

Westside Regional Center
Report on Public Meetings
Regarding Disparity in the Purchase of Services
March 23, 2015

Westside Regional Center (WRC) held two (2) public meetings for our community regarding the statistical disparity in the purchase of services clients by ethnicity, language, age and diagnosis. Notice of the Public Meeting was posted on the WRC website on February 18, 2015. The Notice was also sent to service providers, clients and families.

The First Public Meeting was held on March 23, 2015 at 10:00 AM in the WRC Boardroom located at 5901 Green Valley Circle. The material was presented in English with simultaneous translation in to Spanish. Forty-three (43) people were in attendance. The audience included:

- 19 family members
- 10 WRC staff
- 7 clients
- 2 board members (also family members)
- 4 services providers
- 1 State Council Member
- 2 Disability Rights of California staff

A second meeting was held at the Harry Mier Center in Inglewood California from 6:00 until 8:00 PM. The audience included:

- 4 family members
- 6 WRC Staff
- 2 Vendors
- 1 Disability Rights of California staff

Both meetings are summarized as follows:

Kevin MacDonald, WRC Executive Director reviewed and explained the statistics that were provided by DDS. Mr. MacDonald explained that the meeting was to be an open discussion and dialogue regarding the disparity in the Purchase of Service Statistics. Mr. MacDonald emphasized that Westside Regional Center was the community's center and that parents and clients must come forward with the issues so that WRC can attempt to address them.

Mary Lou Weise-Stusser – WRC Director of Client Services reviewed the activities that WRC had implemented after our initial Public Meeting in June 2013 as follows:

1. WRC Board of Directors developed and implemented a Disparity Committee that reports to the WRC Board. The Committee has met six (6) times since inception. The committee is comprised of Board Members, WRC staff, and parents and most were in attendance at the Public Meeting.

2. The Disparity Committee is refocusing its efforts on equity of services. They will continue to meet as a WRC Board Committee with Fernando Gomez as Chair.
 - a. WRC presented its final draft of the informational sheets that list services and supports by age groups, e.g., Birth to Three Years of Age, Three to Ten Years of Age, Eleven to Seventeen Years of Age, Eighteen to Twenty-Two Years of Age and Twenty-Three Years of Age and on. Copies were provided to the attendees for review. After this final input, WRC will distribute the Guides, titled “Inside Westside-a Guide to Services by Ages”, to all WRC service coordinators, the WFREC and public spaces in our offices.
 - b. WRC is also developing Family Guides to assist families and clients while they explore services and supports that WRC offers. A sample Family Guide in both English and Spanish was provided to the attendees for their input.

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. Attendees were also provided with Comment Cards to document their questions, concerns and comments. Each comment or question was answered by a member of the WRC Executive Team – Kevin MacDonald – Executive Director; Mary Lou Weise-Stusser – Director, Community Services and Bill Feeman – Director, Client Services.

WRC also arranged for a panel that consisted of WRC Program Managers and the Client Services Director – Bill Feeman to answer individual family questions at the end of the meeting. Many attendees took advantage of this opportunity and WRC received positive feedback.

The following comments were received:

1. Several attendees wanted to make sure that the meeting participants understand that, “Parents should not have to fight/struggle to get services because they are already dealing with a lot. We have exhausted families so we have to be patient at WRC with families.”
2. Attendees expressed satisfaction that WRC was focusing on providing user friendly information and stated, “The more you inform case managers, the more information they can pass down to parents.”
3. Attendees were very interested in support groups as they expressed that support groups provide more in-depth information than WRC.
4. Attendees want WRC to make sure all 130 service coordinators have information.
5. Attendees expressed that parents continually fight for education but that they have to continue to educate the educators.
6. How have POS policies changed to address 2012 ILS/SLS changes? **WRC Response:** “POS policies are modified each time there are changes in regulations or law.”
7. Are services that client needs available? Several people stated that, “Case Managers tells family services are not available. **WRC Response,** “WRC Service Coordinators are trained to submit all funding requests for review and authorization. Unless a service has been excluded through the Lanterman Act, Service Coordinators should submit all requests. WRC Director of Client Services will address this issue with Program Managers as well as Case Managers.”

8. What has committee concluded about reason behind disparity? **WRC Response:** The WRC Disparity Board Committee is still working on the issue. The Committee will resume their meetings in July 2015. Also, FRC has dedicated resources to finding out barriers to utilizing services. ARCA created “Equity” committee with goal to reach all individuals. Equity committee recently commissioned a study to research the issues.
9. How has WRC reached out to Latino community regarding this meeting? **WRC Response:** “WRC provided announcements of the meetings to all vendors, service coordinators, posted it on our website, Self-Advocacy Groups, the Family Resource and Empowerment Center. The announcements were in both English and Spanish.”
10. 100% of people who qualify and need services should be able to access it.
11. Total expenditures/authorized services (per capita) are substantially different amongst races, especially for those exiting the school system.
12. Although there is a call for more families to get involved with the regional center, many families cannot get involved due to barriers so families cannot be blamed. **WRC Response:** We need to look at what are barriers; we need to look at what providers are available in the area and develop resources and services that are more accessible for these families. However, families need to tell us the barriers and what will work for them.
13. Attendee suggests that WRC select 10 most underserved and use them as a case study to analyze potential barriers.
14. All regional centers are not the same, why? **WRC Response:** Each regional center is community based, with a volunteer board of directors. Each regional center implements the Lanterman Act in response to their community service and support needs.
15. Why do these disparities exist? **WRC Response:** We are not sure and continue to explore solutions to these issues. Your input helps us to remediate any disparities.
16. Issue from last meeting: parents aren’t connecting with SC’s. What trainings are being provided? **WRC Response:** **WRC Response:** Bill Feeman, Director, Client Services, “SC’s get trainings on how to be more detail oriented with families.”
17. Why do some people get services quicker than others? **WRC Response:** WRC would have to get more information. Program managers and Bill Feeman are available to meet with individuals at the conclusion of the meeting. Please come to talk with them.
18. If a family or a client is not satisfied with their service coordinator what should they do? **WRC Response:** Please contact their program manager. If you are still not satisfied, please contact Bill Feeman, Director of Client Services or Carmine Manicone, Assistant Director of Client Services to request a change of service coordinator.
19. Parent stated that she had someone from FRC come to her home and informed her of services offered. **WRC Response:** WRC has developed multiple Fact Sheets for services by ages and it is helpful (draft sheets were available for review at the meeting) and they will be available through Service Coordinators and the FRC.
20. Families are intimidated. **WRC Response:** WRC staff work very hard to establish good working relationships. The Disparity Committee will also be looking at reaching out to

families who feel this way. WRC will also be providing our annual training in cultural sensitivity in the next few months.

21. Attendee recommended that: WRC (1) should ensure that clients and families who are new to the regional center system to read fact sheet. (2) Develop a Mentorship program; adult parent mentors and client mentors. **WRC Response:** We plan to make sure that all clients and families receive the Guide to Services. WRC also has the Peer Mentor program that can create more mentor programs and will explore expanding a variety of mentor services.
22. Is there a directory of contacts? **WRC Response:** WRC had the directory on our website for many years but recently had to remove it due to phishing incidents.
23. If you have a vendor issue, please contact the Mary Lou Weise-Stusser, Director of the WRC Community Services Department.
24. How long should it take a 22 year old get new SC? **WRC Response:** A new Adult Service Coordinator should be assigned very quickly. If there is a delay, please contact Bill Feeman or Carmine. Also, WRC is in the process of creating a Transition Age Youth unit to provide service coordinators who specialized in the transition to adulthood service and support needs.
25. My service coordinator says “no” to my requests. Is this right? **WRC Response:** A Service Coordinator cannot simply say “no” to a service request verbally but must send a Written Notice of Action to inform the family/client of their right to appeal.
26. What is the Ratio between SC’s and cases? **WRC Response:** There are a variety of caseload ratio requirements. If it is a Medicaid Waiver caseload, the ratio is 1:62. The budget that we receive from the state makes this challenging. Lanterman coalition is pushing for 10% increase in operations and POS. It is important for all people who are supported by the regional center system to contact their representatives in Sacramento about this.

STRATEGIES USED FOR MORE EFFECTIVE OUTREACH

1. WRC held 2 public meetings – one mid- morning (10:00 AM) at the WRC Office and one in the evening (6:00-8:00 PM).
2. WRC held the evening meeting in the community, Inglewood, in which many families identified in the underserved population reside.
3. WRC posted the Notice of Public Meeting on the WRC website on February 18, 2015 to provide early notice.
4. WRC Community Services staff sent the Public Notice to all vendors on distribution lists and encouraged service providers to continue to the outreach to clients and family members. The Service Provider Advisory Committee also completed multiple outreach activities.
5. WRC Family Resource and Empowerment Center forwarded the notice to all families on their lists as well as to all support group members.
6. 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 will provide the finalized Inside Westside Guide to Services.

2. WRC Disparity Committee will reconvene and continue to meet to review possible strategies. The committee name is to be changed to the Equity Committee.
3. As part of an MHSA Grant, WRC has developed a Parent Mentor Project that will train parents to assist other parents to navigate systems.
4. WRC is participating in the **Parents Taking Action**, a research being conducted by the California State University Long Beach School of Social Work. The purpose of the study is to test an educational program for Latino families of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). A Promotora (Community Health Educator), who is also a parent of a child with ASD, will provide an educational program in 14 week sessions in convenient locations to improve Latino families' knowledge about autism services and strategies to improve social communication.

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