supportive Services; Housing and Homeless assistance; transportation; Medi-Cal/ insurance referrals; referrals for legal assistance; special education related services (Individualized Education Program, *IEP*); Department of Mental Health; and other community resources. They will also focus on community outreach activities to



inform families about the existence of regional centers, our intake process, and available services and supports using WRC's newly developed publications.

WRC appreciates the opportunity to present the feedback from our POS meetings to DDS; we will continue to support, educate, and serve all people with developmental disabilities.