

SAN GABRIEL/POMONA REGIONAL CENTER

February 16, 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

Embracing Our Shared Gift of Cultural Diversity

Black History Month

San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center (SG/PRC) welcomes February as Black History Month creating awareness for African Americans' achievements and contributions to U.S. history. Black History Month was created in 1926, by Carter G. Woodson (Harvard PhD.) and February was chosen to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

Among the prominent figures are Madam C.J. Walker, who was the first U.S. female to become a self-made millionaire; George Washington Carver, who derived nearly 300 products from the peanut; and Rosa Parks, who sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott and galvanized the civil rights movement.

Shirley Chisholm, who was the first African American female elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the leader of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. President Barack Obama, the first non-white U.S. President of African and Caucasian heritage. Vice President Kamala Harris, the first female Vice President representing African and (Asian) cultures.

Lunar New Year

SG/PRC welcomes Lunar New Year on February 1, 2022. The Lunar Year is 354 days, 8 hours, 48 minutes and 34 seconds and is based on monthly cycles of the moon. A big family reunion dinner is held on Lunar New Year's Eve, which was January 31st, 2022. Lunar New Year 2022 is the Year of the "Water Tiger." The Tiger ...Yin is paired with the heavenly Stem "Ren"...water.

The 12-year Chinese zodiac calendar is represented by 12 different animals, 10 heavenly stems, and 12 earthly branches. The Chinese New Year is celebrated in other Asian Countries, including Vietnam and South Korea. In ancient Chinese Society it was the only day girls could go out to meet boys. Lunar Year festivities can continue up to 15 days.

SG/PRC's Critical Business Functions

Effective December 29, 2021 our remote workforce, nearly all SG/PRC staff are working flexible remote schedules of 1 day working in the office. The exception are staff within our critical workforce, including our fiscal, human resources, intake/eligibility, administrative and information technology teams working at least 3 days in the office.

All staff continue to test weekly in the SG/PRC COVID-19 testing clinic 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 engaged in business activities, upon entering homes of individuals served, residential facilities, skill nursing facilities, supported living arrangements, day programs, schools, jails, and homeless shelters through relying on our electronic confirmation system, verified through our Human Resources 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.

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

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 actively meeting the needs of its community.

We are getting closer to opening the SG/PRC redesigned lobby as a welcoming environment for individuals served and their families. Our shared vision is that every person that enters the SG/PRC lobby experiences a sense of comfort conveying that SG/PRC is here to serve and take care of their needs.

Intake/Eligibility Data Ending December 31, 2021

Early Intervention/Intake

1216 New Referrals
1239 Eligibility Reviews
1167 Children Found Eligible
37 Reactivations
7 Transfer in

Lanterman/Intake

254 New Referrals
314 Eligibility Reviews
208 Found Eligible
419 Exiting EI (Eligibility Reviews)
214 Eligible (/EI transitions)
45 Provisional Eligible
96 Reactivations
40 Transfer in

(See Attachment A)

SG/PRC COVID-19 Data

Los Angeles County COVID-19 positivity rate 7-day average reported as of my last report was 19.2% percent, and now the positivity rate is 5.5% on February 11, 2022, according to Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. A decline of nearly 75%. This report is encouraging. However, we need to continue to follow public health authority guidance. Our shared efforts created the remarkable downward trend (See Attachment B).

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 under [COVID-19 data](#) updated on February 4, 2022.

Healthcare Worker Booster Vaccine Mandate

On January 25, 2022, the California Department of Public Health extended the deadline for Healthcare workers to receive a COVID-19 vaccine booster. The prior deadline was February 1, 2022. The new deadline is March 1, 2022. All SG/PRC employees are designated as Healthcare workers. Approximately 84% percent of SG/PRC employees have received a COVID-19 vaccine booster (See Attachment C).

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 an average of 98.5% for known negative samples. The rapid test is now available for individuals served, their families members and service provider staff (See Attachment D).

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 at [COVIDtests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov)-Free at-home COVID-19 tests.

Personal Protective Equipment

SG/PRC has sufficient supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for our service providers and individuals served and their families. SG/PRC has partnered with Parents' Place to distribute PPE. You can reach Parents' Place at (626) 919-1091. Jaime Anabalon, Quality Assurance Manager coordinates PPE distributions for service providers and can be reached at PPE@sgprc.org.

Spring Safari Virtual Dance Party

SG/PRC is hosting a Spring Safari virtual dance party for individuals served at least 18 years in age. The dance party will be held on March 4, 2022 between 5:00 p.m. -7:00 p.m. SG/PRC has hosted a yearly internship program with Azusa Pacific University for over a decade. An annual dance party is a featured event of the internship program. Andria Stichter, intern with the support of SG/PRC's Client Advocate, Elisa Herzog and others are planning a fantastic event, including prizes for safari theme costumes, virtual backgrounds and trivia games (See Attachment E).

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. If you are interested, please register for this event. We look forward to spending time with you while supporting your needs (See Attachment F).

Affordable Connectivity Program

The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) has officially launched the Affordable Connectivity Program. Enrollment is now open for households with a least one qualifying household member under a list of criteria, including income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, individuals approved to receive benefits under the free or reduced price lunch program, individuals that receive Pell Grant funding during the current year, individuals that participates in SNAP, Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, SSI, WIC, Lifeline or tribal specific programs. Benefits include a discount up to \$30 dollars a month for internet, and up to \$75 dollars monthly for internet for households within qualifying tribal lands. Also, eligible households can receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 dollars for the purchase of a laptop. Individuals can enroll at www.acpbenefit.org.

Social Security Offices are Reopening

The nationwide network of Social Security Administration offices are on track to reopen 1,200 offices on March 30, 2022. The network of Social Security offices were closed for nearly two years extending back to the start of the pandemic.

National Council on Disability (NCD) Seeks Equitable Healthcare for People with Disabilities

The National Council on Disability is an independent, nonpartisan federal agency charged with providing advice to the President, Congress and federal agencies on matters affecting the lives of people with disabilities. NCD has a statutory mandate to review and evaluate on a continuing basis policies, programs, practices and procedures concerning individuals with disabilities assisted from federal departments and agencies... including access to healthcare.

The NCD has authored a letter sent to the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities and the Director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), seeking the designation of people with disabilities as a "health disparity population."

The NCD in its letter dated December 7, 2021 cited a mountain of empirical evidence demonstrating struggles that persons with disabilities face in front of access to basic healthcare. The intent of the designation is to include the population of people with disabilities within federally funded research designed to identify factors preventing access to equitable healthcare for underserved and marginalized groups (See Attachment G).

State Associations Oppose Electronic Visit Verification Proposed Legislation

Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) is a program intended to ensure that home based services are delivered. In California, the EVV program was launched on January 1, 2022.

Service Providers can purchase and use their own system as long as it is conforming to program requirements or they can register to use the State of California's EVV system. Service Codes for purchase of services included in the EVV program are: Participant Directed Respite Services, In-Home Respite Services Agency, In-Home Respite Workers, Supported Living Services, Homemaker, Homemaker Services, and Personal Assistance. Proposed language in the 21st Century Cures 2.0 Act, defines EVV as a system where services are electronically verified "without the use of geographic tracking or biometrics."

The National Association for Medicaid Directors, ADvancing States, and The National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services has joined in a letter to Representative Diana DeGette (D-CO) and Fred Upton (R-MI) opposing the definition of EVV restricting the use of GPS technology tracking features and biometrics. They are citing inefficiencies, due to the cost to modify current systems (disable GPS tracking) or abandon current systems to comply, while incurring statutory penalties and the challenge with meeting program requirements without the use of GPS technology (See Attachment H).

Credit Union of Southern California Donation

During January 2022, the Credit Union of Southern California donated \$7,500 in trust of the Richard D. Davis Foundation to purchase goods and services for individuals served and their families that cannot be funded through the regional center system. The Credit Union of Southern California's mission is "Building Better Lives", and ethos "People Helping People", is demonstrated through its generous gift. We admire the Credit Union of Southern California, and its investments intended to build better lives throughout communities that are served from SG/PRC (See Attachment I).

SG/PRC's Budget Expenditures FY 21/22

SG/PRC's Operations (OPS) allocation is \$35,207,155. An OPS allocation reserve is projected. SG/PRC's Purchase of Service (POS) allocation is \$318,032,645, with year-end expenditures and late billings projecting a POS allocation reserve.

Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Policy, Guidance, Directives

Extension of Waivers, Modifications and Directives Due to COVID-19

On January 21, 2022, DDS issued a Directive, with amendments and extensions to several COVID-19 Directives. Including: 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, Waiver of Self-Determination Budgets Restrictions and Financial Management Services.

Also, DDS extended flexibility in the provision of services and supports delivered by service providers, (alternative locations) for service codes within the March 18, 2020 Directive (See Attachment J).

Electronic Visit Verification / Live-In Caregiver Attestation

On January 28, 2022 DDS issued a Directive informing us that Electronic Visit Verification does not apply to services delivered by live-in staff. The Directive defines a live-in paid staff as an individual who regularly remains in the home of the individual served at least 24 hours at a time. Service Providers that employ live-in staff are required to complete an attestation statement and retain the attestation document as a business record (See Attachment K).

Electronic Visit Verification; Personal Care Service Provider Self-Registration

On February 3, 2022 DDS issued a Directive informing service providers of their requirement to register and implement Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) beginning January 1, 2022. DDS is reminding service providers of their requirement to implement EVV, and that they are required to register before March 1, 2022. Service Providers with Personal Care Service Codes are required to participate in EVV. Those services include Participant-Directed Respite Agency-Family Member, In-Home Respite Service-Agency, In-Home Respite Worker, Supported Living Services, Homemaker, Homemaker Service, and Personal Assistance (See Attachment L).

COVID-19 Update Regarding Masks and Visitation Policies

On February 8, 2022, DDS issued guidance anchored with the State Public Health Officer's Order regarding the implementation of new guidance related to mask wearing and visitation policies. Beginning February 16, 2022, masks are required for unvaccinated persons in indoor public settings and businesses.

Masks are required for everyone (limited exceptions) when using public transportation, in school or childcare, emergency shelters and cooling and heating centers, specified healthcare settings, state and local correctional facilities, homeless shelters, long-term care facilities, and adult and senior care facilities. Visitors of general acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, intermediate care facilities, and adult and senior care facilities licensed by the California Department of Social Services must verify vaccination status. For the purposes of this Directive, fully vaccinated is two weeks after receiving the second vaccine dose or after receiving one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine (See Attachment M).

SG/PRC Receives DDS Approval for Staffing Shortage Registry

On February 10, 2022, DDS approved SG/PRC's request to waive existing laws to provide supervision and direct care for individuals served, when staffing shortages exist in residential and independent living settings.

The Directive provides details regarding rate negotiation, administrative expenses, and offsets in ordinary labor cost at the minimum wage funded within the existing rate model. We are very pleased that we have this service delivery option to protect the health and safety of individuals served when staffing shortages occur (See Attachment N).

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 400,000 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.

California Bills with Operational Impacts 2021

ARCA conducted an analysis of Bills passed during the 2021 Legislative session and created an outline of Bills that regional centers should have on their radar screen that might have operational impacts. The most noteworthy, is effective January 1, 2022, the minimum wage in California shall increase to \$15 hourly for employers with 26 or more employees and \$14 hourly for employers with 25 or fewer employees

There is new law that cuts off the reach of non-disclosure agreements created during employment as a device to settle or litigate cases involving harassment, discrimination or related retaliation. Also, another important new law, allows businesses to exclude from their state taxable revenue any grants issued related to Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), or the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (See Attachment O).

ARCA's Comments/Proposals in Response to the Governor's 2022-23 Proposed Budget

On February 1, 2022, ARCA issued a written response to Governor Newsom's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23. ARCA complimented the Governor's budget proposal recognizing Service Coordination as a critical direct service through funding for lower caseload ratios; 1 Service Coordinator for every 40 individuals served with no or low purchase of services, and for children ages zero to five. Further, ARCA supports investments of \$87.5M with a priority to reduce caseload ratios within regional centers.

ARCA comments that if the Governor's budget proposal remains unmodified, erosion of recent investments in caseload ratio funding will occur. It will be usurped through an outdated "Core Staffing Formula" that substantially underfunds regional center operations.

ARCA informs lawmakers that the Core Staffing Formula has underfunded regional centers for decades and if it remains unchanged, instability of regional centers' workforce will block the path in front of meeting the needs of over 400,000 people with developmental disabilities served. Fully funding regional center operations will avoid disruptions and delays in the provision of critical services that ameliorate developmental delays and developmental disabilities of individuals served.

Likewise, ARCA joins the Lanterman Coalition's request that the Governor's proposed budget, includes accelerated implementation of the service provider rate model protecting workforce stability within the community based service delivery infrastructure, and increasing access to services through expanding capacity to meet the needs of individuals currently receiving regional center services, and those individuals that will enter the regional center system of care in the future. Also, if the current timing for rate reform remains unchanged, the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities will be intensified (See Attachment P).