



Purchase of Service (POS) Public Meetings Summary & Recommendations and Plan to Promote Equity and Reduce Disparities Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2022- 2023

As indicated in Welfare and Institutions (W&I) Code §4519.5(e)-(f), within three months of compiling the data with the department, and annually thereafter, each regional center shall meet with stakeholders in one or more public meetings regarding the data. The meeting or meetings shall be held separately from any meetings held pursuant to Section 4660. The regional center shall provide participants of these meetings with the data and any associated information related to improvements in the provision of developmental services to underserved communities and shall conduct a discussion of the data and the associated information in a manner that is culturally and linguistically appropriate for that community, including providing alternative communication services, as required by Sections 11135 to 11139.7, inclusive, of the Government Code and implementing regulations. Regional centers shall inform the department of the scheduling of those public meetings 30 days prior to the meeting. Notice of the meetings shall also be posted on the regional center's website 30 days prior to the meeting and shall be sent to individual stakeholders and groups representing underserved communities in a timely manner. Each regional center shall, in holding the meetings required by this subdivision, consider the language needs of the community and shall schedule the meetings at times and locations designed to result in a high turnout by the public and underserved communities.

Westside Regional Center (WRC) held four public meetings for our community with the following objectives:

- Review the annual Purchase of Services (POS) Expenditures for the fiscal year 2022-2023 (sometimes referred to as disparity data),
- Help identify barriers that might prevent individuals and families from accessing regional center services,
- Provide suggestions on how to reduce or eliminate these barriers,
- Learn about activities conducted to promote equity in 2024.

Public Town Hall Meetings:

On March 12, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. the first public meeting was held in person in the Danneker Boardroom at WRC located on the third floor at 5901 Green Valley Circle, Culver City CA. The presentation was delivered by a team that included the Executive Director, the Director of



Community Services/Acting Director of Client Services, the Cultural Diversity and Equity Specialist, the LACC Project Specialist, the LACC Service Access and Equity Specialist and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist. Detailed information about equity efforts was provided by the specialists. The PowerPoint presentation in English and Spanish included a question-and-answer period at the end. The meeting was conducted in English with simultaneous professional Spanish interpretation. In addition, ASL interpretation was provided. A total of 27 individuals attended this meeting including individuals supported by WRC, family members, community stakeholders, as well as representatives from Disability Rights California, and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

The second public meeting was held in person at WRC in the Danneker Boardroom on March 14, 2024, at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was conducted in English with simultaneous professional Spanish interpretation and ASL interpretation. The same PowerPoint presentation was provided with the same meeting format. The presenters that participated in the second in-person presentation were also unchanged. The PowerPoint presentation in English and Spanish included a question-and-answer period at the end. A total of 13 individuals attended including individuals supported by WRC, family members, community stakeholders, as well as representatives from Disability Rights California, and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

The third meeting was held virtually over Zoom on March 19, 2024, at 5:30 p.m. The same PowerPoint information was presented with the same format. The order of presenters was also unchanged. A total number of 103 individuals participated in the meeting. This meeting had considerably more community participation and input provided (refer to section Community Input regarding disparities and access to services during POS March 2024 Townhall meetings). All participants could unmute themselves to ask questions. The Zoom chat function was also available for participants. The chat questions and comments were addressed live by presenters during the presentation. Participants were also able to respond to comments and questions posed by other attendees. The participants included WRC family members, representatives from Disability Rights California and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), as well as at least one Community Based Organization that provides support to individuals interested in Self Determination Program.

The fourth and last meeting was held March 28, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at WRC in the Danneker Boardroom. A total of 13 family members, community members and staff attended. The same PowerPoint presentation and format was followed. The meeting was conducted in Spanish by the bilingual Spanish/English staff that included the Quality Assurance/Resource Development



Manager, the Cultural Diversity and Equity Specialist and the LACC Service Access and Equity Specialist. English interpretation was also provided.

The following informational materials (in English and Spanish) that were made available during the in-person sessions:

- Westside Regional Center Resources Booklet
- Age-specific Services and Supports Brochures: Birth to 3, 3 to 10, 11 to 17, 18 to 22, and 23 and older, as well as flyers with QR codes of the services/brochures
- Self Determination and Coordinated Family Supports flyers
- List of Social/Recreational Services
- Intake and Assessment cards with QR Code linking individuals to online Intake application

Participants were e-mailed a copy of the POS Presentation in English and Spanish. Hard copies of the POS Presentation were also made available in Spanish.

Outreach and Communication to Increase Public Attendance and Participation:

Announcement of the Purchase of Service (POS) Data Townhall public meeting was made over 30 days prior to the first POS meeting on March 14, 2024. Community members were provided multiple notifications in English and Spanish and reminders via e-mail blasts and social media posts during a 7-week period. The notifications were sent on the following dates: 2/9, 2/21, 3/6, 3/11, 3/13, 3/18 and 3/26. In addition, flyers in English and Spanish were posted in all WRC entrances and were placed in the reception area. In response to community feedback expressed last year, the number of meetings was increased from two meetings last year to 4 meetings this year to provide greater opportunities for community participation.

One of the meetings was conducted in Spanish with English interpretation, and ASL interpretation was provided for the first three of four meetings.

Per W&I Code section 4519.5 (i)(1)(C) Regional Centers will report the following information during POS Townhall meetings:

“Whether the data...indicate a need to reduce disparities in the purchase of services among consumers in the regional center’s catchment area.”



Summary of the POS Data Presented During POS Meetings:

- WRC served 12,548 individuals during the reporting period.
- The age distribution of individuals served by WRC was the following: birth to age 2 (n=2,658), 3 to 21 years of age (n=5,756), 22 years and older (n=4,134).
- The ethnic distribution of individuals served range from Hispanic (n=4,416), White (n=2,990) Black/African American (n=2,761), Other Ethnicity or Race/Multi-Cultural (n=1,797) and Asian (n=563). In accordance with DDS Data De-identification Guidelines, counts of one through ten have been suppressed for American Indian or Alaska Natives. In addition, in accordance with DDS Data De-identification Guidelines, counts of complementary cells have been suppressed for Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.
- The top three languages spoken by individuals supported by WRC are English, Spanish and Farsi (Persian).
- The largest proportion of individuals served identified as living in the home of a parent or guardian (10,996).
- A large amount of per capita expended services was for adults (ages 22 and up) to support out-of-home living arrangements. The amount spent per individual living in Community Care Facilities was \$176,790, Community Treatment Facility \$248,663, Foster Homes for Adults was \$153,613, Psychiatric Treatment Facility \$ 369,368 and Independent Living Services/Supported Living Services was \$100,061. Whereas for individuals living in the home of a parent or guardian, WRC averaged an expenditure of \$17,091 per person.

Further Data Pertaining to Disparities and Comparisons from Last Reporting Period (FY 21-22) with current reporting period (FY 22-23):

- There are currently 1,981 individuals of all ages (16%) who receive case management services but do not receive POS funded services at WRC. The percentages of populations without POS funded services are the following: Black/African (14%), White (14 %), Hispanic (18%) and Asian (16%). Although the Black/African American and White populations not supported by POS funded services is relatively equal at 14% (with minor 10ths of percentage differences), the Latinx/Hispanic population without POS services (18%) is greater than the rest of the ethnic/racial groups.
- In addition, through a comparative analysis between the previous fiscal year and the current reported fiscal year (FY 22-23), there has been an observable overall 9% increase



in per capita spending for African American individuals from the FY 21-22 (\$31,345) in comparison to the FY 22-23 (\$34,147) and an 11% increase in overall per capita spending for Whites from FY 21-22 (\$35,569) to FY 22-23 (\$39,639). However, there has been a less remarkable increase in per capita spending of 8% for Latinx/Hispanic individuals from the FY 21-22 (\$18,326) to FY 22-23 (\$19,712).

- Finally, disparities in funded services continue to exist between the three largest adult ethnic groups with the Latinx/Hispanic population being funded at \$49,693 per capita, Black/African American population being funded at \$66,699 per capita and White adult individuals being funded at \$83,271 per capita. Although the differentials are often attributed to an extent to the higher utilization of residential services by White adults, funding discrepancies are also evident amongst the major children's ethnic populations. For instance, White children are authorized at \$14,588 in funding per capita for services, while Black/African American children are authorized at \$11,418 per capita, and the Latinx/Hispanic population of children are authorized at \$9,541 per capita. Therefore, the disparate use of POS services between ethnic groups cannot be fully assigned to one cause alone. Moreover, the data indicate a need to continue the work to reduce disparities in the purchase of services in WRC's catchment area.

Summary of Activities Underway Reported During POS Meetings:

An overview of activities and efforts to increase equity at WRC was provided during the POS meetings. The following is a summary of such activities:

- Increasing community outreach and awareness regarding regional center services, which may have contributed to an increase in POS spending across all populations,
- Refined and expanded Child Find Plan to include more community partners,
- Collaborative engagement with service providers,
- Cultural proficiency training for staff and providers – Implicit Bias trainings (completion date 4/30/24) and Cultural Humility training starting May 2024,
- Increasing interpretation and translation services,
- Enhancing communication experiences for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals through assistive technology and training in American Sign Language for staff and vendors,
- Increasing access to services for individuals with no POS funded or low funded services through Enhanced Case Management services,
- Increasing access to services for individuals through the Self Determination program.



PowerPoint presentation in English and Spanish is available on WRC's website and hyperlinked below:

[WRC POS DISPARITY PRESENTATION 2024 in ENGLISH](#)

[WRC POS DISPARITY PRESENTATION 2024 in SPANISH](#)

Summary of Community Input Regarding Barriers Reported Last Reporting Period (FY 21-22) and the Efforts to Address Concerns:

Lack of information and communication in preferred language

- A LACC Project Specialist was hired to assist with efforts to increase language translations and interpretation for family meetings (e.g., IPPs and IFSPs).

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

- Efforts to increase awareness about services to be continued through dissemination of information and literature such as WRC Service Lists, WRC Information Booklets as well as Self Determination Program Materials at various local community events and resource fairs.

Difficulties initially accessing intake and difficulty with the intake process

- WRC Intake Departments continue to utilize the Intake Portal, which has improved the intake processes and the timelines for service delivery.

Lack of Technology and Support

- WRC contracted an individual to assist families with various technological challenges including uploading documents to the Intake Portal and managing access to encrypted emails and shared documents.

Lack of appropriate service providers in their community

- WRC has significantly increased Social Recreational vendors especially in the areas of Hawthorne, Inglewood and Lawndale; data shows that those areas are the most populated by the Black/African American and Latinx/Hispanic community. WRC has also made great strides in vrending the most Coordinated Family Supports programs across the California Regional Center system.



Public Comments during POS meeting for FY 22-23:

Concerns About the Process of Transitioning from Typical Services to Self Determination Program (SDP) Services:

- A primary concern mentioned by parents going through the SDP process is that they felt that transitioning from typically funded regional center services to SDP services was protracted and complicated. One of the primary barriers mentioned was the length of time it takes to approve the initial budget and the budget for subsequent years as well. In addition, a parent expressed a concern that information is not communicated in a consistent manner causing confusion and frustration.

Lack of information about services:

- There was a concern expressed by the community about the difficulty the Spanish speaking families have in building an SDP budget because families are not sufficiently informed about the array (“menu”) of services. Another parent stated during the IPP meeting that she was told that she did not qualify for SDP and the way she learned about services was through speaking to outside advocacy/community groups.
- Other parents reported that the only service they were offered during IPP meetings was respite services. One parent suggested that a list of services be provided during the IPP. Others noted that services like Social/Recreational opportunities are also typically not mentioned. Another parent stated that Latinx parents don’t have time to learn what is available, and service coordinators do not make the information readily available. Therefore, one parent commented that little progress is made in POS funding utilization.

Challenges with accessing Social/Recreational Services:

- Another area of concern pertaining to Social/Recreational Services, is the issue of “wait lists” for the types of Social/Recreational services that they are interested in. A parent commented that it seemed that the majority of approved vendors are often in the Santa Monica area, which is typically not accessible to families that live further east.

Community platform to discuss barriers:

- Parents and advocates asked for WRC-hosted community gatherings to provide a platform for discussing barriers experienced by the community in accessing services.



WRC’s Recommendations and Plans in Response to Community Input About Improving Service Delivery and Equity:

Challenges Transitioning to the Self Determination Program (SDP):

- WRC will form an internal workgroup that will work collaboratively with the community to develop strategies to improve the SDP transition process at WRC. This process will begin in summer 2024.
- Regarding informing the public about SDP as an option to traditional services, the WRC outreach team will increase efforts to ensure that flyers and future publications on SDP services will be culturally and linguistically accessible as well as disseminated at community outreach events in English and Spanish.

Lack of Information About Services:

- WRC will hold community information sessions and resource fairs to provide more in-depth information on specific services such as Social/Recreational Services, Social Skills Training, and Coordinated Family Support Services. Focused outreach for these sessions will be provided to underserved communities and language accessibility will be emphasized. Information Sessions and Resource Fairs will begin in summer 2024.
- WRC will review and update age-specific service list documents to include current service models described in culturally and linguistically accessible ways. As service lists are completed, they will be translated, posted on the WRC website and promoted on WRC social media accounts. This process will begin in fall 2024.
- Increased training opportunities for service coordinators, such as “Implicit Bias Training”, “Cultural Humility Training”, and “Person-Centered Thinking Training”, are currently underway and will increase awareness about potential bias and improve communication with families and individuals thereby reducing potential barriers.

Challenges with accessing Social/Recreational Services:

- At the end of FY 22-23, WRC’s Community Services department has been able to vendor additional providers in the areas most populated by Latinx and African American families of WRC’s catchment area. Efforts will continue to vendor additional Social/Recreational services to provide increased choices and reduce waiting time. Generic sources for Social/Recreational services will also continue to be explored.



Concerns About Vacant Caseloads:

- WRC will review internal procedures related to caseload coverage and implement necessary adjustments to minimize disruptions experienced by individuals and families when caseloads are vacant.
- With the recent changes to the regional centers' eligibility criteria, WRC's number of people served is growing rapidly. Therefore, to keep up with the pace of new cases, WRC plans to continue hiring new service coordinators. It is the intent and commitment of WRC to continue to monitor caseload ratios to efficiently **distribute cases** and maximize service delivery. To meet the recruitment demands, Westside Regional Center's plan is to establish direct partnerships with Career Centers at local area colleges. The Human Resources Representatives of WRC will also attend Campus Recruitments and Job Fairs and participate in the Handshake Program, which brings the university communities together in one hub to help graduates identify employers in their discipline. WRC's plan is also to implement ClearCompany software for recruiting and talent management.

Interest in a Community Platform to Discuss Barriers:

- WRC will host "Community Conversations" starting summer 2024 to create a listening platform for community input about barriers to services, particularly for the Latinx/Hispanic and Black/African American communities. Brief topics and WRC service updates will also be provided.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, WRC's community input has illuminated critical areas of need for improvement in creating more equitable access to services. By implementing the recommendations to increase awareness about Regional Center services through in-person community outreach and education efforts and addressing information and service gaps by providing informational sessions on underutilized services (in the preferred language) and community resource fairs tailored for the Latinx/Hispanic and Black/African American community, WRC expects to increase more service possibilities for individuals supported and their families. In addition, by improving community networking and constancy through the formation of various listening opportunities, WRC anticipates making further positive strides in improving trust and achieving a more responsive and equitable service delivery system that serves all of WRC's community fairly.