



September 13, 2023

Department of Developmental Services

1215 O Street, MS 8-20

Sacramento, CA. 95814

(916) 651-6309

OCO@dds.ca.gov

To whom it may concern:

Inland Regional Center (IRC) is submitting this correspondence in response to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) letter dated May 5, 2023.

As directed, IRC was to conduct a public input meeting regarding the National Core Indicators (NCI) results for the NCI Adult Family, Child Family, and Family Guardian surveys in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22.

This directive follows Welfare and Institutions (W&I) Code Section 4571(h)(1), which requires each regional center annually to present data collected from the NCI surveys at a public meeting of its governing board to assess the comparative performance of the regional center and identify needed improvements in services for Clients, including, but not limited to, case management services.

On June 1, 2023, IRC posted a notice informing Clients, families, staff, and Community members of the September 11, 2023, hybrid public input meeting with all associated data. The notice was then posted as an announcement on July 31, 2023, to the front page of inlandrc.org. The public input meeting was posted on IRC's social media platforms on August 28, September 1, 6, and the 11th. IRC's DDS liaison was notified of the meeting via email on June 8, 2023.

The NCI data for the Adult Family, Child Family, and Family Guardian for FY 2021-22 was available for review on the inlandrc.org/accountability page.

A hybrid public input meeting was held on September 11, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was attended by 40 participants. IRC provided families traveling to the meeting from the Coachella Valley \$50 in gas cards provided by the Language Access and Cultural Competency (LACC) project. The meeting was attended by 4 participants virtually. DDS was present virtually as well.

The panel was comprised of the Executive Director Lavinia Johnson, Director of Community Services Vince Toms, Program Administrator of Community Engagement CJ Cook, IT Director Kurtis Franklin,

Consumer Service Technician III Community Engagement George Gonzalez, IRC's Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) Cultural Specialist Estefania "Fania" Pena, IRC's Cultural Specialist Maria "Mari" Rodriguez, Director of Transition Services Eric Hamler, Chief Financial Officer (virtually) Merissa Steuwer, and 1:40 Caseload Program Manager Lilliana Garnica. Members of the Board of Trustees present were, Jay Connor, Josuah Souder, and Eric Naranjo.

Community Based Organizations (CBOs) receiving grant funding for Service Access and Equity who attended in-person was, Autism Society Inland Empire (ASIE) and Ives Torres Foundation. Familias First and GANAS attended virtually.

IRC provided Spanish and American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services for attendees using the LACC funding. No request for low-frequency languages was received. Members of the D/HH community did not attend the meeting. Fourteen attendees utilized the Spanish interpretation services.

The attendees were provided with a PowerPoint presentation on IRC's data evaluation in comparison to previous year administered. After the presentation, the attendees were asked to provide input.

The following input was received by the attendees in the open session.

1. Data was confusing and seemed to be outdated and skewed.
2. Questions that didn't seem to be "make sense" in the I/DD Community.
3. One parent who participated in the NCI stated it took two hours and in her opinion that was too long for a survey.
4. Parents who are monolingual Spanish speaking or identify as Latino/Latina have expressed to the CBOs they work with that they feel disrespected by the NCI survey questions and process.
5. One parent stated that the questions are too high-level, and often she answered "other" because the SCDD employee administering the survey could not clarify the question further.
6. One participant in the meeting stated that "The people asking the questions don't understand what they (NCI survey) are asking. I'm an experienced person, and I did not understand what they were asking (NCI survey)."

IRC did identify some positive trends in the data. The Clients surveyed know their Consumer Service Coordinator (CSC) and can contact them. Over 60% of those surveyed feel they are kept informed, in their primary language, about programs and services offered. This data point is in line with the LACC linguistic survey completed in 2022. Finally, close to 80% of those surveyed felt supported and respected regarding their culture.

As an agency, we have some considerable concerns with the NCI survey.

- IRC believes the sample size is too low.
- Each Regional Center has unique challenges.
 - Linguistic
 - Geographical barriers
 - Vendor availability
 - Cultural differences

- Too many questions
- The Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) community did not participate.
 - Clients/parents and caregivers who are D/HH are excluded from NCI because of the ASL barrier.
- Low-frequency languages identified by DDS are not represented.
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities are not adequately represented.
- Reports of questions being unclear, vague, and lacking clarity.
- Reports of vague and unclear communications from SCDD at the beginning of the survey cycle.

IRC's D/HH Specialist pointed out that the Deaf community is unaware of the NCI survey or its purpose, possibly due to limited outreach efforts. The fliers about the survey are available in 12 languages, including low-frequency languages. Still, ASL is not included in the survey's marketing materials, making it inaccessible for those who primarily communicate in ASL, a spatial-visual language with no written or spoken components.

Captioned videos about the NCI survey are available on the DDS website but may not be culturally and linguistically accessible. For example, information about the Adult In-Person Survey video located on dds.ca.gov does not utilize an ASL Interpreter, closed captions are not on, and it is ten years old.

As well, the DDS videos contain English-only captions, effectively excluding D/HH individuals whose first language is not English or ASL and who may rely on lip-reading as a tool to enhance access. It is important to consider providing multi-language captioning options or alternatives to ensure inclusivity for these individuals. As a result, IRC created an ASL video to empower our Clients to participate. In addition, IRC's D/HH Specialist hosted a Deaf community focus group to assist us in obtaining a better understanding of barriers so we can create strategies to remove them. The report for this focus group will be reviewed with the Executive Management team once completed and made available to the public via inlandrc.org.

Many individuals in the Deaf community, especially those with I/DD, have historically faced challenges with both written and spoken language skills due to ongoing societal and cultural barriers. As a result, they may have difficulty fully understanding written information. It is important to provide accessible alternatives, such as in-person ASL interpretation, and additional support, such as visual aids, simplified language, or communication assistance, to ensure effective communication.

The lack of awareness about relay services that provide communication access can be a barrier when contacting D/HH Clients and families to inform them about the NCI survey. Deaf people often have two phone numbers. One is a mobile number used for texting and other communication tools; another is a video relay service (VRS) number specifically for video relay calls. Deaf individuals can use this number to connect with a sign language interpreter who facilitates communication between them and the hearing caller.

Many people are not aware that relay services exist or that they may be used to facilitate communication with individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. Some may not have the education or training to use

relay services, leading to a lack of awareness on effectively utilizing these services. It is common for deaf people to get hung up on by hearing callers who are unfamiliar with relay service calls.

IRC will continue to:

- Continue to advocate for the removal of barriers to inclusion.
- Continue to create linguistically competent marketing materials for IRC Clients.
- Continue to advise, train, and inform CSCs of NCI.
- Support SCDD in their efforts each cycle through emails to staff and survey support.
- Continue to utilize LACC funding to engage D/HH and low-frequency languages and cultures.
- Continue to create easy to read marketing materials.
- Maintain Inlandrc.org and all associated pages that empower the Client, parent, and caregivers with information.
- Based on NCI results - IRC will continue to offer Client and parent trainings, such as Alternatives to Conservatorship.
- HR will continue recruiting, hiring, and onboarding new staff to limit CSC changeover as much as possible.

For questions reference this letter, please feel free to contact at community@inlandrc.org

Sincerely,


Lavinia Johnson, Executive Director

CJ Cook, Program Administrator Community Engagement 

CC: Maureen O'Connell, IRC Board of Trustees, Chair

Ernie Cruz, Deputy Director Community Services Division Department of Developmental Services