

Public Stakeholder Disparity Meetings Statewide Assessment of Public Comments

In August 2016, the Department of Developmental Services (Department) held four public stakeholder meetings throughout the state to discuss disparities in regional centers' purchase of service expenditures. The meetings were held in Campbell, Sacramento, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles. This document contains a summary of common themes provided by stakeholders in attendance at these public meetings.

- **Barriers to service and information access because the system is overly complex.**
 - Responses included commentary on the complex structure of the system, and the need for regional centers to assist in understanding regional center-funded services available to consumers/families. Suggestions included: simplifying documents, developing and providing a list of regional center-funded services and service providers, simplifying service descriptions, increasing service awareness, and providing assistance to families in navigating the system (e.g., a master list of services and service providers, a comprehensive "handbook" outlining system navigation, and appointing "Navigators" among RC staff to assist families).
- **Assistance and support to develop self-advocacy skills.**
 - Some ethnic groups expressed a hesitancy to self-advocate. Suggestions included providing education and training to families so they can advocate for their needs.
- **Relationship between regional centers, service providers, and consumers and families.**
 - Some individuals indicated there is a lack of trust, including a history of mistrust, between families and regional centers, and families and providers. Suggestions included strengthening community partnerships (e.g., regional center attendance at community events, collaboration with local agencies, and working with community churches) to rebuild trust between regional centers and consumers/families, and between consumers/families and providers in targeted ethnic communities.
- **Cultural barriers to services (Hispanic, Black/African American, and Asian populations).**
 - Different cultural ideologies, values, and mannerisms may impact families' relationships with regional center staff and service providers. Suggestions included performing outreach to underserved ethnic populations and communities, and promoting cultural competency and sensitivity training for regional center staff and service providers.
- **Ongoing training for regional center service coordinators.**
 - Stakeholder input included commentary on the lack of knowledge displayed by some service coordinators in the area of developmental disabilities. Suggestions included providing more training to service coordinators regarding the Lanterman Act, increasing the amount of ongoing training for service coordinators, and addressing the quality of training for service coordinators.

- **Barriers to service access and utilization due to the lack of available services.**
 - Some individuals indicated there is a lack of available service providers (e.g., many providers of authorized services have waiting lists), as well as the lack of services in rural areas. Suggestions from families included recruitment of potential vendors and developing programs in rural areas (e.g., allocating start-up funding for the development of new programs in targeted areas).
- **Use the “Promotora” model to empower and connect families.**
 - Parent-to-parent support groups have been successful. Suggestions from families included implementing a system similar to the “Promotora” model to connect parents in local communities. To this end, families can receive support from a neutral third party, to help build trust, invite dialogue, and increase access to and utilization of services.
- **Transportation and child care.**
 - Lack of transportation and/or child care may impact family/public attendance at meetings and workshops, as well as service utilization.
- **Use technology to increase access to information.**
 - Regional centers should utilize social media and text messaging platforms to promote engagement with families and keep them connected with their regional centers.
- **Language barriers are barriers to regional center services.**
 - Regional centers should perform outreach activities to reach all ethnic/language populations, and improve quality of translations.
- **Families suggested improving assessment and intake processes.**
 - Discussion included commentary on the impact of delay and/or misdiagnosis during the assessment and intake processes. Suggestions included modeling intake for regional center consumers aged 3-22 after the Early Start intake process and instituting earlier diagnosis and provision of services for consumers.
- **Services vary from regional center to regional center.**
 - Many families receive different services and/or customer service depending on which regional center provides the services. Suggestions included developing a uniform approach to service coordination and delivery among all regional centers so that consumers have access to the same services and quality of services regardless of where they live.