

SAN GABRIEL/POMONA REGIONAL CENTER

February 17, 2021

TO: Dr. Gisele Ragusa, 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

Black History Month

Black History month takes place during February every year in the U.S. and Canada to reflect on and to recognize the experiences and accomplishments of the Black community. The purpose of this tradition is to underline the importance of civil rights, strive for greater equality, and empower Black history makers to tell their own stories.

“Those who say it can’t be done are usually interrupted by others doing it.”

-- James Baldwin

SG/PRC's Critical Business Functions

The SG/PRC office remains open to the public on an appointment only basis. We are pleased to report that all critical functions including Intake/Eligibility, Fiscal, Clinical, Human Resources, Quality Assurance and Information Technology are at optimal levels. Our remote workforce fluctuates between 85%-95% percent.

All visitors are required to wear a face mask, and pass a contactless electronic temperature screening device. Our porter sanitizes and disinfects our office space during business hours. SG/PRC is the only regional center throughout the pandemic that has continued to safely provide in-person intake and eligibility services and Early Intervention service clinics. As expected, all of us see children and their families in our lobby waiting to receive diagnostic and counselling services. Our shared vision clearly illustrates SG/PRC's mission. This reality has not changed and will simply continue, because we embrace an unwavering commitment to meeting the needs of our community.

The following reflects our data ending January 31, 2021 (See Attachment A).

Early Intervention/Intake

785 New Referrals
767 Reviews
726 children found eligible

Lanterman/Intake

128 New Referrals
80 Reactivations
179 Eligible (Including EI transitions)

COVID-19 LA County Surge / SG/PRC Risk Mitigation Efforts

As many of you are aware, Los Angeles County during the past 90 days experienced a surge of COVID-19 transmissions. As expected, SG/PRC has experienced a concurrent rise in the reporting of positive COVID-19 cases for individuals served, service provider staff, and SG/PRC staff (See Attachment B). In response, SG/PRC leadership, Nurse Advocates and management have been working around the clock triaging and assessing service needs, engaging resource identification, developing risk mitigation strategies, and assuring follow-up activities occur to protect the health and safety of individuals served and their families. Our surge capacity including surge facilities and staffing registries have adequately supported the needs of individuals served. We have a stockpile of PPE that is delivered by our transportation providers to residential hot spots when needed and at least monthly to all SG/PRC service providers.

SG/PRC COVID-19 Community Outreach

SG/PRC was proactive at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We held our first weekly Zoom COVID-19 meeting with our service providers on March 16th, 2020 before Governor Newsom issued his stay at home order on March 19th, 2020. We began holding weekly Zoom Community meetings on March 26, 2020. These meetings continue to occur on a weekly frequency.

Throughout the pandemic we have contacted all individuals served telephonically, text messaging or letters at least three times. We have maintained focused Check-In programs with individuals served 65 years in age and older or having co-occurring mental health diagnosis, and those that live in their own homes or are receiving supported living or independent living services. Our Check-In programs are in addition to our routine contacts that are either, quarterly, semi-annually, annually or more frequently, according to the Individual Program Plan (IPP).

On January 29, 2021 the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) issued a directive requiring that regional centers contact individuals served within 30 days, if contact had not been made prior to January 1, 2021 (See Attachment C). As a feature of these required contacts as stated in the mentioned DDS directive, Service Coordinators will assess service needs of individuals served, including supports needed to secure COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.

COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization

LA County Department of Public Health has determined, according to its guidance, that individuals that live in congregate living settings, regional centers (including non-residential service providers and their staff and regional center staff), IHSS workers, family member health caregivers, and individuals over the age of 65 are eligible to schedule appointments and receive COVID-19 vaccines within Phase 1(A) tier (1) and tier (2) (See Attachment D).

We have provided letters for non-residential service providers and their staff, regional center staff, family member health caregivers, and individuals served living in Family Home Agency settings or that receive either independent living services or supported living services. In addition, we have created a partnership with a pharmacy that has designated vaccines for SG/PRC, specifically for individuals served over the age of 65.

There was a tidal wave of occurrences, where family member health caregivers (regional centers) in Southern California were rejected from receiving the vaccine, after reaching the front of the line. Regional Center letters were not accepted at vaccination sites. We are pleased to report that SG/PRC's vaccine letters have been accepted at a rate of 100 percent. The good news is that these unfortunate occurrences are reported at lower frequencies, after representatives with DDS, the Association for Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) and Local Public Health Authorities issued clarifying guidance creating boundaries around the definition of a regional center family member health caregiver.

As you are aware, our compelling chorus of advocacy shaped California's public health policy. Effective March 15, 2021 individuals with developmental disabilities will have access to COVID-19 vaccines (See Attachment E). Service Coordinators will contact individuals served and offer supports for securing COVID-19 testing or vaccination appointments (See Attachment F).

COVID-19 Testing and Vaccinations for our SG/PRC Community

We are pleased to announce that we have entered into an agreement with the California Department of Health and Human Services and Valencia Laboratories for offering COVID-19 testing at SG/PRC's business office for individuals served, service providers and SG/PRC staff. We anticipate a soft opening during March 2021. Our goal is to offer COVID-19 testing at least on a weekly basis.

Well over a month ago, we initiated conversations with LA County Department of Public Health officials with a goal to make SG/PRC's business office a vaccination site for individuals served, service providers and their staff, and SG/PRC staff. In addition, we have engaged productive conversations with local pharmacy partners and Home Health Agencies as critical resources to support our efforts.

COVID-19 Funeral Benefits

COVID-19 funeral benefits are available, retroactively for funerals that have taken place between January 2020 and December 31, 2020. Federal legislation was passed during December 2020 allocating 2 billion dollars to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to meet this need. Families that provide documents, and receipts demonstrating funeral costs and death certificates can apply and be reimbursed up to \$7,000. This program is not operational at this time (See Attachment G). We will keep our SG/PRC Community informed.

SG/PRC Community Events

Our weekly Community meetings and our website www.SGPRC.org are great resources and communication forums regarding SG/PRC's events and those special events hosted by our strategic partners.

On Thursday, February 25, 2021 through Zoom from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Dr. Larry Yin, SG/PRC's consulting physician, will host a COVID-19 "vaccine" conversation with our Community with a question-and-answer session.

On Tuesday, March 9, 2021 in lieu of our Community meeting through Zoom, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, Mr. Chris Littlefield an inspirational speaker will provide us with tools for "Being Resilient in a Pandemic." Mr. Littlefield's clients include the United Nations, U.S. Army, U.S. Airforce, MetLife, Kraft foods, Salesforce, L.L. Bean, Fidelity Investments and many others (See Attachment H).

On Friday, March 19, 2021 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. in partnership with Azusa Pacific University, SG/PRC is hosting a virtual dance party for individuals served 18 years and older. The theme is the '80s. There will be a costume contest, music and a lineup of fun activities and prizes (See Attachment I).

SG/PRC Budget FY 19/20

Regional Center budgets are implemented within a three year cycle. SG/PRC's Operations (OPS) and Purchase of Services (POS) budgets retain small reserves.

SG/PRC Budget FY 20/21

SG/PRC's OPS allocation for FY 20/21 is \$32,213,085 projecting at \$32,014,567 at the end of the fiscal year. Current month expenditures are \$2,325,625 and year to date expenditures are \$15,084,082.

SG/PRC's POS allocation is \$271,307,068. Current month expenditures are \$21,716,221. Year to date expenditures are \$124,740,250. We anticipate a deficit reflecting \$7,159,253 derived from COVID-19 Health and Safety Exemption expenditures. All regional centers are required to track COVID-19 expenditures and report those specific costs to the DDS. Anticipated future allocations related to COVID-19 expenditures will yield a balanced year end budget outcome.

Audit of SG/PRC's Representative Payee Services

SG/PRC serves as the representative payee for approximately 2,071 individuals served. On January 16, 2020 SG/PRC's Client Benefits Service Programs were audited by Disability Right of California. There are no outstanding issues. The Social Security Administration has determined that SG/PRC has fulfilled its representative payee duties (See Attachment J).

Caseload Ratio Survey

Annually every regional center is required to conduct a caseload ratio survey and submit its survey to DDS. SG/PRC outperformed the statewide average in most measurable categories and its caseload ratios are near statutory thresholds, although efforts are frustrated due the core staffing formula. SG/PRC did not satisfy all statutory requirements.

The antiquated core staffing formula creates an under allocation in funding for Service Coordinator positions. SG/PRC's allocation for Service Coordinators' salaries and benefits represent \$7,146,720 and \$1,693,733 respectfully. The actual cost is \$10,394,370 and \$2,650,564. SG/PRC created its plan of corrective action through public meetings and input from its stakeholders. SG/PRC's plan was submitted to DDS on November 17, 2020. SG/PRC agreed to identify methods to create efficiencies to free up operations allocation expended for other critical functions.

The most significant element of SG/PRC's plan is to inform lawmakers in partnership with ARCA regarding the shortcomings of the outdated regional center staffing formula and gaining their support for an updated staffing model. Aply, the cost for Service Coordinators' salary and benefits are not static at \$37,000 annually. On February 3, 2021, SG/PRC received DDS' acknowledgment that SG/PRC's plan was received and approved for implementation (See Attachment K).

Department of Developmental Services

Family / Self-Advocate Survey

The Family/Self-Advocate survey closed on December 18, 2020.

Alternative Monthly Rate / Non-Residential Services

January 2021, is the first month for implementation of the Alternative Monthly rate system. We anticipate there might be kinks that need to be ironed out after the first billing cycle. Beginning January 2021, service providers by the fifth business day of each month must submit a report for the prior month for each vendorization delivering Alternative Services using SurveyMonkey (See Attachment L).

Waiver for Payment for Financial Management Services

On February 3, 2021 DDS issued guidance waiving the requirement that Financial Management Services are funded through the Self-Determination participant's budget. This wavier is retroactive to October 1, 2020 and is effective throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (See Attachment M).

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.

Governor Newsom's Budget Proposal FY 21/22

On February 9, 2021 ARCA issued a position statement as a response to Governor Newsom's budget proposal (Department of Developmental Services) addressed to Senator Susan Talamantes Eggman, Chair Senate Budget Subcommittee (Health and Human Services) and Assembly Member Joaquin Arambula, Chair Assembly Committee on Budget, Subcommittee #1 (Health and Human Services).

ARCA's statement applauds the budget proposal for its status quo elements, having no budget savings, rate increases for specific service types, extension of the sunset date for the Uniformed Holiday Schedule, Supplemental Provider rate increases and new funding for 21 regional center positions to coordinate the management of natural emergencies such as fires, floods, earthquakes, heatwaves and or extended power outages.

ARCA's statement affirms that California has experienced substantial budget surpluses without addressing the need to fix the antiquated core staffing formula that increases Service Coordinators' caseload ratios system wide. The average Service Coordinator caseload ratio is 75.48. A shortfall of 850 positions. This trend will continue to grow if left unchecked, compromising the regional center system's ability to efficiently meet the needs of individuals served stated within their Individual Program Plans.

ARCA is advocating for a more efficient allocation process to adjust service provider rate increases due to minimum wage increases. Also, ARCA is requesting a fully secured investment within the regional centers' service delivery infrastructure connected to the temporary down payment maturing into permanent rate increases and subsequent increases as recommended through the Burns & Associates rate study.

Finally, ARCA is requesting one-time funding to replace the outdated Uniformed Fiscal System (UFS) that was created in 1985 and is over 35 years old. The UFS accounting system has limited functionality and hampered efficiencies due to the reach of technology that existed when it was created (See Attachment N).