

# SAN GABRIEL/POMONA REGIONAL CENTER

January 19, 2022

TO: Penelope Fode, Board President & Board of Directors  
San Gabriel / Pomona Valleys Developmental Services, Inc.

FROM: Anthony Hill, M.A. J.D. Esq.  
Executive Director

RE: Executive Director's Report

## Happy New Year/2022

Dear Self Advocates, parents, families, Service Providers, Community Partners, and San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center (SG/PRC) Board of Directors, on behalf of the SG/PRC staff we wish you a New Year that is filled with love, joy, family, friends, and ongoing success in everything that you do. During 2021, we accomplished great things, in supporting the roll out of COVID-19 vaccines through clinics, education and encouragement. We did our part individually and collectively in participating in COVID-19 testing clinics and practicing evolving health care policy and guidance for each other, and for our community we deeply cherish. Our children returned to the brick and mortar classrooms, channels and streams of commerce fully re-opened, large venue events have returned, vaccines are now available for children at most ages, over 70 percent of Californians are vaccinated, COVID-19 booster vaccines have been approved by the Federal Drug Administration, and we have COVID-19 treatments. When looking back, 2021 was a great year, and 2022 will surpass it, because of our resilience, and diligence to support, encourage, and be kind to each other.... unifying soul force that always overcomes everything.

## Martin Luther King Jr. Day

When I think about the great Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I am amazed at his grace, compassion and unfettered determination to serve all people through love and humility.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. through his life and actions modeled the example for all of us to follow, in staying true to his beliefs, refusing to seek comfort as a means to avoid the messy process of increasing social awareness, accepting personal responsibility and our impact on others. We admire, you Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and we will do our very best to follow your leadership model every second, and every minute of every day.

*"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"*

*Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

### **SG/PRC's Critical Business Functions**

Given recent public health policy related to the Omicron COVID-19 variant tethered to our "Abundance of Caution" strategy, effective December 29, 2021 our remote workforce, nearly all SG/PRC staff are working flexible remote schedules of 1 day working in the office. Excluding our critical workforce staff, including our fiscal, human resources, intake/eligibility, administrative and information technology teams that are working at least 3 days in the office while most are working 5 days a week in the office.

All staff are required to participate weekly in the SG/PRC COVID-19 testing clinic, in receiving both the rapid BinaxNow antigen test, and PCR test consecutively. Unvaccinated staff, are required to test more frequently. As many of you are aware, during August 2021, all SG/PRC staff are required to disclose their vaccination status when engaging in business activities, upon entering homes of individual served, residential facilities, skill nursing facilities, supported living arrangements, day program, schools, jails, homeless shelters through relying on our electronic confirmation system, verified through our Human Resource team.

The SG/PRC office has remained open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Visitors and staff are required to wear a surgical grade face mask and pass a contactless temperature screening device. Our Porter cleans and sanitizes our business office daily, supported by other internal health and safety protocols. We are very proud of our distinction of being the **only regional center throughout the pandemic** that has continued to provide in-person intake/eligibility assessments and early intervention clinics. Every business day we see children and their parents or guardians spending time with us, waiting in our lobby, and thereafter receiving diagnostic counselling, assessments, and intake services. These images, illustrate the mission of SG/PRC in action meeting the needs of its community, exceedingly.

With regard to Individual Program Plan and Individual Family Service Plan meetings, SG/PRC's Service Coordinators are conducting these meetings in-person at the discretion of the individual served, their legal guardian or conservator while practicing health care guidance through wearing surgical grade masks, and staying within prescribed boundaries for psychical distancing.

### **SG/PRC COVID-19 Data**

Los Angeles County COVID-19 positivity rate 7-day average reported on January 16, 2022, is 19.2% (See Attachment A). On November 26, 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) designated the variant B. 1.1.529, a variant of concern, named Omicron. The WHO decision was based on evidence presented to the Technical Advisory Group on Virus Evolution that Omicron has several mutations that impact on how it behaves, on how easily it spreads and severity of illness (Source World Health Organization).

We have experienced a steep increase in the number of individuals served, service provider staff, and SG/PRC staff positivity rates. Currently, positivity rates are at levels near the surge during December 2020 and January 2021. A noticeable difference from the surge during the past year is the layer of protection for those vaccinated ....demonstrating no symptoms, mild symptoms, or having less reliance on hospital resources.

Our surge staffing registries are sturdy, and are supporting the SG/PRC community and individuals served through other Southern California regional centers. The purpose of surge registries is to support individuals served living in residential settings, supported living arrangements or with their family. When staffing shortages occur due to COVID-19, Direct Support Professionals from surge registries all allocated to cover scheduled working hours of unavailable staff.

### **COVID-19 Vaccine Data**

As required by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Directive, SG/PRC is collecting COVID-19 vaccine data for individuals served. We are collecting the vaccine brand, whether the individual served is fully vaccinated, and whether the individual served demonstrated their choice to decline COVID-19 vaccines. SG/PRC's vaccine data collection efforts remain at **the top of the list** of regional centers according to DDS Data at [www.dds.ca.gov](http://www.dds.ca.gov) under [COVID-19 data](#). The DDS dashboard reflects data collected before or on December 10 2021.

### **SG/PRC's COVID-19 Testing Clinic**

Our SG/PRC testing Clinic is open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursdays for individuals served and their families, service provider staff and their families, and SG/PRC staff and their families. The clinic is held at the SG/PRC office from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Effective November 29, 2021, we have begun offering BinaxNow Covid-19 Antigen test, a rapid testing option as an additional layer of protection against the spread of COVID-19 and its known variants including Omicron. The accuracy rate for BinaxNow Covid-19 Antigen test for known positive cases is 84.6% and 98.5% for known negative samples. However, our supplies of the BinaxNow Covid-19 tests are very low. As a result, the rapid test is only available for SG/PRC employees.

All SG/PRC employees are required to test at least (1) time weekly consecutively with the rapid and PCR tests. Some staff are required to test more frequently under specific circumstances. Testing demand has risen. We are testing approximately 225 people every day during our clinic. A memorable experience I had recently, was when an individual served drove up in her car, recognized me, and I supported her with the nasal swab process, because we did not have our nurse working that day. The individual served, thanked me. After her sample was collected, she smiled and drove away in her car (See Attachment B).

### **Federal Government COVID-19 Test Kits**

Beginning January 15, 2022, every home in the United States is eligible to receive (4) COVID-19 test kits at no cost. You can order your free test kits @ [www.covidtest.gov](http://www.covidtest.gov).

### **Moderna & Pfizer Vaccine Booster Clinic**

On January 27, 2022, SG/PRC is offering a COVID-19 vaccine booster clinic featuring **only** the **Moderna** and **Pfizer** vaccine brands from 9 a.m. through 1 p.m. at the SG/PRC business office. Our clinic is a partnership venture with Mercy Pharmacy. Please refer to our Vaccine Booster Clinic flyer for additional information (See Attachment C).

### **Holiday Outreach**

Every year in collaboration with the Richard D. Davis Foundation, SG/PRC encourages goodwill through supporting families during the holiday season. During December 2021, the Richard D. Davis Foundation contributed \$10,000 dollars and a portion thereof are donations from SG/PRC staff payroll deductions.

One Hundred/ \$100.00 dollar gift cards (grocery) were purchased and delivered to needy families. In addition, SG/PRC hosted a virtual Holiday Dance Party, featuring D.J. Jose De Leon, Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus where many individuals served danced and had fun. It was a fantastic event.

### **Friendship Virtual Dance Party**

SG/PRC is hosting a Friendship Virtual Dance Party on February 10, 2022 from 6:00 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. There will be games and prizes. This event is intended for individuals and their families that are served by SG/PRC (See Attachment D).

### **Collaborative Virtual Transition Fair**

On March 16, 2022, SG/PRC in partnership with local WorkAbility Programs are jointly hosting a transition service fair featuring live presentations from 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. We hear through the grapevine that this fair was a phenomenal success during the past year.

The transition services fair offers a unique opportunity to explore and learn about employment options, day programs, and educational options and other supports for young adults (See Attachment E).

### **Personal Protective Equipment**

SG/PRC has sufficient supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for individuals served and their families and our service providers. Parents' Place is coordinating PPE distributions for individuals served and their families. You can reach Parents' Place at (626) 919-1091. Jaimie Anabalon, Quality Assurance Manager coordinates PPE distributions for service providers and can be reached at [PPE@sgprc.org](mailto:PPE@sgprc.org).

### **Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LCDPH)**

On January 8, 2022, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health issued amended guidance covering Community Care Residential Facilities regarding the Omicron Variant; return to work criteria, vaccine boosters, criteria for non-essential visitation, and new / readmissions into residential facilities. The guidance covers a wide range of subject matter. A very important change is found on page 18, related to exposed staff returning to work based on vaccination and booster status. We believe this amendment is a response weighing the health and safety risk of Omicron on vaccinated persons while balancing staffing shortages, due to the rate of spread of Omicron. This guidance does not apply to all service provider categories under a theory of general applicability (See Attachment F).

### **SG/PRC's Expenditures FY 21/22**

According to the C-2 Amendment SG/PRC's Operations allocation is \$35,207,155 with current expenditures reflecting \$34,058,555. According to the C1 Amendment, SG/PRC's POS allocation is \$318,032,645, with year- to- date expenditures \$107,175,719. SG/PRC is projecting Operations and POS budget reserves.

### **Department of Developmental Services (DDS)**

#### ***Minimum Wage Increase Effective January 1, 2022***

DDS issued a Directive dated December 17, 2021, informing regional centers that some service providers might be eligible to receive a rate adjustment to increase employee's pay to comply with the California minimum wage increase from \$14.00 to \$15.00 hourly for employers with 26 or more employees, and from \$13.00 to \$14.00 for employers with fewer than 26 employees. The Directive provides an overview of the procedural process and criteria for adjustments under this specific initiative (See Attachment G).

### ***Extension of Waivers Modifications and Directives Due to COVID-19***

On December 22, 2021, DDS issued a Directive, with amendments and extensions to several COVID-19 Directives covering; Health and Safety Wavier Exemptions, Day Program Attendance, In-Home Respite Worker/ First Aid and CPR training requirements, Residential Facility Payments COVID-19 related absences, Extension of Early Start Services, Waiver of Half Day Billing, and Waiver of Self-Determination Budget Restrictions and Financial Management Services (See Attachment H).

### ***COVID-19 Booster Shot Mandate and Other Information***

On December 23, 2021, DDS issued guidance anchored to the State's Public Health Officer's Order, requiring that residential facility workers, workers who provide services within indoor settings and Healthcare workers that are eligible for COVID-19 Booster vaccines, must receive booster shots before February 1, 2022 or no later than 15 days after the recommended timeframe for receiving a booster dose. Currently, 70% percent of SG/PRC employees have submitted verification of receiving COVID-19 Booster doses (See Attachment I).

### **Appeals Process Survey**

DDS is conducting a survey to gather feedback from individuals served and their families related to their experience when participating in the regional center appeals process. The survey is covering appeals filed within the past three years. Responses are confidential and can be sent to [familyinput@dds.ca.gov](mailto:familyinput@dds.ca.gov). (See Attachment J).

### **Governor Newsom's Budget DDS 2022-23**

On January 10, 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom released his budget for the State of California. The DDS overview focuses on proposed budget policy impacting DDS, Regional Centers, and State Operated Facilities. Encouraging policy is an overall budget increase from Current year \$10.9 Billion to Budget Year \$12.4 Billion supporting an estimated increase in caseload growth moving from 386,431 to 407,634. Within the summary, DDS provides updates related to the American Rescue Plan Act 2021 budget policy initiatives (See Attachment K).

### ***New Policies/ Regional Centers***

Reduced Caseload ratios for children ages 0 through 5 (\$51.1. million), Part C to Part B transition resources (\$10.0 million), Special Education Supports for Service Coordinators (\$3.2 million), and Communication Assessments for individuals served that are deaf or hard of hearing (\$15.0 million).

### ***Regional Center Operations***

Performance Incentive Program (Caseload Ratio Reduction) (\$87.5 million), Enhanced Service Coordination for low or no POS (\$14.2 million); Lanterman Act Provisional Eligibility (\$8.1 million), Specialized Caseloads Ratio for Complex Needs (\$4.4 million), Emergency Coordinators (\$2.5 million) and Direct Support Professional Training and Development (\$16.2 million).

### ***Regional Center Purchase of Services***

Service Provider Rate Reform (\$554.2 million/ including \$427.1 million increase), Minimum Wage Increase (\$4.1 million), Social Recreation/Camp Services (\$49 million/ including \$19.6 million increase), START Training (\$17.9 million/including \$1.3 million increase), and Lanterman Act Provisional Eligibility (\$17.4 million/including \$1.2 million increase). Within the budget synopsis, you will find additional information related to DDS safety net services, administration, and state operated facilities.

### **Self-Determination Program- Goods and Services**

On January 13, 2022, DDS issued guidance regarding the Self- Determination Program (SDP) Budget process. Specifically, offering examples of goods and services that are not allowable through SDP and goods or services that might be secured outside of the individual budget.

A major takeaway is that SDP funds can only be used for goods and services approved by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and those that are not available through other funding sources (e.g., Medi-Cal, In-Home Support Services, school, etc.) This Directive will help the Planning Team navigate Individual Program Plan needs identification within the context of the SDP Budget process (See Attachment L).

### **Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) Updates**

The Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) represents the 21 non-profit regional centers that advocate on behalf of and coordinates services for California's over 350,000 people with developmental disabilities. The Association functions as a leader and advocate in promoting the continuing entitlement of individuals with developmental disabilities to achieve their full potential and highest level of self- sufficiency. The Association participates in the development of public legislative policy that impact individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

### **ARCA's Budget Updates**

ARCA's staff have been very responsive through delivery and unpacking of Governor Newsom's 22/23 budget and policy initiatives with continual updates, and subsequent analysis. We anticipate in the near future, ARCA will compose a written response related to the proposed budget's very positive funding components while expanding our view to include policy initiatives that had not been included. ARCA is scheduled to meet remotely on January 20, 2022. Thereafter in subsequent Director's reports, I will include ARCA's policy positions related to Budget Year (22/23) and proposed Bills impacting individuals served, their families and regional centers.