

**MINUTES OF MAY 8, 2023**  
**Inland Counties Regional Center, Inc.**  
**Board of Trustee Meeting**

**BOARD PRESENT:** Jay Connor; Kiana Buffington; Carmela Garnica; Alicia Lara; Theodore Leonard; Eric Naranjo; Maureen O'Connell; Briseida Ramirez; Rene Rojo; Gizelle Siojo; Teri Smith; Joshua Souder, April Stewart

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**BOARD FACILITATOR:** Amparo Mercado; Robyn Souder; Jorge Tamayo

**DIRECTORS PRESENT:** Steve Beckett; Kurtis Franklin; Felipe Garcia; Eric Hamler; Lavinia Johnson; Merissa Steuwer; Vince Toms

**STAFF PRESENT:** Amalia Barcelo-Huizar; CJ Cook; Maria Rodriguez

**GUEST PRESENT:** Rene Abraham; David Banda; Sofia Benitez; Beth Burt; Tauna Butler; Tamika Doyle; Martha Garcia; Araceli Gil; Patricia Herrera; Veronica Juarez; Haydee M; Esteban Ortiz; John P; Juan Ruiz; Nikisia Simmons; Isabel Torres; Elvira Velasquez

**RECORDING SECRETARY:** Sandra Guzman

**CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting was called to order by Ms. O'Connell at 5:07 pm.

**MINUTES OF MARCH 13, 2023 BOARD MEETING: 1. Motion made to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2023 Board Meeting as presented M/S/C Rojo/Connor.**

**PUBLIC INPUT:**

**BETH BURT**, Parent and Executive Director of Autism Society, Inland Empire: Thanked IRC for support and partnership during COVID. One issue of concern that was identified as the result of the survey was an increase in crisis calls. Calls that are going to police, hospitals and families that are afraid to come forward. 97% have a loved one who is a danger to themselves and others. Do not have services including medical & behavioral available to them. Results of the survey will be released this week. Looking forward to continuing working with IRC.

**MARTHA GARCIA**, Parent: Wanted to thank IRC for the ASL pilot program in Coachella Valley. Has a couple of suggestions on how to better the program. In Coachella there is farm workers and a huge Hispanic community. The teacher was excellent but Spanish and ASL translators were needed. Having this pilot program, showed the needs for the deaf of hearing and their families. During the pandemic, they remembered there was supposed to be a satellite office that would be closer. The Coachella people feel underserved because nothing has happened. Pandemic showed that we have the technology to do this and do not understand how you are not working with the school districts to make it happen.

**TAUNA BUTLER**, Parent: Here to talk about the difficulties and challenges in her life with her diagnosis of Autism, Intellectual Disabilities and being deaf. She was taught to hide her autism and her intellectual

disabilities. She was always told growing up to act normally. She learned to mask in public, hold back her flapping, clapping, stimming and other unnormal behaviors. Behind closed doors, she had meltdowns and severe outbursts with anger issues. She started having hearing loss in kindergarten and got worse throughout her life. In 2019, she was diagnosed with sensory hearing loss and one day she would be completely deaf. In 2021, she was totally deaf, and it was difficult to learn a new language. She is in need of IRC's services now more than ever. She has no interpreter for when she's out in public. She is hoping IRC will be able to fill in the cracks. Everyone deserves equal services and to be included and not excluded.

**ISABEL TORRES**, Parent and Executive Director of Yves Torres Foundation: Spanish speakers have lots of barriers such as language, technology, and transportation. They are underserved because they are not aware of what is happening in their community, do not know how to use technology or have transportation. She asked that everyone keep that in mind because you want to be able to serve these families and provide services to them.

**PATRICIA HERRERA**, Regional Manager for State Council on DD: Looking for high priority things to do in the community. She wants to join forces with IRC to reach as many Spanish speaking families as possible. Maybe there's an opportunity for her to do a presentation.

**LAURIE CORANZA**, Conservator: Is concerned that residential care facility is not properly adhering to the proper diet given by the doctor. Ms. O'Connell stated this concern has already been assigned to staff and are already working on it.

**LILLIANA RAMIREZ**, Co-founder of Padres Excepcionales: Ms. Ramirez stated she is the mother of an autistic child and benefited from the ASL pilot program out in Coachella Valley. Having such a short program is like giving someone one pill and then taking the rest of their medication away. They need a longer program in order to connect with their children. Also, asking the Board to consider adding an additional minute to public comment for people who use a translator.

**GLADIS OROZCO**, Parent: Here with similar concerns as previous speakers. She participated in the Coachella ASL pilot program. Is here to ask for a more intensive program, longer period of time and more interpreters for Spanish speaking families.

**VERONICA JUAREZ**, Family Member: There are barriers that Coachella Valley Psychoeducational Support Group face. 1. Barriers prevent consumers from accessing services and preparing for independent and inclusive living in the community. 2. From personal experience, the Service Coordinators are not trained or informed to guide and provide services offered by IRC. 3. Service Coordinators are not qualified to explain the guidelines that govern each service. 4. Language barrier when conducting IPP meetings. 5. Service Coordinators and Program Managers do not inform the consumers or families on how and when to fill out a 35c. 6. There is a communication barrier between service providers and the department that authorizes the services. 7. Lack of service providers and lack of staff wanting to work in the Coachella area. 8. Transportation as a barrier in order to attend board meetings.

Based on the barriers mentioned, the Coachella Valley Psychoeducational Support Group is requesting the following: 1. That Service Coordinators be trained so that they have a better performance in their work. 2. Training for Service Coordinators so that they can submit the service renewal to the corresponding department on time. 3. Training support groups to be able to advocate before legislators.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Ms. Johnson thanked everyone for attending the first in-person board meeting post pandemic and reported the following: 1. As of March 31, 2023, IRC serves 48,086 consumers. 2. IRC currently employs 950 staff of which 609 are in case management. 3. IRC's HR department held a job fair on Saturday, March 25. 38 verbal job offers were made. 4. IRC is offering a Bilingual Language Stipend to any staff who demonstrates proficiency in reading and speaking or speaking. Staff must demonstrate ability by taking a knowledge/skill test. 5. IRC is also offering a monthly stipend for staff who mentor new staff. Stipend is giving to mentor until new staff has completed their initial training. 6. As of March 1, due to end of the State of Emergency, IRC's buildings are open to the public. All visitors must have an appointment through IRC's Envoy system. We continue to have security guards at both San Bernardino and Riverside locations. 7. IRC continues with hybrid model of remote and office days. Directors, Managers, and all case management staff have been coming in and working in the building a minimum of once per week or as needed. The check in system has been discontinued. 8. Congratulation to Eric Hamler who has been promoted to Director of Transition and Specialized Services.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Written reports were submitted. Ms. Garnica requested additional information on the Pre-School units. Mr. Garcia explained Pre-School units are for children ages 3 to 6. There are two units in San Bernardino and 2 in Riverside counties. Cases coming out of Early Start transition to the Pre-School units. Caseloads are 40 to 1. Currently there are 52 service coordinators in these units and are looking to hire 90 more. Units are designated by county and not cities currently. Once the case get through the intake process and eligibility is determined, they get assigned a case worker.

**COMMITTEE REPORT:**

- 1) **ANOTHER WAY:** Ms. Gonzales submitted a written report. There were no questions from the Board.
- 2) **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:** The minutes from the March 2023 Executive Committee Meeting was included in the board packet. No questions from the Board.
- 3) **LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE:** No Report.
- 4) **MASTER TRUST COMMITTEE:** Ms. Miller submitted a written report. There were no questions from the Board.
- 5) **VENDOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** No Report.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **REVISED BYLAWS:** Ms. Johnson stated that at the March Board meeting, the Board approved the request of the Vendor Advisory Committee (VAC) term extension for certain members of the VAC. The request would result in some VAC members serving more than two consecutive terms, which would be a violation of the Bylaws. Ms. Johnson is seeking the Board's approval to revise Article VIII, Section 5 of the Bylaw to allow extending these terms. **2. Motion made to approve Article VIII of the Bylaws M/S/C Rojo/Souder.**

2. **\$250,000 CONTRACTS:** Mr. Toms is seeking approval of 56 contracts. All these contracts are renewals, and all are in good standing. **3. Motion made to approve the 56 contracts presented by Mr. Toms M/S/C Connor/Rojo. Ms. Stewart abstained from voting.**
3. **VACATION POLICY:** Mr. Beckett is requesting the Board's approval of IRC's amended Vacation Policy. Full-time employees who have worked at IRC for less than 5 years can earn up to 3 weeks of vacation per year. Full-time employees who have worked at IRC for at least 5 years but less than 10 years, can earn up to 4 weeks of vacation. Full-time employees who have worked at IRC for at least 10 years can earn up to 5 weeks of vacation. The maximum amount of vacation that can be accrued is 240 hours. **4. Motion made to approve the revised Vacation Policy as presented M/S/C Connor/Rojo. Ms. Stewart abstained from voting.**
4. **SICK LEAVE POLICY:** Mr. Beckett is seeking the Board's approval to amend IRC's Sick Leave Policy. Due to the number of IRC employees, amending the Sick Leave Policy as a cost containment effort was necessary. Full-time employees hired after July 1, 2023, who have worked for less than 5 years, can earn up to 80 hours of sick leave per year. For employees who have worked at IRC at least 5 years but less than 10 years, can earn up to 120 hours of sick leave per year. Full-time employees who have worked at IRC for at least 10 years can earn up to 160 hours of sick leave per year. The maximum amount of sick leave that can accrue is 480 hours. Full-time employees hired before June 30, 2023, regardless of how long they have worked for IRC, can earn up to 96 hours of sick leave per year. There is no cap on the amount of sick leave that can be accrued. **5. Motion made to approve changes to the Sick Leave Policy as presented M/S/C Connor/Rojo. Ms. Stewart abstained from voting.**

#### **TRUSTEE INPUT:**

Mr. Rojo commended Ms. Beth Burk for all that she does out in the community. He has a family member that has Autism.

Mr. Connor thanked Sandra Guzman and Claudia Mora for all that they did for the Board during the pandemic. Could not have gotten through it without them.

Mr. Naranjo commended everyone for their hard work. He stated it is great to be back. Looking forward to more in-person meetings.

Mr. Rojo stated he is available to new Board Members if they have any questions.

Mr. Leonard apologized for not attending in-person, but he injured his knee and cannot drive. Is looking forward to seeing everyone in-person.

Ms. O'Connell adjourned the meeting at 5:49 p.m. to go into Executive Session. Executive Session was called to order at 6:04 p.m.

Ms. O'Connell reconvened at 6:13 p.m. The Board acted on employee salary and benefits in accordance with W&I Code 4663(a)(3).

Ms. O'Connell adjourned the meeting at 6:14 p.m.

Sincerely,



Alicia Lara  
Board Secretary



Sandra Guzman  
Assistant Secretary

**MOTIONS FOR THE May 8, 2023 Board of Trustees Meeting:**

- 1. Motion made to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2023 Board Meeting as presented M/S/C Rojo/Connor.**
- 2. Motion made to approve Article VIII of the Bylaws M/S/C Rojo/Souder.**
- 3. Motion made to approve the 56 contracts presented by Mr. Toms M/S/C Connor/Rojo. Ms. Stewart abstained from voting.**
- 4. Motion made to approve the revised Vacation Policy as presented M/S/C Connor/Rojo. Ms. Stewart abstained from voting.**
- 5. Motion made to approve changes to the Sick Leave Policy as presented M/S/C Connor/Rojo. Ms. Stewart abstained from voting.**

