

Department of Developmental Services
Reduction of Disparities in Purchase of Service
Regional Center Funding Proposals (Fiscal Year 2016-17)

Regional Center(s): Harbor Regional Center

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I. PROPOSAL

Please attach the proposal for Fiscal Year 2016-17. Proposals must meet the criteria outlined in the application guidelines in Attachment 1. Proposals must also be consistent with the information derived from the public meetings with stakeholders regarding purchase of service (POS) disparity data. Regional Centers may partner with other centers to implement strategies to address areas of disparity in POS authorization, utilization, and expenditures.

II. BUDGET DETAIL

- a. Amount of funding Harbor Regional Center is requesting: \$410,000
- b. Estimated number of HRC clients to be impacted by the services: 2000

III. DIRECTOR'S CERTIFICATION

I certify that the information completed above and attached is true and correct.

Director's Name: Patricia Del Monico

Director's Signature: 

Harbor Regional Center Serving Our Diverse Community: Proposal for Funding for Reducing Disparities in the Purchase of Services

Harbor Regional Center Demographic and Expenditure Data: Summary

Demographic and expenditure data collected in December, 2015, pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code section 4519.5 of the Lanterman Act revealed the following significant trends and some continuing differences in purchase of service authorizations (POS) and expenditures by age, ethnicity, language, diagnosis, and living arrangement.

- The great majority of Harbor Regional Center (HRC) clients overall are children – only about a third are adults;
- A greater percentage of African American, Asian, and Hispanic clients are children (60-75%) while more than 50% of non-Hispanic White clients are adults.
- The substantial majority of all HRC authorized expenditures are for adults;
- Per capita authorized expenditures for adults are 5 times greater than per capita authorized expenditures for children;
- Per capita authorized expenditures for all HRC clients who live with families are highest for our Asian clients across all age groups; they are lowest for African American clients from birth to three and for Hispanic clients age three and older;
- A significant portion of all HRC authorized expenditures -38%- are to support out of home living arrangements;
 - Per capita authorized expenditures for clients who live in group homes are 12 times greater than those for clients who live with families;
 - Per capita authorizations for HRC adult clients who live outside the family home are highest for our Hispanic clients and lowest for our African American clients;

The expenditure data do not answer questions about why differences exist. Further research is needed to learn more about these differences. We do know that generic agency resources have assumed responsibility for provision of many services, reducing the need for regional center funding. We also know that regional centers have been prohibited from funding the services of choice for many of our families, for the last several years. From input that we have received thus far, we also believe that factors include lack of awareness or understanding of services available, language and communication barriers, family or cultural preferences, and other family needs which take precedence over participation in services.

Target Populations

Based upon input received from focus groups, from staff working directly with families regarding barriers to service delivery and upon the trends identified in the 2015 POS data summarized above, our target populations for proposed activities will be:

- Hispanic families of children who live at home, especially ages three and older;
- African American families of children who live at home, especially from birth to three years of age;
- African American transition-aged and adult clients and their families.
- Asian Pacific parents with limited English, for translation of information.

Public Forum

Immediately after receiving guidelines from the Department of Developmental Services in late July, through early September, we began meeting with focus groups to present ideas, to provide as many opportunities as possible for discussion and input. In addition, on Wednesday, August 31, 2016 Harbor Regional Center held a public forum to present its proposal to our community. This meeting was publicized on our website and in our electronic newsletter that is sent to our clients/families and service providers. In total, these meetings were attended by 40 stakeholders representing clients, family members, service providers and community members. In addition we have posted the proposed activities on our website and distributed information to members of parent groups who were not able to attend our public forum or that presented by the Department of Developmental Services.

We discussed all of the strategies which HRC plans to utilize for increasing awareness, understanding, and utilization of services for all of our families, including those from underserved groups:

- Recruitment and training of a culturally- and linguistically diverse and competent staff
- Recruitment and training of a culturally- and linguistically diverse and competent service provider community
- Continued collection and analysis of input from our clients and families, to assess barriers to service utilization and recommended actions to increase access.
- Development of family information, orientation and training, to increase understanding of regional center services, and navigation of the service system.
- Increasing access to parent support and information through language-specific support groups,
- Increasing our library of publications in multiple languages, to provide family-friendly information about available services.
- Engaging and connecting online with clients and families, and providing information through our website and social media.
- Partnering with cultural, community, and local government organizations for further outreach and access to both regional center and generic community services.
- Partnering with a community-based group to develop a Promotora program.

The response at the above meetings to the above proposed strategies has been very positive. Recommendations for support and implementation of these strategies included:

- Explore training for service coordinators in ways to enhance open communication with clients/families.
- Explore alternative ways to communicate with families about available services.
- Coordinate efforts with agencies in the community, such as school districts/SELPAs, and assist families to negotiate access to other community services and benefits
- Involve clients and families in the development of these strategies.

In addition, two attendees who had spoken at the DDS Stakeholders' Forum on August 26th, 2016, (one from HRC area, one from another RC area) provided similar input at HRC's forum, to express concern with differences in average overall expenditures between regional centers.

Strategies for Implementation of Plans

We are hopeful that the following planned activities will improve understanding of and access to available services for all of our families.

COLLABORATIVE PROPOSALS

HRC plans to work collaboratively with other Regional Centers and the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) whenever possible, to maximize our available resources and impact.

Research and Analysis:

Currently, the regional centers have severe data limitations when it comes to understanding POS utilization rate disparities. These limitations not only restrict HRC's ability to understand the dynamics of these expenditure disparities, but it also limits our ability to develop and implement strategies that effectively address these issues.

This August, in a letter to the Department of Developmental Services, Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) Executive Director Eileen Richey stated,

Ensuring equity in California's developmental services system begins with better understanding utilization patterns in different communities. Funding a study that not only reviews existing data but also includes interviews, focus groups, and surveys would help determine whether specific barriers to accessing needed services exist and develop suggestions for how best to correct them going forward.

HRC supports the SGPRC/ARCA proposal for a multi-phase, multi-year project to systematically address the underlying reasons for variances in utilization of regional center funded services by different ethnic groups, and recommended systemic solutions for ameliorating this. HRC will work with other regional centers, and utilize the information provided through these collaborative avenues to inform our efforts to make services provided to be responsive to the needs of individuals from diverse communities. *Please refer to the proposal submitted by ARCA for a detailed description of this proposal, and the anticipated cost for statewide efforts of \$200,000 - \$250,000 per year.*

Internally HRC has been preparing to conduct telephone interviews with a random sample of clients and families from diverse backgrounds to gain information about service satisfaction, utilization, and barriers to access that HRC clients experience. Upon completion of the telephone survey, HRC will gather more in-depth information from our client families through a series of focus groups. The following is our proposed schedule for executing our research and data collection plan:

- Complete telephone survey, and contract with Kinetic Flow by December 31, 2016 to conduct focus groups with HRC clients and families.
- Conduct these focus groups to explore and analyze in greater depth their utilization of services, the barriers they have experienced in access to services.
- Complete analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data outcomes and use information to develop specific strategies for serving diverse populations.
- We anticipate that this project duration will be approximately 18 months.

Contract with Kinetic Flow for Conducting Focus Groups and Analysis of information gathered.	\$50,000
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Public Information

Families have expressed a strong desire to have increased access to information about regional center services including what services are available, and how should they work with the regional center to access these services. This has been a common theme at many of the regional centers' public forums. HRC hopes to provide information to clients in a way that engages them and communicates that HRC is a diverse and inclusive organization.

HRC would like to develop and translate selected materials specific to the HRC service area, as well as work collaboratively with public information representatives of other Regional Centers, on the development of easy-to-understand, informative publications in multiple languages which can be used by clients/families of any and all regional centers. This may include creation of new materials and/or translation of current materials into additional languages. Topics for newly developed materials may include application for services, assessment and diagnosis, early start, services available by age, generic resources, and information about transitions.

We will also explore improving the way in which we connect with our diverse families online. Websites and social media channels can many times be a client's first introduction to our centers and the services we offer. Utilizing informational content in multiple languages, as well as photography and videos, we will develop a diverse, multi-lingual and interactive experience online and via our numerous social media channels.

In collaboration with other regional centers through the Statewide Training and Information Group, we propose to work together to:

- Identify priorities for information needed across all of our service areas.
- Develop materials to meet the needs of a variety of reading levels and learning styles, including but not limited to:
 - Videos / Website Content
 - Print or online guides to services and supports
 - Fact Cards or Sheets
- Ensure materials are in plain language, with visual cues, and provided in quality translated formats.
- We anticipate that this is a two year project.

Total estimated HRC share of cost for collaborative development of public information with other regional centers	\$30,000
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To promote this access to information about *HRC* services, and thereby reduce barriers to access, HRC plans to expand availability of informational materials, on topics such as services by age group, service planning and coordination, accessing services, in multiple languages. :

- Identify and contract with a translation agency or agencies with expertise in translation into multiple threshold languages by June 30, 2017.
- Content will be distributed to parent support groups during the development process, for review and assessment of effectiveness and clarity of information.
- We anticipate that the duration of this project will be a continuous effort for two years.

Total estimated cost for HRC development and translation of public information materials	\$100,000
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HARBOR REGIONAL CENTER AREA PROPOSALS

Staff Development

Recruiting and retaining a culturally diverse and competent staff whose ethnicity, language and cultural background reflects that of our client population has long been a priority for HRC. We believe this is critically important to increase client engagement, reduce barriers created by language and lack of cultural understanding, and promote service utilization. The better our staff is able to communicate with and inform clients and families about HRC services, the more likely our clients and families will be able to access and utilize those services. Currently, one-half of Harbor Regional Center staff is bilingual in languages including Spanish, Mandarin, Tagalog, Arabic, Khmer, Korean, Japanese, Hmong, Vietnamese, and other Asian dialects.

In an effort to continue to identify and recruit culturally diverse staff, promote communication and trusting relationships between our clients/families and HRC staff, and facilitate person-centered service planning and coordination HRC plans to:

- Identify and contract with at least one guest trainer with expertise in the areas of inclusion, diversity, and communication by June 30, 2017.
- Conduct training for 150 staff members.
- Conduct Pre-and Post-training evaluations to rate effectiveness.
- We anticipate that the duration of this project will be two years.

Anticipated cost for continued staff training:	\$10,000
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Service Provider Network Support

Harbor Regional Center believes that having a culturally competent service provider network is also extremely important. HRC supports the following ARCA recommendations regarding our service providers:

- Start Up Funding- Since 2003 regional centers have been unable to assist potential providers with the costs of starting programs serving individuals who are living in the community (as opposed to living in or at risk of entering institutions). Statutory changes are needed to help providers start desperately needed programs which will serve our diverse communities.
- Median Rate Relief- Since 2008 negotiated rates for new regional center funded services have been capped at the lower of either the local or statewide median rate for that service. These limitations apply regardless of the actual cost of providing a service. This severely restricts service providers' capacity to employ bilingual staff, offer flexible scheduling, and travel into diverse communities. Elimination of the median rate requirement would encourage the development of needed services.

Locally, in order to develop and support a culturally competent network of service providers who are ready to serve our diverse clientele, HRC proposes to coordinate and host training presentations at HRC for 600 service provider administrators and lead direct care staff. To do this, HRC would like to:

- Identify and contract with a trainer with expertise in providing culturally competent services by June 30, 2017.
- Conduct Pre-and Post-training evaluations to rate effectiveness.
- We anticipate that this project duration will be spread over two years.

Anticipated HRC costs for training 600 service providers over a two day period	\$10,000
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Family Support

In California approximately 75% of individuals with developmental disabilities live with their families. For HRC families, especially families from diverse backgrounds, that number is much higher. Currently, while only 15% of all HRC clients live outside of the family home, 93% of Hispanic clients are living with their families. For clients who remain in the home family supports are critical, and at HRC we believe a key component in reducing utilization disparities is to make family supports more accessible. In 2015 DDS data showed that regional centers received 64 fair hearing requests related to respite and 17 related to social services. HRC currently offers child care for families during trainings as well as work to make transportation services available when needed, but more needs to be done.

HRC supports ARCA recommendations to DDS, which request the limits on respite care, camp and other social services be removed so that regional centers can adequately provide these much needed services. Removing respite and social service rate limits will give all regional centers the power to be responsive to family needs and make service options more accessible to families of diverse cultural backgrounds.

In addition to supporting ARCA's recommendation, HRC would like to expand its sponsorship and development of ethnic specific parent support groups. Currently HRC has long-standing parent groups for all types of families; from those with children who have autism and Down syndrome, to culturally specific parent groups for Korean and Spanish speaking families. Ethnically specific parent groups are not only an extremely important resource for families, in that they provide a tremendous amount of emotional support and a vehicle for information sharing, but they also benefit HRC in that they provide a way for us to provide information and to gather input concerning barriers to service and purchase of service issues. This past year HRC initiated a Japanese speaking parent group. In the coming year we hope to develop a Cambodian family support group and perhaps more. Families of these groups have expressed the need for more information, training and orientation regarding available services. Expansion in this area would give HRC the ability to provide this information.

HRC plans to continue to make concerted efforts to improve our support and engagement with families of diverse backgrounds, improve the way we connect clients and families of diverse backgrounds to each other, and ensure that these families understand the services and supports available to them as HRC clients. In the Public Information section of this proposal we discussed plans to make more public informational materials available to families in more languages. We also plan to develop new ways of support families through outreach, training, and information designed to familiarize families with available HRC services, and how we can work together for coordination of services to meet their client and family needs. Harbor Regional Center proposes to:

- Develop a parent orientation curriculum.
- Involve members of language-and culturally-specific support groups in the development and piloting of parent orientation curriculum.
- Secure a contract for translation of curriculum materials into at least three languages by June 30, 2017.
- We anticipate that the duration of this project will be 18 months.

Translation of orientation curriculum	\$30,000
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Community Outreach

Finally we would like to expand our community outreach to connect to new and potential clients, as well as help us connect our current client families to resources and programs that will help improve their access to services and quality of life. We will partner with local city and county government organizations to identify opportunities for collaboration, and for building awareness for HRC's programs and services.

We will also work to build relationships with cultural organizations within our service area that can help connect clients to much needed resources and supports.

- Identify community based organizations working with diverse communities in our service area, with whom we can partner for outreach and family support, .for -identification and engagement of new and current HRC clients.
- Contract with a community organization by June 30, 2017 to develop a pilot Promotora program in a city within our catchment area, including recruitment and training of support staff.
- Evaluate effectiveness in increasing client intake, understanding of service system and service utilization.
- We anticipate that this project will be developed and piloted over a two year period.

Promotora project development and pilot in HRC area	\$180,000
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Total Funds Requested	\$410,000
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These strategies we believe will help HRC begin to close the POS utilization gap and make services and programs more accessible for all HRC families.