



Report on Public Meetings
Regarding Disparity in the Purchase of Services
Monday March 7, 2016
And
Saturday March 12, 2016

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 2, 2016. The Notice was also sent to service providers, clients and families.

The First Public Meeting was held on March 7, 2016 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:

- 17 family members
- 4 WRC staff
- 7 clients
- 1 board member (also family members)
- 4 services providers
- 1 State Council Member

A second meeting was held at the LA Speech and Language Program in Culver City, California on Saturday March 12, 2016 from 10:00 AM until 12:00 PM. The audience included:

- 19 family members
- 2 WRC Staff
- 2 Vendors
- 1 WRC Board Member
- 2 Disability Rights of California staff

Both meetings are summarized as follows:

At the March 7, 2016 public meeting, Mike Danneker, Interim WRC Executive Director reviewed and explained the statistics that were provided by DDS. Mr. Danneker explained that the meeting was to be an open discussion and dialogue regarding the disparity in the Purchase of Service Statistics. Mr. Danneker 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.

The activities that WRC had implemented after our initial Public Meeting in June 2013 as follows:

1. WRC Board of Directors developed and implemented an Equity Committee that reports to the WRC Board. The Committee has continued to meet prior to Board of Directors' meetings. Interested audience members were asked to join. The current committee is comprised of Board Members, WRC staff, and parents.
 - a. WRC will release the Inside Westside Services by Age informational sheets in May 2016. 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.

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. Many attendees took advantage of this opportunity and WRC received positive feedback.

The following comments were received:

- **What is P.O.S?** Purchase of Service
- **Where does the money come from?** WRC has a contract with the Department of Developmental Services who provides state and federal money to purchase services and supports. The State spends about 5-6 Billion dollars a year for services for people with developmental disabilities; about half of the money is from the Federal government. The money flows from the Department of Health Services to the Department of Developmental Disabilities and then to the regional centers.
- **Why is the regional center having difficulty getting services?** Due to Historical Budget Cuts, regional centers have been struggling and vendors are struggling as rates have been cut and frozen. There are recent increases through a new bill, ABX 2 1, that will help the regional centers and vendors to provide more service coordinators and some rate relief for vendors. However, DDS will instruct regional centers on how to use the new funds. Regional centers will also be increasing service coordinators to meet the caseload ratio of 1:62.
- **Is there discussion between disparities, between RC?** Regional Centers are constantly discussing and investigating disparities in service delivery. One of the reasons we have this public meeting it to get input from our community, answer questions and get ideas for better service delivery.

Mike Danneker advised the group that the board of directors meeting at all regional centers are open to the public and that there is a public comment period at each meeting for open discussion.

The California State Council on Developmental Disabilities also has information and meetings regarding disparity, opportunities for public input.

Disability Rights California also has information on their website and in their offices on all issues.

Why aren't parents using 100% of Services?

- WRC estimates that awareness of services available and lack of information are a major reason. However, we are not sure we have all of the answers. Fernando Gomez, WRC Board Member and ARCA Delegate informed the audience that they need to get involved and ask the tough questions. He informed the audience that if your service coordinator is not responding, you should speak with their supervisor and if issues are still not resolved, you should talk to Mike Danneker/the new Executive Director.
- **How do we communicate needs to the Executive Director?**
You can attend the Board Meetings and gather information as well as speak during the public comment period. ARCA also has board meetings that are open to the public where you can speak and/or ask questions.

Equity Committee

- ARCA is currently involved with a Study regarding diversity/disparity/equity. Updates on study results will be available at board meetings, on the WRC website when they become available.
- It is hoped that Best Practices will evolve from this study and other activities that are happening.

Lack of Awareness of Services

- The audience asked the regional center to get information out as parents are looking for solutions
- Fernando encouraged the audience to push for more information

- **Who will be Next Executive Director of WRC?**

- The WRC Board of Directors has a Search Committee who is working on this right now. A new Director will be announced by April. There are 13 People on the Search Committee and the Board of Directors will make the final choice. There will be a Public Meeting on March 16, 2016 at WRC.
- There will be several new Board Members next fiscal year, approximately 6. Please come to the meetings to meet the new Board Members.

- **Where is WRC with Self Determination?**

WRC's Self Determination Committee meets the second Tuesday of every month at WRC. The Self Determination Committee's focus is "Giving Parents more power and money to make decisions regarding services" you can also get information on **Self Determination. Org**

- **Is Self-Determination being held up/delayed?** The Self-Determination Waiver is still in the process of being approved by CMS. CMS has asked many questions that must be answered.
- **Can I get a "Waiver" to get a program I think is appropriate?**
Currently, only services that are vendored can be authorized for Purchase of Service funds. Unfortunately, some programs do not want to be a Vendor due to rates.
- **Why are Spanish speaking parents not here?**

Parents heard about the meeting through CRA Office – Did Not Receive Invitation from SC for today. WRC sent notices out to all vendors, to the service coordinators, support groups, Family Resource Center and the notice was posted on the WRC Website.

Out Reach Difficult

A Second Public Meeting will be held this Saturday, March 12, 2016 from 10:00-12:00 at:

Los Angeles Speech & Language Center
5761 Buckingham Parkway
(310) 649- 6199
(Child Care Available)

About WRC

- Board Meetings are the First Wednesday of every Month at 6:00pm in the WRC Boardroom. Please contact Vanessa Arauza at 310-258-4201 for questions and details. Information about WRC, training opportunities, events and legislative updates can be found at www.westsiderc.org
- **Purchase of Service Questions?** All service requests will be presented at the Purchase of Service Committee. If services are denied, families and clients have the right to Appeal. You should receive a **Notice of Action** letter informing you of the denial, the reason for the denial and your right to appeal. If you have questions about services, the **WRC Service Standards** are on our website and/or you may request a copy. The State Council of Developmental Disabilities also has information regarding services. The State Council's next meetings are March 18, 2016 Meeting at the WRC Self Determination meeting and April 30, 2016 for Independent Facilitators.

A second meeting was held at the LA Speech and Language Program in Culver City, California on Saturday March 12, 2016 from 10:00 AM until 12:00 PM. The audience included:

19 family members

2 WRC Staff

2 Vendors

1 WRC Board Member

2 Disability Rights of California staff

At the March 12, 2016 public meeting, Mary Lou Weise-Stusser, Director of Community Services, reviewed and explained the statistics that were provided by DDS. Ms. Weise-Stusser explained that the meeting was to be an open discussion and dialogue regarding the disparity in the Purchase of Service Statistics as well as other issues families needed to discuss. Ms. Weise-Stusser discussed the statistics and worked with the audience to cover the issues that concerned them. There was a great deal of discussion regarding the right to services as well as the right to request services and the importance of the goals and objectives for each person in their IPP. Ms. Weise-Stusser emphasized that families and individuals served needed to develop clear, concise goals for services requested. That services are designed to address developmental as well as individual independence issues. Ms. Weise-Stusser and Fernando Gomez, WRC Board Member,

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.

Ms. Weise-Stusser discussed the activities that WRC had implemented after our initial Public Meeting in June 2013 as follows:

1. WRC Board of Directors developed and implemented an Equity Committee that reports to the WRC Board. The Committee has continued to meet prior to Board of Directors' meetings. Interested audience members were asked to join. The current committee is comprised of Board Members, WRC staff, and parents.
 - b. WRC will release the Inside Westside Services by Age informational sheets in May 2016. 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.
- **What is the difference?** The beginning of the power point used in the presentation discussed diversity and questions were raised regarding the difference between diversity and disparity. Mr. Gomez answered this and explained that there is diversity among people but we were here today to speak about the disparity in service delivery.
- **How can we navigate services?**
 1. We want to make sure families utilize the resources. WRC is committed to informing families of services available as well as providing access to available services.
- **Why is there a disparity in services for adults?**
 1. Lack of resources – families expressed concern about the lack of meaningful services, such as employment. The families stated that they were not being given the information.
 2. Employment Specialist – The audience was informed that WRC had recently hired an Employment Specialist who was focused on obtaining jobs, educational opportunities and training for our individuals being served.
 3. Website – WRC's website is updated with the latest employment information and training information. People who do not have a computer or internet access requested that WRC send "hard" copies to them.
 4. Service Coordinators – Audience felt that the service coordinators needed more information to provide to families. Some expressed that their service coordinator did not have many resources to share. WRC will be conducting trainings and be providing service coordinators with our Guide to Services in May.
 5. Computers for clients. Many families felt that one of the best services a regional center could provide is purchasing computers for clients.
 6. Good vendors. Families want to know who the "good" vendors are. It was explained that WRC monitors all services but families had the right to choose vendors.

- **What is the Service Coordinator's responsibility?**
 1. Assisting families to identify and obtain ABA, Social Skills and other services
 2. The service coordinator should assist families and clients in setting meaningful goals
 3. Service Coordinators should help families with IEPs. WRC has an Education Support Team that was shared with the families.
 4. The WRC Family Resource Center is available for all families to obtain information, talk about issues in a parent to parent setting.
 5. Self-Determination is a new program that will be starting. Families will be given a budget and assigned to a Fiscal Management System that they select if they choose self-determination.
 6. WRC will be providing service coordinators with Guide to Services based on age, needs, and goals.
 7. Many people stated that they need more support from the Service Coordinator
 8. Many expressed that they were not given their Right to Appeal when services were denied.
- **How many Service Coordinators is WRC going to hire?**
 1. In response to the need for more support from service coordinators, Ms. Weisse-Stusser explained that new budget language will provide for additional staff. WRC hopes to hire an additional 12-18 depending on funding.
 2. Families were encouraged to join and start-up Support groups as a way of getting information.
 3. The Office of Client's Rights has information for families and clients.
 4. Once again, families request that WRC mail out information and not just discern the information electronically.
 5. Mr. Gomez stated that WRC must work on its communication with families.
- **Public In-Put that Families felt was essential:**
 - Working relationships
 - Communication between WRC and the school district
 - WRC needs to train Service Coordinators
 - Families as support systems
 - Training bulletin to be mailed to families
 - Parent Advocate/Attorneys
 - Different rates by zip code
 - Evaluations/Clinical meetings
 - Training for teens/ young adults
 - Police cross training
 - Life span services-Social Skills
 - Pre-employment/Social Skills-Dr. Wiley

STRATEGIES USED FOR MORE EFFECTIVE OUTREACH

1. WRC held 2 public meetings – one mid- morning (10:00 AM) at the WRC Office and one held on a Saturday from 10:00 – 12:00 at a local community vendor's agency.
2. WRC held the Saturday event to attract more working families. Although we had more people at the meeting held at WRC (17/34), the Saturday meeting drew more families (19/16)
3. WRC posted the Notice of Public Meeting on the WRC website on February 6, 2016 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 in May 2016
2. WRC Equity Committee will continue to meet to review possible strategies.
3. As part of an MHSA Grant, WRC developed a Parent Mentor Project that trains 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.