

**Alameda County Developmental Disabilities  
Planning and Advisory council Minutes  
January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**This meeting was held virtually using Zoom.**

**Directors Present:** Edda Banuelos, Stephen Beard, Scott Brooks, David Cammarata, Sandra Coss, Melissa Crisp-Cooper, Angelique Goldberg, Ron Halog, Christine Hanson, Herb Hastings, Greg King, Rachel Longan, Darin Lounds, Phu Nguyen, Larene Pare, Bill Pelter, Michael Pereira, Dinah Shapiro, Jane Sliheet, Nina Spiegelman, Karen Toto, Leslie Visbal, Esther Wong, and Geneva Ziaoure.

**Directors Excused:** Erin Boyd, Wandra Boyd, June McIntyre, and Laurel Sillins

**Guests:** Kausha King, Family Resource Navigators; Michelle Gong, Regional Center of the East Bay; Arleene Vasquez, La Familia; Patrick McKay; Sara Desumala; Lisa Kleinbub, Regional Center of the East Bay; Deborah Pearl; Hue Ly, Asian Resource Network; Sabrina Jean; Donna Feingold, HireAble; Lindsay Reynolds; Elvia Osorio-Rodriguez, Regional Center of the East Bay; Pam Perls; and Ramsay Mashy

**Staff Present:** Benjamin Chen, Coordinator; Gabrielle Romabiles, Temporary Associate Program Specialist

**Call to Order**

**Roll Call by Angelique Goldberg**

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Angelique Goldberg wished everyone a Happy New Year. She reflected on 2021 as another year overshadowed by the challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, she shared her admiration in the response of service, coordination, and collaboration, which has continued to sustain our community. Angelique encouraged folks to bring intention, partnership, and creativity into the new year.

Aside from welcoming folks into the new year, Angelique acknowledged January as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. She explained that law enforcement and organizations across America unite to eliminate human trafficking in January. Based on the International Labor Organization data, she shared that approximately 40 million human trafficking victims exist worldwide - an issue that impacts all races, classes, religious sects, genders, and bodies.

Angelique also shared that January is National Blood Donor Month and asked folks to consider donating blood. She mentioned that a single donation could help multiple people in need. the [American Red Cross website](#) was posted into the chat for those interested in finding a donation center.

Finally, Angelique announced that the next Board meeting would be on February 9<sup>th</sup> from 9:30 am – 12 pm.

**COORDINATOR'S REPORT**

Benjamin Chen reported that daily case rates of COVID-19 have surged in Alameda County. In January, cases rose to 114 per 100,000 people with a 17.7% positivity rate, which is four times greater than in January 2021. Luckily, fewer children's hospitalizations have been reported, but the increase in cases could still potentially pose a problem for hospital system capacity. In South Africa, Ben shared that case rates declined four weeks after the peak, which he hoped would be the case for Alameda County. He also highlighted the following COVID-19 updates:

- [Alameda County and the City of Berkeley Rescind Face Mask Amendments](#): Everyone Must Mask in All Indoor Public Settings. As of December 30th, everyone, regardless of vaccination status, is required to wear a mask in all indoor settings, which will help limit the spread of COVID-19. [Click here for Alameda County mask guidelines](#).
- Bay Area Health Officers Urge Boosters to Protect Against Omicron Variant. Data shows that a booster dose improves the body's immune response to the virus that causes COVID-19, helping to prevent serious illness and death. While some evidence suggests that the Omicron variant is less lethal, surges of new cases can overwhelm healthcare delivery services.
- Alameda County Reaches Milestone: More than 50% of 5-11-Year-Olds Have Received At least One Dose of COVID-19 Vaccine. Alameda County strongly encourages residents to continue wearing face masks, avoiding large and crowded indoor settings, and getting fully vaccinated and boosted. With recent COVID-19 case increases and the highly transmissible Omicron variant, individuals should stay home if ill or tested positive, test if symptomatic or exposed, and avoid crowded and poorly ventilated indoor settings.
- Alameda County Awards \$12.2 million to 11 community-led coalitions to expand COVID-19 vaccine access and build upon community resiliencies towards pandemic recovery. This initiative is an evolution of previous and existing partnerships with community organizations to provide COVID-19 testing, conduct case investigation and contact tracing, distribute isolation/quarantine kits, and reach residents with COVID-19 prevention and health information.

#### **APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 2021 MEETING MINUTES**

f/Herb Hastings, s/Ron Halog

Minutes approved with two abstentions.

#### **PANEL PRESENTATION: Community Navigation**

Angelique welcomed the panelists and greeted Kausha King from Family Resource Navigators, Sandra Coss from La Familia, Esther Wong & Hue Ly from Asian Resource Network, and Michelle Gong & Phu Nguyen from Regional Center of the East Bay's (RCEB) Asian Case Management Team.

#### **Family Resource Navigators – Community Empowerment Project**

Kausha King introduced herself as Family Resource Navigator's (FRN) Operations Director and the Program Manager for their Community Empowerment/Transition to Equity Project. The Community Empowerment/Transition to Equity Project focuses on supports and services, disparities in services, and family navigation for African American families. She mentioned that FRN also has similar projects for communities that speak Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Hindi, Tamil, and Spanish under the Multilingual Family

Navigation project. Those projects are similarly focused on community empowerment and transitioning to equity.

The work around FRN's empowerment project started in 2019 after finding disparities in services for people with disabilities who identify as African American. To address the disparity issues, FRN collaborated with Care Parent Network. Together, they first looked at data, which revealed disparities in services. They reached out to families to understand the bigger picture and asked about their experience accessing resources. Overall, their goal is to empower families to advocate for their children, especially parents from communities with historical distrust of systems. They started by conducting one-to-one family navigation but learned that families preferred workshops, trainings, and conferences since they could network with other families and support one another. They shifted towards doing workshops and trainings, which led to hosting an annual conference. After moving to the community approach, FRN has focused on getting families information through the most appropriate and accessible means while being incorporating community feedback. Kausha highlighted that FRN's success in building rapport with the African American community stems from being willing to truly listen to their needs and be guided by their voices.

FRN's Community Empowerment Project offers a seven-week leadership training for the African American community. During the training, they introduce grassroots advocacy efforts, teach families how to join committees, and elevate their voices beyond advocating for their children. FRN's Community Empowerment Project is also putting effort towards forming a collective where families and community partners can directly share their needs and concerns. Overall, the focus is to provide families with the tools needed to uplift their concerns to broader audiences.

Bill Pelter thanked Kausha for her presentation and asked if there were updates on FRN's article regarding the disparities in healthcare among Black and Latinx children. Kausha mentioned that inequities in healthcare persist and that not much has changed. However, their intention for the article was to highlight the challenges faced by Black and Latinx families to broader communities.

Larene Pare expressed her appreciation for Kausha's presentation and the work FRN does. She shared that FRN has supported her and commended the 'strengthening families approach' that teaches families how to advocate for themselves and educate providers. With the upcoming Legislative Breakfast and the state budget release, she asked what her ask would be. Kausha answered that continuing FRN's work without worrying about funding running out. Many grants last between one to three years, but the work extends beyond that timeframe.

Nina Spiegelman thanked Kausha for the presentation and shared that she enjoyed hearing about the Community Empowerment Project's evolution. She asked if FRN has written a paper on their findings. Kausha shared that their work is detailed in their reports and that she'd be happy to send them to the group.

### **La Familia**

Sandra Coss introduced herself as the Supervisor for the Disparity Funds Program at La Familia. Before stepping into her current role, she shared that she worked as a case manager supporting Latinx families in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties for ten years. As a case manager, she noticed that language barrier, fear of discrimination, and mistrust in public assistance prevented Latinx families from accessing services.

She briefly went over La Familia's history. She shared that for 45 years, the organization has provided mental health and community support services to Latinx families from Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. She described La Familia as an inclusive community-based organization committed to its mission of providing underserved multicultural communities with the tools and supports necessary to build resilience, wellness, and economic power. La Familia offers a wide range of services, from Zumba classes to empowerment services and outpatient therapy. Sandra highlighted La Familia's robust COVID-19 response, including vaccine clinics, testing, and community support funds. So far, La Familia has tested 86,000 people for COVID-19 and vaccinated more than 20,000 individuals. Edda Banuelos is the Director of the Developmental Disabilities department that is broken into case management (as a delegated agency from RCEB) and the Disparity Fund Program, which Sandra supervises. She shared that since 2018 La Familia has had a direct contract with DDS. For four years, La Familia has been a recipient of DDS's Promoting Service Access and Equity (SEA) Grant, which provides cultural and linguistic education and support to Latinx individuals with IDD and their families who live in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. Overall, La Familia's Disparity Funds Program was designed to reduce barriers that prevent families from resources and services, increase clients' knowledge and ability to navigate the service system, exercise their rights, and build trust between public systems and the Latinx community.

Before the pandemic, all of their activities were in-person, but they shifted to hosting meetings over Zoom and posting information to social media, like Instagram and Facebook. To accommodate the technological shift, La Familia has taught families how to use technology, providing many families with the skills to access online resources.

Sandra shared that their program has established an approach that allows them to reliably communicate with parents and clients through regular engagements, like monthly orientations and workshops in Spanish. Orientations cover broad topics ranging from the Lanterman Act to generic resources and RCEB services. During their monthly orientations, parents and caregivers are given time to network with parent leaders and learn about support groups in their local communities. For those interested, families may opt into one-on-one consultations after the orientations. They've found that one-on-one consultations have been integral to breaking down stigma-related barriers, connecting with families, and sharing information/updates. La Familia also has a Local Advisory Committee (LAC) that meets quarterly and is attended by RCEB's Diversity and Equity Specialist. During their LAC meeting, they discuss program design and reflect on areas for improvement. La Familia stays connected with their community by providing monthly newsletters, a medium for sharing activities, information, and community resources.

In addition to monthly orientations, La Familia offers monthly workshops that cover topics like regional center services, self-determination, living options, social security, and more. Sandra emphasized that La Familia presents workshops based on the community's needs and interests. As briefly mentioned, La Familia has several parent leaders that lead parent support groups. During these monthly meetings, parent leaders share how they've navigated the service system. Sandra highlighted Rossana Ali, a parent leader from Dublin/Livermore, and the impact she's made. Rossana attended a Self-Determination orientation, and her son was selected as a participant for the SDP pilot program – the first Latinx client from RCEB to transition into SDP. He is currently receiving services, and now Rossana is certified for the Personal Center Plan and helping other parents develop their plans.

La Familia hosts two main annual events: the Latino Equity Summit and their End-of-the-Year Event. The Latino Equity Summit was developed to create leadership opportunities for families. At the same time, their End-of-the-Year Events celebrates the accomplishments from the previous year, where folks

engage in fun learning activities. Sandra also shared that La Familia is diligent about gathering feedback from their participants, which they collect from surveys and focus group discussions in addition to collecting data needed for quarterly DDS reports.

Sandra concluded her presentation by letting folks know that La Familia is interested in collaborating and partnering with groups to support their program participants.

### **Asian Resource Network (ARN) & Regional Center of the East Bay (RCEB) – Case Managers**

Esther Wong introduced Hue Ly, Asian Resource Network staff; Michelle Gong, a case manager from the Asian team at RCEB; Phu Nguyen, case manager supervisor at RCEB; and herself as panelists speaking on the community navigation within the Asian American community. She recognized that the Asian community is diverse, with over 1,400 languages spoken. As ARN staff, Esther shared that the project was funded to train DSPs who speak Asian languages. ARN's mission is to do workforce development in the mainstream provider community, but they also engage in active outreach to the Asian community to identify people that may be interested/qualify for regional center services. Esther stated that the pandemic has strained ARN's work and queued Hue to explain more.

Hue explained that ARN connects consumers and their families to access regional center resources and services. Over the last year, ARN noticed that it was difficult for families to link with RCEB staff who speak Asian languages. Moreover, the pandemic made outreach to the Asian community challenging since community services were closed, which was compounded by the apprehension of Asian families to let folks into their homes. She added that immigrant families who have a family member with an IDD are not open to seeking or receiving services, which makes building trust and rapport challenging. Additionally, immigrant families feel disempowered to seek assistance because of stigma. Hue recognized building trust among immigrant families as the key to connecting them to needed resources and education.

Michelle shared that she's been a case manager for over nine years and serves consumers between three to 80 in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. She described that many of her clients speak Cantonese or Taishanese and live in various settings, from the family home to group homes, and even independently with SLS. She shared that supporting this community requires a hands-on approach and reaffirmed language as a barrier to receiving resources and support. For example, the loss of bilingual staff prevents monolingual families from getting the services they need. Michelle finds it helpful to work with community support staff, vendors, and professionals (i.e., doctors, school administration, etc.) and have a binder that lists all organizations. She shared that families struggle to transition their youth into adult services and identified starting transition conversations before the child turns 18 and including community vendors and partners as remedies. Similarly, she suggested that explaining services to families requires repetition and reiterated the importance of including service providers and community partners who speak in the consumer's language.

Esther elaborated on language barriers and stated that monolingual families are reliant on their case manager and staff who speak their language. Esther believes that increasing the number of bilingual DSPs into the provider network would relieve case managers while also creating an opportunity for providers to build trust with the Asian community.

Like preceding panelists, Phu expressed that the Asian community experiences barriers to accessing services. Phu works primarily with the Vietnamese community, which he's done for over 30 years, and has reflected on the reason behind the low numbers of Asian families seeking regional center services.

He agreed with Michelle that language barriers and culture prevent Asian families from obtaining support, but he also mentioned that transportation plays a role. Referencing the former, he explained that monolingual Vietnamese families struggle to complete application forms because it is difficult to understand the questions. Additionally, some Vietnamese families have cultural beliefs that wrongdoing in a past life is why their family member has a disability and that caring for them is their sole responsibility. In some cases, families feel shame and feel they need to isolate their family member, which prevents them from exploring appropriate services. Some families believe that generic resources and regional center services aren't required since they are not used to a public service culture. For these reasons, Phu and other case managers work to encourage Vietnamese families not to worry about the opinions of others while instilling the importance of public services. He expects an improved outlook as adult children raised in America will help navigate systems for their family member. As for transportation, Phu mentioned that parents feel uncomfortable inconveniencing their adult children to drive them to meetings and feel discouraged when they miss RCEB appointments.

Esther reiterated the importance of building trust within the Asian community. She's noticed that many immigrant families believe that receiving public services will jeopardize their immigration status. Therefore, speaking the same language is not enough; trust needs to be established to deliver appropriate services effectively.

Angelique asked about outreach approaches that have been successful for the Asian community. Phu shared that he helped a family overcome a public assistance myth – one family was reluctant to access services because they thought the younger generation would need to pay the government back. However, after building a relationship with the parents, Phu assured them that was not the case, and the family has sought several regional center services ever since.

Michelle reflected on the impact providers can make when they successfully build trust with the community – she explained that Community Based Organizations like Helping Hands East Bay have been integral in helping monolingual families complete necessary applications and think through appropriate services for their family members. She also mentioned that case managers may not have the opportunity to speak frequently with their clients and their families. Organizations like ARN, which has bilingual staff, are invaluable.

Ben asked all panelists how they overcome the challenges related to shame, stigma, and different cultural understandings of disability. Phu mentioned that overcoming shame will take time and alluded to future generations adopting a more inclusive perspective as a strong catalyst.

Elvia Osorio-Rodriguez, the Associate Director for Children's Services at RCEB, added that RCEB has focused outreach to the Vietnamese community regarding SDP. Vietnamese case managers help the Vietnamese community by explaining basic information on SDP, allowing them to make informed decisions.

## **EBLC REPORT**

Michael Pereira reported that Governor Newsom released his budget proposal on January 10<sup>th</sup>, which is an initial budget offering that will likely be amended through the 'May Revise' process with the Legislature. Based upon this fiscal year's revenue, Michael shared that the state is projecting the surplus of \$45.7 billion that includes over \$20 billion for discretionary purposes and will likely account for one

time spending dollars. He projected that roughly \$16 billion will be allocated for education, reserve deposits, and state pensions. With focus on the IDD community, he advised that statutory limits will likely be exceeded, which he explained as the total the state could spend. If the state exceeds the amount, then taxpayers may receive dollars back. As expected, the budget will address COVID-19 issues and Michael speculates for focus to be on increasing testing, distribution, and the delivery of vaccines. He mentioned that meeting requirements for the booster mandate has been challenging and hopes conditions improve.

Michael described that the state is planning to increase spending on general education, and families can expect to see a general per capita increase of \$20,855 per year per student – the highest amount to date. Special education continues to see additional investment as in recent budget years.

Regarding DDS specific dollars, including the implementation of the rate model for service providers, he shared that the first round of increases will take into effect in April 2022. He added that over \$65.5 million is allocated for assisting families in their child's early start transition into special education. Additionally, there are over \$15 million allocated for communication assessments for the deaf and hard of hearing community and \$8.4m for a service model pilot program to expand full employment opportunities to replace 14/ work activity programs, a result from SB 639 passing last year.

Michael announced that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is creating a new DDS position to support the aging population as the implementation of the Master Plan for Aging rolls out. HHS is also providing ongoing funds to Regional Centers for reduced caseloads for children five years old and younger. Michael added that some monies (\$2.1m) will be available for bolstering the Master Plan for Aging dashboard, and funding to help improve health care access for people working with a disability. Similarly, the California Department of Human Resources is continuing practices toward recruiting and supporting folks with IDD to gain employment for State and Local positions.

Finally, Michael asked folks to help promote the Legislative Breakfast, which is scheduled for January 28<sup>th</sup>. He emphasized that the IDD system needs more immediate investment and that rate increases should be accelerated beyond the first increases scheduled for April 2022. He encouraged self-advocates, families, and parents to attend and share their concerns, issues, and stories with legislative directors and aids.

### **Racial Equity Steering Committee (RESC) Report**

Gabrielle Romabiles reported that RESC met twice since the last Board Meeting – on December 13<sup>th</sup> and January 10<sup>th</sup>. She expressed her gratitude to Lisa Kleinbub, Ronke Sodipo, and Christine Hanson for joining on December 13<sup>th</sup>, where they presented on Living Options and answered questions from committee members and guests. Gabrielle mentioned that committee members used the January 10<sup>th</sup> meeting to digest the discussion from December 13<sup>th</sup> and identify how to best support vendors based on what was shared. She told folks that the next RESC would be on Valentines' Day from 3 pm – 4:30 pm.

Since the December Board meeting, the Asian American and Pacific Island (AAPI) workgroup met on December 14<sup>th</sup> and January 11<sup>th</sup>. During the December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, the group discussed strategies for reaching monolingual AAPI consumers and families. They identified project proposals that included informational videos and resource guidebooks. That same meeting, the group was joined by Lisa and Ronke, who provided an overview of the regional center's new position, the Self-Determination and Participant Directed Services Specialist. She thanked Lisa and Ronke again for attending the AAPI meeting. Gabrielle explained that the group continued compiling resources for monolingual consumers during their meeting on January 11<sup>th</sup>. The group also thought through the following topics: CalABLE, transition planning, RCEB basics, self-determination program, and other resources related to internet and technology access. She shared that the next AAPI meeting would be on February 5<sup>th</sup> from 10 am – 11 am.

Gabrielle reported that during the last Black Providers and Consumers Workgroup (BPCW) meeting on January 5<sup>th</sup>, the group debriefed the December 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. Additionally, Ben Chen went over the Living Options workshop, and the group discussed tentative project proposals. She concluded by announcing the next BPCW meeting date, which will be on February 23<sup>rd</sup> from 1 pm – 2 pm.

### **RCEB REPORT**

Lisa Kleinbub reported that one of RCEB's yearly requirements is to report on purchase service (POS) expenditures for the previous year, including language, ethnicity, diagnosis, and living arrangement. She added that RCEB would be scheduling meetings regarding POS expenditures in March, which folks can find on [RCEB's website](#). She emphasized that the pandemic has skewed data for the fiscal years 2019 through 2021 and that there will be more authorizations due to how RCEB enters alternative service delivery into their system. Despite nuances in recent POS data, Lisa expressed that she's looking forward to hearing the community's thoughts on the data.

Echoing Michael's sentiments on the booster mandate, Lisa shared that it's been a challenge. She explained that all eligible RCEB staff are required to receive their booster by February 1<sup>st</sup>. Those that do not receive it will need to get tested weekly. Given the lack of available testing, Lisa will continue working through booster mandate challenges with her staff.

Lisa mentioned that RCEB is had been working on the health and safety requests. Authority had been given to Regional Center's Executive Director's for approval. As of January 2<sup>nd</sup>, regional centers will no longer be able approve health and safety requests, and service providers will need to go through Department of Developmental Services (DDS). When providers report concerns about staffing needs to RCEB, RCEB will email the process to make a request to DDS if they believe they may need to incur costs to fund staffing at higher rates. Lisa hopes that DDS will be flexible in reviewing requests, especially since the current surge has created a challenging landscape for service providers.

Lisa highlighted that regional centers are gathering rate implementation-related information for DDS and their consultant to help them compute rates that will begin implementation in April. Currently, RCEB is forming batches of providers and their current rates to gain a snapshot of their services and staffing level. Information gathered from service providers will be related to DSP level (i.e., behavioral technician, nurse, etc.), the percentage of their program within the community versus onsite, and more. Lisa urged selected providers to promptly reply to RCEB because responses will impact how rates are determined. She anticipates the process to be complicated and hopes to gather the information in February.

Like Michael, Lisa focused on the state's budget, which will serve over 400,000 consumers. Effective in July, continued budget growth will help reduce regional center caseloads. She expressed her hope for funding to sustain service support rates. Lisa added that monies from the budget would continue the funding for caseloads of individuals with no or low POS. She made two assumptions based on the state's budget: increased service consumption when caseloads are lowered, and consumers will utilize social recreation services. Since social recreation services will roll out in July, Lisa asked providers interested in providing social recreation services to contact RCEB's Resource Development Department.

The budget surplus would also support case management in the early start and young children's programs, allowing RCEB to have one case manager for every 40 children. The 1:40 caseload would allow for more focus on IEP and transition planning. She shared her excitement in supporting children coming out of the pandemic. Within the budget, Lisa also mentioned that there is money for communication assessments for the deaf and hard of hearing population, which are specialized assessments.

She shared a lesser-known aspect of the budget – that there will be additional money for service providers who will be required to complete paperwork to be identified as medical providers. The paperwork includes items like listing service provider board members and having those individuals go through a second level of review, so Medicaid funds can be seen as directly to approve providers. She assured folks that the process isn't complicated but will need to happen soon. Finally, Lisa shared that there will be a proposal for universal healthcare by 2024, which extends to individuals that don't have legal paperwork. Currently, MediCal has been expanded to adults 60 and over in addition to people up to age 26. Lisa is happy about the healthcare proposal and looks forward to seeing it crystalize over the next five months.

## **HCEB REPORT**

Darin Lounds updated folks on the Avance apartments in Livermore, sharing that the application period closed in December. He reminded the group that the 44 units are for regional center consumers and that the majority are RCEB clients; however, some applications were outside the catchment area. Darin expects applicants to be contacted soon and that folks can move into Avance starting summer.

Darin shared that he's been attending meetings for the California Policy Center for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities group, which focuses on increasing financial support and improving access to jobs, homes, and social networks for people with IDD. He shared that leadership for this group includes Senator Don Perata and a doctor from UC Davis' MIND Institute. Darin hopes to galvanize the group's support in his state-level advocacy to allocate approximately \$4 million to housing and community development.

Finally, he shared that the HCEB waitlists are open and directed folks to [HCEB's website](#) (under 'Our Homes') to access the application.

## **PVAC REPORT**

Leslie Visbal shared that PVAC last met on December 10<sup>th</sup> and mentioned that PVAC is looking for someone to fill the role of Co-Chair. She concluded that the next PVAC meeting would be on January 14<sup>th</sup> from 9:30 am – 11:30 am.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Stephen Beard announced that he surpassed 5,000 unique listeners since launching his podcast on accessible housing, *Accessible Housing Matters* last year. He also shared that his latest episode features DD Council Board member Melisa Crisp-Cooper and her husband, Owen and their housing search. During the episode, he also speaks with the president of SafeinHome – a disability equipment supplier from Walnut Creek – who has collaborated with East Bay Innovations and others to provide remote support services to aid direct support staff and help community members who want to live independently in their homes. [Click here to visit Stephen's podcast.](#)

**MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:59 am**