

Westside Regional Center
Report on Public Meetings
Regarding Disparity in the Purchase of Services
April 2, 2014

Westside Regional Center (WRC) held a public meeting 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 February 28, 2014.

The Public Meeting was held on April 2, 2014 at 10:00 AM in English with simultaneous translation in to Spanish. Fifty-two (52) people were in attendance. The audience included staff, parents, clients, board members; vendors, staff from Senator Holly Mitchell's office and Disability Rights of California.

Mike Danneker, 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.

Mary Lou Weise-Stusser – WRC Director of the Community Services & Quality Assurance Department 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 four (4) times since inception. The committee is comprised of Board Members, WRC staff, and parents and all were in attendance at the Public Meeting.
2. The Disparity Committee is focusing on two tasks in response to the request for more information regarding services and supports that were received at the June 2013 Meetings.
 - a. WRC is in the process of developing 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. A sample was provided to the group in both English and Spanish for input.
 - 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.

The following comments were received:

- The families prefer that meetings and information be provided face-to-face.
- There are no resources for adults ages 18-22. Families are being told that services aren't available for this age group. (It was explained that clients need a Certificate of Completion or High School Diploma for adult services between 18-22 years of age)
- Transportation problems
- It is very difficult to obtain any information in the schools.
- If the service coordinator does not give you help/guidance, communicate with their supervisor and ask for a change of service coordinator.
- In some instances, the families are afraid to ask for services to their service coordinator. The families are also afraid to ask for an appeal when services have been denied. They are afraid that the service coordinator will become angry at them for asking for their rights to services and to appeal denied services.
- The service coordinator should be trained on how to offer services to families. A training that the service coordinators would need is how to relate and communicate with others. Some families expressed that they are intimidated. They stated that if the service coordinator is "strict", then families are in fear of asking for services. These families feel that they are not listened to and the services coordinators tell them, "No, this is not a service that you or the child needs."
- Families believe everything the service coordinator tells them.
- Some people that are present here today would be the voice for other families in their support group.
- I didn't accept No as an answer. I insisted and will continue to do so until the answer is yes. Give me options not just a negative response.
- Speaking to the senators is very important so that they can make a change on how Westside Regional Center gives services to the families.
- Help with transportation so that we are able to take our children to their therapy. Families would like Westside Regional Center to pay for transportation, there are exceptions.
- I attended last year's meeting and I feel better about the administrative changes that have occurred. I have a new service coordinator.
- Thank you Westside Regional Center and Mike for helping us.

Proposed Strategies:

1. WRC Disparity Committee will complete the Informational Sheets and Family Guides to Services.
2. WRC Disparity Committee will continue to meet to review possible strategies.