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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**The Department of Developmental Services Announces 2022-23 Service Access & Equity Grants**

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is proud to announce awards totaling \$22 million to 75 community-based organizations and regional centers as part of DDS' Service Access and Equity Grant Program, a critical investment in approaches to improve equity, diversity, and service access to all Californians with developmental disabilities. "At the California Health and Human Services Agency equity is our North Star," said **California Health and Human Services Agency Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly**. "Our goal is to disrupt disparities and address systemic inequities through the programs and services offered across our departments and offices. These grant awards will help us move closer to this goal." "These projects improve how individuals and families connect to the resources they need, while also advancing DDS' efforts to reduce disparities and increase equity in California's developmental service system" says **Nancy Bargmann, Director of DDS**.

The issue of access to services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities from diverse communities has been the subject of conversation and study during much of the past two decades. Studies conducted by universities, other research organizations, RCs, and DDS find that communities of color are less likely to receive RC services and receive lower than average (per capita) expenditures on services, compared to individuals who identify as White.

DDS received a total of 136 proposals. Grantees will implement a variety of efforts that prioritize cultural and linguistic competency in the developmental services system. Awarded projects focus on more than 30 languages, 16 unique ethnicities, and proven approaches that include: community navigation, family support/training, and projects intended to build a more diverse workforce.

**Highlights from this year's awards include projects that will:**

- Empower diverse emerging self-advocate leaders and mental health ambassadors with skill development through education and training
- Create the first statewide Native American navigator program based on tribal land to assist tribal communities with accessing available state & local services
- Establish a first-of-its-kind navigator and support program focused on the Deaf+ community

- Facilitate navigating Early Start services for African American infants exiting Neonatal Intensive Care Units through grassroots and trauma-informed care approaches
- Build a more culturally and linguistically responsive workforce of clinicians, behavior therapists and respite service providers from diverse communities
- Streamline behavioral health treatment for foster youth served by regional centers
- Connect Chinese and Vietnamese self-advocates and their aging caregivers with community partnerships and supports for future planning and advocacy training

DDS remains committed to learning more about the challenges consumers and their families face in accessing services and using existing resources to make measurable progress in reducing disparities.

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[More about DDS' Service Access & Equity Grant Program.](#)

**About DDS:** *Under the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act, DDS is responsible for overseeing the coordination and delivery of services and supports to over 400,000 Californians with developmental disabilities including cerebral palsy, intellectual disability, autism, epilepsy and related conditions. The state's service system is designed to meet the needs and choices of individuals at each stage of their lives, and, to the extent possible, serve them in their home communities, providing choices that are reflective of lifestyle, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.*