



KERN REGIONAL CENTER

Striving to Achieve Equality, Independence and Empowerment

May 31, 2022

Ernie Cruz
Department of Developmental Services
1215 O Street, MS 8-20
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Cruz:

Enclosed is a copy of the Kern Regional Center (KRC) report on stakeholder feedback relating to our purchase of service expenditure and utilization public meetings for FY 2020/2021.

KRC conducted 2 public information meetings on March 29, 2022, for the purpose of sharing KRC's Purchase of Service and Expenditure Data for Fiscal Year 2020/2021 and to engage consumers, family members, vendor community, and other stakeholders in conversation to obtain feedback and recommendations to resolve the issues around purchase of service inequality.

The presentation was conducted in two sessions: one in English and the second in Spanish via Zoom. The presentations were followed by question-and-answer sessions to obtain feedback from the attendees. KRC was able to obtain meaningful feedback.

The findings from this meeting demonstrate the need to enhance KRC's outreach efforts and engagement and to continue to monitor the service needs of the communities throughout Kern, Inyo, and Mono counties to promote equity in service delivery and utilization.

It is KRC's mission and commitment to provide comprehensive, person-centered, and excellent services to our consumers and their families. We look forward to any feedback from the Department.

Respectfully,

Celia Pinal, MSW
Director of Client Services

Approved by KRC Director of Client Services: Celia Pinal, MSW Date 5/31/22

cc: Michi Gates, Ph.D. Executive Director, Kern Regional Center
Enrique Roman, Director of Community Services

Kristine Khuu, Assistant Director, Client Services
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Dr. Jasmeet Bains, Kern Regional Center
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Regional Center Community Services Directors
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Kern Regional Center 2020/2021 Disparity Report

The Kern Regional Center (KRC) was founded in 1971 and our mission is striving to achieve equality, independence, and empowerment for the individuals we serve. KRC coordinates resources and collaborates with other agencies to develop the best, most appropriate and person-centered services for consumers and their families. KRC values diversity, respects individual rights and choices, and is committed to excellence and cost-effective service delivery. KRC respects, supports, and collaborates with public and private agencies to carry out our mission.

KRC's service area includes Kern, Mono and Inyo counties. During fiscal year 2020/2021, KRC served over 11,000 individuals across these three counties. The main office is in Bakersfield with outlying offices in Lamont, Delano, Tehachapi, Taft, Ridgecrest, and Bishop.

Acknowledgements

Kern Regional Center wishes to acknowledge the stakeholders including consumers/families and service providers who participated remotely in the meetings and who offered their time and insights to support this effort.

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I. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to share the findings from stakeholder meetings held by Kern Regional Center (KRC) regarding differences in expenditures and service utilization among different races and ethnicities. The meeting was held amongst various subgroups served by KRC. This report meets the requirements of the Department of Developmental Services as determined by changes made in the Lanterman Act (Welfare and Institutions Code section 4519.5) effective June 27, 2012.

II. Summary of KRC Purchase of Service (POS) and Expenditure Data

Consistent with guidance provided by the Department of Developmental Services, KRC prepared a report on "KRC Purchase of Service Expenditure and Demographic Data, Fiscal Year 2020/2021. The report focuses on ethnic groups, African American, Hispanic, White, Asian and Other (encompasses all other ethnic groups not listed). The report provides data based on the identified ethnic groups for Fiscal Year 2020/2021:

- Caseload Growth
- Total Annual Expenditures and Authorized Services by Ethnicity or Race
- Total Annual Expenditures and Authorized Services vs. Utilized by Ethnicity or Race
- Total Annual Expenditures and Authorized Services by Age Groups
- Total Annual Expenditures and Authorized Services by Diagnosis, all ages
- Consumers with No Purchase of Services by Ethnicity or Race

The report in its entirety can be found in Appendix I. It is also available on the KRC website at www.kernrc.org.

KRC summarized and presented the expenditure data by use of a PowerPoint presentation in English and Spanish.

III. Community Stakeholder Meetings

KRC Director of Client Services and Assistant Director of Client Services, presented the disparity data to consumers, families, and stakeholders by a Zoom video conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. KRC Director of Community Services also presented the data to the Vendor Advisory Committee.

Instructions were provided to the participants on how to use functions on Zoom to make comments. Participation from attendees was encouraged.

The data was shown in graphs and charts for FY 2020/2021. The graphs and charts presented to the community members can be found in Appendix II.

IV. Findings

Attendees provided feedback to increase utilization and identified barriers to accessing services.

KRC, like other regional centers, has rural and metropolitan communities in its catchment area. Each geographic location has challenges, especially the rural areas where the number of vendors is limited and is also impacted by transportation needs of consumers to gain access to services in neighboring communities. For a vendor who provides in-home services, the challenges have been the hiring and retention of qualified staff at the median rates. For families and consumers, the challenges have included forming and establishing trusting relationships with service providers and their staff/employees.

The common concern expressed at both presentations was the low utilization of purchase of service among the Hispanic community, high regional center caseload numbers, the need for well-trained and knowledgeable Service Coordinators to assist families with navigating the regional center system, a need for more community outreach to increase attendance in public meetings, and the availability of technology for consumers and families.

Data reviewed and findings:

Data reviewed and findings:

1. Ethnic groups overall POS utilization were as follows:

- Other-55.8%
- Asian- 59.48%
- African American- 64%
- Hispanic- 60.9%
- White-63.9%

2. Authorization and Utilization by Language (English/Spanish)

- English 61.5% (Count 9,301 Authorized 27,555)
- Spanish 64.4% (Count 2,260 Authorized 15,105)

3. Utilization based on Diagnosis: Intellectual Disability has the highest expenditure by diagnosis for all ethnic groups, followed by Intellectual Disability/Epilepsy.
4. Percentage of consumers (all ages) with no POS are as follows:

- Other – 30.4%
- Asian-31.8%
- African American 24.9%
- Hispanic 33.2%
- White-25.5%

Feedback and Recommendations:

When reviewing the data and incorporating feedback to improve utilization, there appears to be two driving factors:

- Systemic institutional driver – these are things an agency can change or address
- Independent/Personal driver – these are stigmas; trust in the system, attitudes, beliefs/practices, financial status, self-made barriers, etc.

The feedback on data will be addressed based on one of the two above drivers.

Systemic institutional drivers:

1. Ensure that families and consumers fully understand that the services they receive are part of entitlement afforded through the Lanterman Act and that they will never be billed for an authorized regional center service. Families are requesting more information and written materials on the type of services that are available and the importance of the services, as they want to know the types of services available across all age groups from Early Start to adult and how to access the services by means of the traditional service delivery system, the Self-Determination Program and/ or Participant Directed services.
2. Insufficient outreach and engagement especially for Hispanic families who are reluctant to request and accept services due to immigration status and political climate. There are also cultural and language concerns that need consideration.
3. Enhanced training for staff to assess thoroughly the needs of the consumer and families and to follow through with the referral process essential to access the correct service. Service Coordinators will also be monitoring closely to review the utilization of services for the clients on their caseloads on a periodic basis and identify barriers to the accessibility of services.
4. Observe vendor data trends for encumbrance vs. utilization and establish a threshold for appropriate encumbrance vs. utilization. If utilization falls under standard, review the current practices that are in place when submitting a POS.
5. Work closely with vendors when consumers have not utilized any service(s) for a specified period. Service Coordinators would then contact the consumer or family to assess for any barriers in receiving services.
6. Work with consumers and families on how to access and utilize technology.

Independent/Personal drivers:

1. Life circumstances relating to work demands, lack of transportation if vendor transportation is not available or community resources are lacking due to the geography of where consumers/families reside.
2. Barriers and competing priorities other than transportation needs continue to interfere with families' ability to access services or keep scheduled appointments for services.
3. Consumer's poor health preventing participation in services.
4. Consumer's unstable housing due to barriers other than regional center diagnosis.
5. Consumer and/or family not accessing public assistance program for fear of being reported to immigration and deportation.
6. Consumer and/or family substance abuse or domestic violence.
7. Perceived stigma of regional center diagnosis.
8. COVID pandemic adversely impacting utilization from consumers and families due to fear of exposure, health concerns, and illness. Additionally, providers experienced staffing shortage related to illness and turnover during the pandemic.

V. Action Plan

Kern Regional Center continues its commitment to working with consumers, families, vendors, and community partners to improve equity in service delivery. KRC's action plan includes:

1. Ongoing education to Service Coordinators and families regarding regional center service options; this will include how to have access to services through the traditional service delivery system, through the Self-Determination Program, and Participant Directed service delivery option.
2. Increased community outreach efforts especially to communities outside the metropolitan area where service options are limited.
3. Education about the IPP/IFSP process including funding for identified services.
4. Improve trust between KRC and its stakeholders.
5. Ongoing training to KRC staff on disparity, service equity, and cultural competency. KRC would also require for all case management and assessment staff to participate in implicit bias training once it becomes available.
6. Apply for grant monies via the Department's Disparity Funds Program to assist KRC with implementing strategies to reduce disparities and increase equity in regional center services.

It is KRC's mission and commitment to help individuals with developmental disabilities and children at risk to reach their goals. By implementing the above action plan, KRC hopes to achieve this goal to deliver services in a more equitable manner and strive toward reducing disparity across ethnic groups specially where services are needed most.