

**Purchase of Service (POS) Public Meetings Summary and Recommendations  
and Plan to Promote Equity, and Reduce Disparities  
Annual Report  
FY 2018/19**

North Bay Regional Center (NBRC) conducted 3 public Disparity Town Hall Meetings in 2019, one in each of our catchment areas of Napa, Sonoma, and Solano counties. Our Napa meeting was held on Monday, February 25 from 6pm- 8 pm, during the Down Syndrome Spanish speaking parent support group, through our local community partner ParentsCAN and approximately 30 people were present (25 signed in, but there were a few who did not sign in). The Sonoma county meeting was held on Wednesday, March 13 from 9:30am- 11:30am in conjunction with the Santa Rosa Matrix Luna Spanish speaking parent support group and approximately 18 people were present (16 signed in, 2 did not sign in). The Solano county meeting was held on Monday, March 25 from 11am- 1pm at the Vallejo library, in partnership with State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) and 13 people attended. We had a turnout of around 61 attendees in total this year, which was double the turnout from 2018.

Meetings were bilingual and provided in our threshold languages of Spanish and English, with a professional from the Language Network providing the Spanish interpretation. The PowerPoint presentation was provided for participants in their preferred language of Spanish and English.

We ensured that all voices were heard by offering increased transparency through our presentation of the information in a way that solicited genuine feedback about how the audience heard about NBRC, the Individual Program Plan (IPP) process, and the complex intersections of cultural and linguistic barriers they face when accessing resources. Other ways that we were considerate of the communities' cultural needs included providing reminders that our role in those meetings was to hear about the positive and negative impacts that NBRC has had, without fear of retribution or a need to please us as the presenters, which are common practice in the Latino community. We communicated this purpose in our meeting flyers, electronic notifications, and at the beginning of the presentation to create a safe space for open and honest dialogue throughout the meeting.

This was reinforced by our close partnerships with the community organizations, and the already established feelings of trust and understanding in the parent support groups, especially in Napa and Santa Rosa. Since participants in these groups already knew each other and each other's stories, they felt safe and comfortable sharing with us and were able to draw on each other's experiences. We explained that we wanted to know about their personal experiences so that we can continue to improve NBRC to better serve their individual needs and the future needs of their community. Participants seemed to understand that the meetings were their opportunity to share their positive and negative experiences with the regional center, in regards to overcoming linguistic

and cultural barriers to receiving appropriate services and supports. The Diversity & Equity Specialist provided immediate call backs in their preferred language, to those who signed in with specific questions.

The types of disparities discussed in the meeting were by residence, ethnicity, language, and no services. The data indicated a need to reduce disparities in Purchase of Services with our Spanish speaking population, but overall showed that there are similar disparities across all ethnicities and language groups.

The community shared that their biggest concerns and most important topics to be addressed included access to culturally and linguistically appropriate respite services, increased understanding of the intake and eligibility process, increased understanding and encouragement around the process to re-apply and advocate for services, and the transition process to adult services.

Some participants shared their frustrations that these concerns seem to be ongoing, for example, language barriers with documentation, gaining access to culturally and linguistically appropriate resources, mainly respite services, and questions around intake and eligibility. We were able to share some of the strategies and progress that has been made based off the community feedback from last year. Some of those strategies included the establishment of a Diversity Committee, ongoing cultural competency training for staff and leadership, translation of documents and resources across programs, increased outreach targeted toward the Spanish speaking community, and the creation of an internal DocuShare resource hub for Service Coordinators to increase their knowledge of local resources and potential services.

Other process that were used to engage a variety of stakeholders and gather information over the last year included the Unmet Need Survey and Kinetic Flow Survey. The Unmet Need Survey was conducted internally with Service Coordinators through a written survey of questions and 35 responses were collected to assess barriers faced by Service Coordinators when attempting to navigate services for NBRC clients. The Unmet Need Survey revealed that barriers for Service Coordinators included the need for more access to information about generic resources; barriers for families and clients include the need for bilingual and immigrant-related services and providers; and there was a general need for more providers, service options, and access to information noted for both Service Coordinators and their clients. The information obtained through these processes were shared in the presentation.

The Kinetic Flow Survey was conducted by an outside agency to gauge overall service access, usage, and satisfaction, specifically to understand potential service disparities, through phone calls (839 respondents) and an online survey (58 respondents) with NBRC clients and their families. It revealed that NBRC scored highest in the ability for Service Coordinators to speak to families in their preferred language, and scored lowest on ability to identify and connect individuals and families with natural supports and generic resources. When asked about which services and supports the regional center

has made available to the family, that they have not utilized, the most common response by far, with 59 mentions, was respite services.

A new tool that NBRC utilized this year to improve attendance was the Everbridge notification system to specifically reach out to Spanish speaking families by sending a bilingual text message and voice message with the details and purpose of the community meeting. This was the first time utilizing this notification system, and according to our sign in sheets, 7 people who attended (5 from Napa and 2 from Vallejo) received the message with the details of the meeting.

We also attended a different support group through our community partner ParentsCAN than we have in the past, to reach a new audience. Collaboration with our community partners has been our biggest strength with attendance and strong participation, as the families have already made the time and commitment to attend those groups and share feelings of mutual trust with each other and the group facilitators.

Other outreach efforts that were employed included sharing details of the meetings on the NBRC website, sending a bilingual flyer to Spanish speaking families, with the details and purpose of the community meeting, and posting a copy of the flyer on the NBRC Facebook page.

We also presented the Disparity presentation and a final summary of the Disparity findings and community feedback that was gathered to our Board of Directors, which was also open to the public for comments.

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