



Purchase of Service (POS) Public Meetings Summary & Recommendations and Plan to Promote Equity and Reduce Disparities Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2021-2022

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

- Learn about the annual Purchase of Services (POS) Expenditures for the fiscal year 2021-2022 (sometimes referred to as disparity data);
- Help us identify barriers that might prevent individuals and families from accessing regional center services;
- Provide suggestions on how to reduce or eliminate these barriers; and
- Learn about Westside's activities to promote equity in 2023.

The first public meeting was held virtually on March 22, 2023 from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Powerpoint presentation from that meeting is attached. The presentation was delivered in English primarily by the Director of Clinical Services. In addition, the Director of Community Education at USC Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, a partner community-based organization, presented on their work with supporting small community-based agencies and individuals with submitting grants requests through DDS. Simultaneous professional Spanish interpretation was provided.

A total of 27 individuals attended this initial meeting virtually. Attendees to this meeting included individuals supported by WRC, family members, and community stakeholders, . In addition, a representative from Disability Rights California, an employee from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and a representative from the California State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) were in attendance.

Actions taken to improve public attendance and participation included a posting on the WRC website on February 14th. The event was also promoted via email with a follow up notice emailed out the week prior to the meeting.

Following feedback received during the public March 22nd public meeting, WRC decided to conduct an additional meeting, which was held as a hybrid meeting on May 11, 2023 from 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. both via Zoom and in person at WRC. The presentation was delivered in English by the Director of Clinical Services. A total of 32 individuals attended this meeting virtually and 12 individuals attended this meeting in person. Attendees to this meeting included individuals supported by WRC, family members, and community stakeholders. Also in attendance was a representative from Disability Rights California, a representative from the



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California State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) and a representative from the Office of Clients Rights Advocacy.

Also resulting from community feedback during the public meeting, actions were taken by WRC with respect to this additional meeting to improve public attendance and participation. These actions included a posting on the WRC website on April 27 as well as email notifications in both English and Spanish. Reminders were also emailed out the week before the meeting. Additional efforts were made by WRC staff to advertise this upcoming meeting in different community stakeholder meetings and support groups with our underserved communities. These included the African American Support group, Siempre Amigas and the Ethiopian Family Support group.

A summary of the POS data presented is as follows:

- WRC served 11,528 individuals during the reporting period.
- The ethnic distribution of individuals served range from Hispanic (4,006), White (2,807) Black/African-American (2,493), Other Ethnicity or Race/Multi-Cultural (1,683) and Asian (516)- less than 0% are individuals identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (n= 12) and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (n=11).
- The top three languages spoken by individuals are English, Spanish and Farsi (Persian).
- The largest proportion of individuals served identified as living in the home of a parent or guardian (9,583).
- A large amount of per capita expended services were for adults (ages 22 and up) to support out-of-home living arrangements. For example, the average spend per person annually on Community Care Facilities was \$176,169, Foster Homes for Adults was \$145,474 and Independent Living Services/Supported Living Services was \$85,539. Whereas for individuals living in the home of a parent or guardian, WRC averaged \$14,210 spent per person living in the home.

IDENTIFIED DISPARITIES IN THE PURCHASE OF SERVICES

There are currently 1,922 clients (all ages) who are only receiving case management services (no purchased services) at Westside Regional Center. When evaluating the percentage of individuals receiving no purchased services, it is noted that the percentage is higher for Hispanic (19.9%) Asian (17.6%) and Other (16.6%) than for White individuals(14.4%).

IDENTIFIED BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SERVICES & SUPPORTS



To better understand barriers to service access, WRC has made a number of efforts including community surveys and listening sessions. Efforts have been made to include the communities who have been identified as experiencing disparity in our system. A summary of the feedback WRC has received from the public meetings, surveys and listening sessions includes:

- Lack of information and communication in preferred language

A number of individuals and families in our community have identified difficulties in accessing materials and information in their preferred language as a barrier to accessing services. In addition, they have noted that when they call, they are sometimes not consistently able to speak with someone immediately in their preferred language. Instead, they may be asked to wait to set up interpretation, or they are put on hold until someone can be accessed to interpret.

- Not familiar with all of the services provided by the regional center

Many families have noted that they are not always given information about the different services that are available to them. We heard from many families that they may learn of a potentially helpful service years later at a time when they noted that service may no longer be needed.

- Difficulties initially accessing intake and difficulty with the intake process

Several families who were interviewed and provided comments at our public meeting noted that they had difficulties knowing how to apply for initial intake to the regional center. They indicated that they were also aware of families who had been denied and who felt intimidated by the process to appeal their determination.

- Lack of Technology and Support

A number of households indicated that as the world has become increasingly virtual following the pandemic that they have felt left behind. Specifically, they noted difficulties using zoom and other virtual technologies and reading email correspondence that is encrypted. They noted that they have not been able to obtain support in these areas and subsequently have had difficulties attending meetings or conferences that are virtual and in reading their correspondence.

- Lack of appropriate service providers in their community

Many families have noted that there do not seem to be sufficient resources in their community. They added, in particular, that although they applaud the restoration of social and



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recreation services, they often do not have providers for these services in their communities and subsequently have to travel outside of their area. They noted that this is an additional hardship since many individuals do not have easy access to transportation. In addition, they noted that many of the services offered are not in their preferred language.

EFFORTS MADE TO PROMOTE EQUITY

Through both the DDS Service Access and Equity program and the Language Access and Cultural Competency funding, WRC has engaged in a number of activities to better support underserved communities in accessing services. These include the following:

INCREASED EFFORTS TO TRANSLATE REGIONAL CENTER MATERIAL AND PROVIDE ON DEMAND INTERPRETATION

In our efforts to improve language access, WRC has hired a dedicated Language Access Specialist. This new position has been dedicated to streamlining the translation process for IPPs and IFSPs as well as correspondence to families and individuals. All meeting flyers and Services and Supports brochures have been translated into Spanish, thereby improving accessibility within the community. Westside Regional Center has also successfully completed vendorization with Hanna Interpreting Services, and we have distributed instructional materials to simplify the utilization of on-demand interpretation services. WRC continues to provide interpretation services for all who might need it during a public meeting, Board meeting, or a private meeting between a client and their care team.

ONLINE VIDEO MATERIALS

WRC has completed a number of videos which are available on our website and on YouTube. These videos provide in-depth information on a number of supports and services. We have developed training videos to help families better understand services available to them. We have created three distinct courses: Early Start, School Aged Youth and Adults. In these videos, we discuss the different service options available to families in each of these respective cohorts. Our team has developed 66 videos in English and Spanish on a variety of services, including Respite, ILS/SLS, Social Skills and more. WRC has also developed a number of videos explaining generic/community resources (e.g. IHSS/SSI).

ONLINE INTAKE PORTAL AND ONGOING COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

In November 2022, Westside Regional Center launched an online intake portal to help simplify the intake process. Now, instead of mailing out applications or having families

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download and print the application, families can apply easily online. Families can complete the application using the portal as well as download any supporting documentation or materials onto our website. They are also able to track their intake experience and communicate with their intake counselor through the portal. In addition, WRC is conducting ongoing outreach efforts to different communities that have been identified as being underrepresented. We are currently doing outreach at community fairs, medical offices and clinics, hospitals, schools and head start programs. We are now able to provide a QR code that providers can use to quickly access the intake portal and to submit an application on behalf of an individual or family.

COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

WRC has contracted with a technical specialist to provide community technology support. With the understanding that families may have difficulties accessing our new intake portal, as well as ongoing issues reading encrypted emails and using different video meeting software, we have contracted with a professional to assist families with these access issues.

SERVICE ACCESS SPECIALIST

WRC has hired a service access specialist to assist us with doing community outreach for the purpose of recruiting and training new service providers, particularly those who may be in underserved communities and who may also be bilingual. We are currently conducting a community survey as well as ongoing listening sessions to gain a better understanding of the specific service needs of these communities. With this information, we will be targeting potential providers with identified backgrounds through a variety of means including resource fairs, townhall meetings and attendance at different local community events.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PLANS TO PROMOTE EQUITY AND REDUCE DISPARITIES

WRC will be conducting staff trainings next year on Cultural Competency and Humility. One of WRC's goals is hiring new staff to further reduce our caseload ratios so that we might better serve our community in general as well as to provide more focus on individuals from underserved communities that are not currently accessing services. WRC is in the process of conducting an internal equity audit to better understand our own organizational practices and policies to ensure that they are fair and equitable for our staff. This includes looking at our hiring, training, and job development practices. In addition, we have included our cultural competency specialist in our ongoing onboarding practices and training.

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We are looking to update our video materials with the latest information. For example, one of our plans is to develop a video on the appeals process and to highlight new services. As noted, we have translated many of our materials into both English and Spanish. In addition, WRC will be focusing on translation into Farsi which is one of our new identified high frequency languages.

CLOSING STATEMENT

WRC continues to appreciate the opportunity to present the feedback for our POS meetings to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). We also appreciate the many funding opportunities through Service Access and Equity Grants and through our Language Access and Cultural Competency funding.

SUMMARY OF OUTREACH EFFORT FOR PUBLIC MEETING

Official notice was posted on the WRC website on February 14, 2023

Follow up notice was emailed on March 16, 2023

7,153 verified email addresses received follow up emails.

183 out of 7,153 follow up emails were opened.

11 out 183 opened emails clicked on links to review information presented in the email.

May 11th POS Expenditure Townhall Listening Session

Official notice was posted on the WRC website on April 27, 2023

Follow up notice was emailed on April 27, 2023

7,159 verified email addresses received follow up emails.

175 out of 7,159 follow up emails were opened.

15 out 175 opened emails clicked on links to review information presented in the email.