

**North Bay Regional Center
Purchase of Service (POS) Public Meetings Summary and Recommendations &
Plan to Promote Equity, and Reduce Disparities
Annual Report**

North Bay Regional Center (NBRC) planned a total of 6 Town Hall Meetings in 2020. Four were scheduled pre- COVID-19 pandemic and once we adapted to the Shelter in Place orders, we scheduled two additional Town Hall Meetings virtually through Zoom.

Schedule of NBRC's 2020 Disparity Town Hall Meetings

February 27 from 6-8pm in Napa

- 0 Community Members
- 1 DDS Employee
- 3 NBRC Employees
- 1 ParentsCAN Employee

March 3 from 11am-1pm in Vacaville

- 0 Community Members
- 1 DDS Employee
- 2 NBRC Employees
- 3 Solano County Health & Social Services Employees

March 4 from 9:30-11:30am in Santa Rosa

- 17 Community Members**
- 3 NBRC Employees
- 2 Disability Rights Employees

March 27 from 6-8pm in American Canyon= cancelled due to shelter in place orders

August 6 from 10am-12pm on Zoom

- 5 Community Members**
- 3 NBRC Employees
- 7 Community Providers
- 1 DDS Employee

August 20 from 6-8pm on Zoom

- 0 Community Members (3 were present in the beginning but left shortly after)
- 2 NBRC Employees

Total: 51 attendees in all, 22 were community members

Out of the six attempted meetings, community members were present in 2 meetings: March 4 in Santa Rosa with the Matrix LUNA Spanish speaking parents group; and August 6 through Zoom. Both of these meetings were held in Spanish and facilitated by Claudia Calderon, NBRC's Children's Supervisor. We decided to have a Spanish speaking NBRC supervisor facilitate the meetings directly in Spanish, rather than hiring

an external interpreter to translate the information from English. Ms. Calderon was not only able to present the information in Spanish, because of her knowledge of the regional center, she was able to describe the information in a way that the audience could understand with relevant examples and stories. This was a very successful change that will continue to be implemented in the future. The presentation and materials were provided to all audiences in Spanish and English.

We planned the February 27th meeting in partnership with ParentsCAN, a Napa community partner, however we decided to cancel 30 minutes after the start time, due to a lack of community attendees. We worked with ParentsCAN to re-schedule an additional meeting at their American Canyon location, however that meeting was cancelled due to the Shelter in Place orders that were issued in mid-March. These meetings were scheduled at new locations which would allow for a bigger space for the audience, as this group is usually large and overflows from their ParentsCAN conference room.

This year was the first time we were scheduled for a location in Vacaville and new larger locations in Napa and American Canyon, however we did not have an increase in attendance, due to the circumstances. The regional center was surprised by the low turnout at the first two meetings early in the year, but we surmised that initial reports of coronavirus and the first week that the Public Charge Rule went into effect, had an impact on our attendance.

We advertised for the meetings each time by sending out flyers (paper and digitally) in English and Spanish to NBRC Service Coordinators who then send them to their caseload, especially Spanish speaking caseloads. We promoted the meeting at the Board of Director's meetings leading up to the meetings and the information was shared with the Vendor Advisory Committee (VAC). We also posted the bilingual flyer on the NBRC Facebook page, added the meetings to our website front page and meeting calendar, and shared the flyer with our community partners including ParentsCAN, Disability Rights, State Council of Developmental Disabilities, Matrix LUNA, Parents Empowering Parents, Behavioral Health Committee, Healthy Solano Network, and Travis Air Force Base.

The meetings were promoted as a space to learn about how NBRC identifies and addresses service disparities; how NBRC has used community feedback to improve service delivery; discuss current culture and language challenges to accessing and using services; provide suggestions for overcoming culture and language barriers in service delivery; and share successes from experiences with service accessibility and delivery. We also shared the purpose of the meeting at the beginning of the presentation and throughout the meeting to create a foundation for open communication. Although we would be sharing disparity data about expenditures, we acknowledged that there are many other ways to measure and assess if we're meeting the needs of our Spanish speaking clients and their families that we would like to explore.

The data that we presented indicated a great need to understand disparities in purchases of services with Spanish speaking families. We discussed disparities by Residence (ages 3-21, 22+), No POS by Residence (ages 3-21, 22+), Ethnicity/ Race (ages 3-21, 22+), No POS by Ethnicity/ Race (ages 3-21, 22+), Language (ages 3-21, 22+), and no POS by Language (ages 3-21, 22+). The information presented showed that NBRC spends over **three** times as much on services per person for individuals who speak English and/or are White, than individuals who speak Spanish and/or are Hispanic/Latinx.

To ensure that all voices were heard, regardless of race, national origin, income, etc., the facilitators encouraged open and honest dialogue without fear of repercussion or retaliation. We provided transparency around the feedback process and our goal to improve services for all families. Our Executive Director attended each meeting and expressed an “open door” policy for families and provided his contact information. The Diversity and Equity Specialist provided her contact information and invited community members to join the Disparity Committee.

The Santa Rosa meeting on March 4 was scheduled with our community partner Matrix LUNA, a Spanish speaking parents group. This was the group with the largest community presence and we received a lot of great and honest feedback about their struggles and successes. We utilized community comment cards to gather written feedback with an opportunity for anonymity. *Results from those comment cards are included with this report.*

Members of the Matrix LUNA group shared that they see the Regional Centers as unique and reputable bearers of information and that we should take the lead in educating the community, especially the non-disability community, about disability awareness and resources. They reported a need for support around bullying in schools. Many of their children are the recipients of bullying by other children, adults, and sometimes even their teachers. These families are appalled by the lack of training for teachers and lack of compassion from other parents in understanding the behaviors that sometimes accompany these diagnoses.

This was also the first year that NBRC held meetings virtually, which allowed for participants to attend from anywhere, rather than county/location specific meetings. The first virtual meeting hosted a total of 16 people, with 5 identifying as clients/family of clients. The second, however had a few participants in the beginning, however they each left the meeting shortly after.

Although it was great to have additional opportunities to receive community feedback through technology this year, we received feedback from the Disparity Committee that our current format for these meetings (data and information heavy, presentation style rather than a conversation, concentration on how White/English speaking clients are better served than their community) is not the most culturally competent approach and it seemed to elicit even less feedback virtually than in person. We are reevaluating the way we would like to structure these community meetings in 2021 and in the future.

While we will still be functioning virtually for these upcoming meetings due to public health orders, our Disparity committee has discussed holding more of a round table, participatory structure, utilizing cultural brokers in the community and our relationships with community partners to gather the most possible input in a way that is comfortable and familiar to the community we are trying to learn from. We are hopeful that these revised efforts will help us meet the needs of our diverse community in a way that always upholds their dignity and values.

Prepared by Lindsay Franco, NBRC Diversity and Equity Specialist