

Service Access & Equity Workgroup Update

June 23, 2020

Purpose/Overview:

The purpose of the Service Access and Equity Workgroup is to review and make recommendations for creating a culturally and linguistically competent and equitable service system. Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) section 4519.5 requires regional centers to annually collaborate with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to share data related to purchase of service (POS) authorization, utilization, and expenditures, by each regional center. This section also requires regional centers to undertake certain activities to identify significant disparities and barriers to equitable access to services and supports, and to develop recommendations and plans to reduce existing disparities.

Meeting date(s): February 18, 2020; April 28, 2020; June 24, 2020

Discussion items:

- Equity in Access to Services
 - What is a Service Disparity?
 - Equality vs. Equity
 - Cultural Competency
 - Linguistic Competency
- Data Availability, Limitations & Review
 - Statewide Disparity Measures
 - Data Discussion Group
- Disparity Funds Program overviews, guidelines, awards, updates, insights gained and what investments should be prioritized?
- COVID-19 Community Concerns
 - What are the most pressing challenges facing communities of color as a result of COVID-19?
 - What are some lessons learned, best practices and innovations in response to COVID-19?
- Diversifying Workgroup Membership
- What are the unique challenges of each ethnicity/culture in an economic downturn?

Recommendations/Input on priorities:

- Forward thinking, decisive action that allows flexibility in service delivery saves lives
- Implementation and operationalizing directives can be a challenge. Can we survey families in real-time to measure/understand rollout?
- Teleservices/remote visits have proved to be very successful for a lot of families and should continue to be available after the COVID_19 pandemic
 - Technology challenges are not just limited to lack of appropriate devices, also access to wi-fi, technical assistance, and family preferences (What's App, FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, texts, etc.)
- Open, accessible, real-time communication is critical
 - Share COVID-19 data by regional center to identify "hotspots"
- Be mindful that multiple family households encounter additional challenges when trying to limit exposure
- Absence billing doesn't work well for Early Start kids given their limited service history, are options besides annual averages available?
- Expand successful partnerships with universities, local food banks, RCs, and others to address food insecurity

- Disparities have been magnified by the COVID-19 crisis, food insecurity is a widespread issue
- Social isolation is a significant concern
 - Is there something we can do similar to the Governor's "neighbor to neighbor" program?
- Communication needs to be simplified and response time improved
 - Suggest a direct channel, e.g. Facebook Messenger, or What's App, or another place where RCs or providers can post questions and have someone follow-up
 - Need for information has expanded: e.g. mental health services, addiction services, tenant needs, and economic displacement
- More clarity in the state's directives
 - Translations into plain language and Spanish are helpful
 - Consistent interpretation/implementation between regional centers