



Inland Regional Center
Service Access and Equity Report
Purchase of Service (POS)

March 12, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

Attached you will find the Inland Regional Center's (IRC) Purchase of Service (POS) Report and plan to ensure that the services authorized and approved are of the highest quality and available to all Clients no matter the age, language, ethnicity, diagnosis, geographical location, living arrangements, or other identifiable challenges.

IRC continued to take a collaborative approach to gathering Input from the community and added additional trainings to empower our Clients and families. The Community Engagement Team, Service Access and Equity (SAE) Team, and Language Access and Cultural Competency (LACC) Team maintained their collaborative efforts with Community-Based Organizations (CBO's) and the Autism Society of Inland Empire (ASIE) to support the dissemination of POS data, surveys, and scheduling of meetings.

This year, IRC provided three focus groups, an IRC strength assessment survey, and a POS survey in English, Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin/Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and American Sign Language (ASL) to gather Input. One in-person POS Listening Session in Spanish, English, and ASL also occurred on February 15, 2024, at the IRC Conference building.

At the in-person meeting, all CBO's receiving grant funding from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) during the reporting period were allowed to speak. IRC also requested quantitative and qualitative data from each CBO to assist in creating the POS report.

The POS data was presented in the CBO IRC Resource Roundtable, Disparity Link, CLASE, and Client Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings. Finally, all IRC staff received the data and survey and were encouraged to provide feedback.

The attached report has Input from our Community, Partner Organizations, and Staff, summarized with a plan to continue addressing the POS disparities.

Do not hesitate to contact me at (909) 890-3400 or via email at Ljohnson@inlandrc.org with any questions, concerns, or additional input. We welcome the opportunity to discuss our activities with you.

Sincerely,

Lavinia Johnson

Executive Director

Inland Regional Center

CJ Cook, Program Administrator Community Engagement *Cjc*

Approved by the Board of Trustees in open session March 11, 2024



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Note: For a list of common abbreviations, click here [Service Access and Equity | Inland Regional Center \(inlandrc.org\)](https://www.inlandrc.org)

Overview of Training Sessions to Improve Public Input

To increase public Input, as it relates to data, IRC provided the below trainings. These trainings were designed based on public Input collected in IRC listening sessions, community outreaches, and feedback sent via our community@inlandrc.org email and the “Contact Us” option on inlandrc.org.

Note:

1. Our marketing initiatives encompass various channels, including Facebook, IRC's email listserv, Instagram, Twitter, newsletters, CSC notifications, and notifications to DDS SAE grant recipients.
2. Every session was provided in English, ASL, and Spanish. Upon request, low-frequency languages were also accommodated.

Session	Date	Attendees	Marketing Period
Advocating with Data	July 25, 2023	24	April 24, 2023, to July 25, 2023.
Providing constructive public Input	August 29, 2023	26	April 24, 2023, to August 29, 2023.
Common Services	September 19, 2023	15	April 24, 2023, to August 29, 2023.
Utilization of Technology	October 24, 2023	8	April 24, 2023, to October 24, 2023.
Mock Listening Session	November 14, 2023	11	April 24, 2023, November 14, 2023.
Totals	5 sessions	Total - 84	

1. Advocating with Data was provided via Zoom webinar and provided the attendees with an overview of the POS data, plus where to locate the data on inlandrc.org. Also, the training explored types of data (quantitative/qualitative) and the need for access to data and took a virtual tour of IRC's inlandrc.org accountability page to become more familiar with where all the data IRC collects is located. This tour included brief overviews of the following, caseload ratio, National Core Indicators (NCI), Performance Contracts, Home, and Community Base Services (HCBS), and LACC overview.



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2. Providing constructive public Input was provided in person at IRC. Over the past several years IRC has noted that public Input provided in listening sessions is off-subject and often a testimonial on an issue that occurred in the past. Also, in recent sessions, IRC has noted racial and cultural incentive comments that are not in line with social norms, nor IRC Core Values. The goal of the session was to model appropriate ways to provide public Input, using the current data, to the attendees. The intended outcome was for the Cultural Specialist to be provided with the ability to facilitate a more robust listening session that yields enduring public Input that can drive positive change.
2. The Common Services session was held in person at IRC At IRC Person-centered planning (P.C.P.) is used when developing a Client's Individual Program Plan (IPP), which requires the client, parent, or caregiver to have an understanding of services available by age. This session aimed to empower participants to research and utilize the common services list located on inlandrc.org.
3. Utilization of Technology was held in person at IRC with the intent to familiarize parents and clients with technology to assist with, communicating with IRC, reviewing data, or seeking activities in the community.
4. The Mock Listening Session was hosted in person at IRC. The overall goal was to provide the participants with data to review 30 days before the training and then provide them with a brief presentation on the data. Once the presentation was complete, the participants practiced providing public input based on what they saw in the data.

Inland Regional Center Strength Assessment

Strength Assessment Survey 2023 Summary Report

The Strength Assessment Survey 2023 aimed to evaluate the strengths and areas of improvement within the IRC system. The survey, consisting of 12 questions, was conducted through SurveyMonkey in multiple languages, including Tagalog, Mandarin Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, English, and Spanish, with ASL support through VideoAsk.

Positive Responses and Trends:

- Forty-eight responses were obtained in total: 37 in English, 8 in Spanish through SurveyMonkey, and 3 in ASL via VideoAsk; one response in ASL appeared confused about the purpose of the survey and, thus, not used for analysis.
- Positive responses highlighted diverse support services, ASL classes, and community events.
- Noteworthy responses emphasized the agency's size, language variety, and empowerment of parents and consumers.
- Identified areas for improvement included communication, customer service, and the need for innovative programs.



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- Suggestions encompassed better training, increased communication, and technological advancements.
- Trends included appreciation for language support, technological updates, and responsive client services.

Language and Accessibility:

- 96.15% of participants communicated with their CSC in their preferred language.
- 92.31% received their Individualized Program Plan (IPP) in their preferred language.
- 96.00% felt IRC respects their culture.

Improvement in Language Access:

- 87.50% perceived improvements in language access and accessibility in the past two years.
- Improvements included better communication, interpreters in workshops, and forms available in multiple languages.

Concerns:

- Concerns raised involved insufficient training for CSC's and high caseloads impacting service quality.

Conclusion:

The Strength Assessment Survey provided valuable insights into IRC's strengths, areas of improvement, and language accessibility. Positive trends included appreciation for diverse services and language support, while concerns emphasized the need for enhanced training and ethical considerations. Efforts to improve language access were acknowledged but continued focus on communication, and cultural sensitivity is recommended for sustained progress.



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Service Access and Equity Action Items to Obtain Public Input

- July 31, 2023 - POS Public Input meeting announcement posted on IRC calendar.
- October 24, 2023 - Public announcement IRC Purchase of Services Focus Group Sessions
- November 27, 2023 - POS Public Input announcement to Directors
- November 27, 2023 - POS Public Input announcement to IRC staff
- November 27, 2023 - POS Public Input announcement to CBOS, DDS, OCRA, DRC., DEI, and SCCD
- December 11, 2023 - POS Public input meeting announcement on the IRC website
- December 28, 2023 - POS data posted to the IRC website.
- December 28, 2023 - POS data uploaded to accountability page.
- January 8, 2024 - Post IRC website Blog the Power of Participation - Link www.inlandrc.org/1824
- January 8, 12, 20, and February 2, 6, 12, 2024 - social media post-POS Public Meeting
- January 8, 2024, IRC posted The Power of Participation: The Importance of Attending Public Input Meetings blog with links to the Focus Groups and Listening Sessions.
- January 12, 2024 - Presentation to CLASE leaders
- January 17, 2024 - POS Focus groups, surveys, and Public POS meetings provided to all IRC staff.
- January 17, 2024 - English POS Focus Group Session
- Interpretation services for ASLand Spanish were available, and IRC provided support for less commonly spoken languages such as Vietnamese, Tagalog, Arabic, and Chinese. However, no specific language requests were received.*
- January 24, 2024 - Spanish POS Focus Group Session
- Interpretation services for ASLand Spanish were available, and IRC provided support for less commonly spoken languages such as Vietnamese, Tagalog, Arabic, and Chinese. However, no specific language requests were received.*
- January 31, 2024 - ASL POS Focus Group Session
- Interpretation services for ASLand Spanish were available, and IRC provided support for less commonly spoken languages such as Vietnamese, Tagalog, Arabic, and Chinese. However, no specific language requests were received.*
- February 1, 2024 - IRC provided flyers to CBO's and shared them with families and the Listserv.
- February 1, 2024 - IRC sent flyer on IRC constant contact listserv.
- February 5, 2024 - IRC sent an email to CBO's as a reminder about the POS public meeting.



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On February 13, 2024, IRC posted a Podcast referencing the POS meetings.

February 15, 2023 - The Service Access Equity Purchase of Service (P.O.S.) presentation was delivered to the community in person.

Spanish session - 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Number of attendees =28

English/ASL session - 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM

Number of attendees = 37



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Black Indigenous People of Color Plan (BIPOC)

On August 5, 2023, IRC partnered with Nasaba Family Services and Consulting Inc. to host a Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) focus group furnished by the LACC funding provided by DDS. To review the complete report, please click on <https://www.inlandrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/IRC-Focus-Group-Final-PDF.pdf>

IRC utilized Nasaba Family Counseling because they are dedicated to enriching the lives of those we serve by promoting a strength-based, Client-centered approach. Nasaba believes that achieving a balanced social-emotional well-being is the foundation of prosperity, good health, and meaningful relationships. The data collected by Nasaba speaks to the lived experience of IRC Clients, families, and their loved ones.

IRC and Nasaba created a specific criterion based on the feedback pursued, i.e., the lived experience of IRC Clients, families, and their loved ones. For this reason, only parents, caregivers, and Clients from IRC can participate to ensure our data specifically speaks to our IRC Client population. Unfortunately, the focus group was attended by a DDS SAE Grant recipient who knowingly did not meet the pre-established criterion, which may have skewed the data collection process. The LACC team hoped that the DDS SAE Grant recipients would connect Clients, families, and their loved ones who met the criterion to the focus group to enhance the data collected, not attend, and speak on their behalf.

IRC and Nasaba will continue to partner to decrease the inequities within our care system from a strength-based, Client-centered approach for FY 23/24. This will include the following.

1. IRC Vendor Cultural Humility Training - BIPOC- 4/2 hr. sessions.
2. Professional Development for Early Point of Contact School Personnel - 4 Zoom sessions.
3. African American Parent Workshops- 2 Sessions in-person
4. Youth, Parent, and Family Life Skills Services - 5 sessions in-person



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Purchase of Service (P.O.S.) Public Input Meeting 2024

February 15, 2024

English / ASL/ Low frequency languages

5:00 PM to 6:00 PM

Agenda

- ❖ **Welcome** – Monica G. Munguia, M.A. - Community Engagement Program Manager
- ❖ **Purchase of Services (P.O.S.) Presentation** – Mari Rodriguez, M.P.A.
- ❖ **Introductions** - Community-Based Organizations (CBO's) - Mari Rodriguez, M.P.A.
 - Autism Society Inland Empire - Beth Burt & Clara Garcia
 - Chasing 7 Dreams - Tenika Doyle
 - GANAS - Martha Barragan and Maria Martinez
 - Ives Torres Foundation - Isabel Torres
- ❖ **Public Input Session**- Martin Morales, M.P.A. and Mari Rodriguez, MPA
 - 5 minutes per person if provided before the meeting
 - 3 minutes per person at a live session

* Links to data - [IRC-POS-Data-Reports-22-23-Rev-A.pdf \(inlandrc.org\)](https://www.inlandrc.org/IRC-POS-Data-Reports-22-23-Rev-A.pdf)

*Link to common acronyms -[Service Access and Equity | Inland Regional Center \(inlandrc.org\)](https://www.inlandrc.org/Service-Access-and-Equity)

IRC Staff: Lavinia Johnson, Executive Director, Vince Toms, Director of Community Services, Dr. CJ Cook, Program Administrator, Monica Munguia Community Engagement Program Manager; Lilliana Garnica Program Manager, Maria Rodriguez, Cultural Specialist; Estefania Peña, D/HH Cultural Specialist; Charles Mason, ASL Facilitator; Martín Morales, LACC Specialist; George Gonzalez, CST III. Joshua Souder Board member.

Vendors: Sofia Benitez, 24hr. Home Care; Karen Corado, Options for All, Tenika Doyle, Chasing 7 Dreams,

Interpreters: Cresenciano Garcia, Abelina Garzon - Tri-lingual English/Spanish/ASL; Gil Villalobos Spanish interpreter.

Other Agencies: Rachel Leach, OCRA; Adriana Jimenez, Emily Ikuta DRC, Madison Gonzalez, Self-Determined Futures.



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C.B.O's invite via email- November 9,2023, February 5,2024

C.B.O's in attendance

- Autism Society Inland Empire
- Padres con Ganas
- Chasing 7 Dreams
- Ives Torres Foundation

C.B.O's not present

- Access Nonprofit Center
- Familias First
- Disability Voices United (DVU)

Note:

IRC offered three virtual opportunities for community members to provide public comments. These sessions were conducted on January 17th in both English and low-frequency languages, January 24th in Spanish, and January 31st in ASL.

It is important to note that the two in-person sessions held at IRC on February 15, 2024, were not live-streamed or recorded. These precautions were taken to ensure a safe and confidential environment for those providing feedback and to protect the privacy of individuals present. It is worth mentioning that these safeguards were also implemented in response to feedback from the community. Many past participants expressed concerns about unidentified individuals observing them while they provided feedback in an open forum or appeared on camera. Furthermore, the meeting times were based on feedback received from the community.

The previously mentioned virtual and public listening sessions were actively promoted within the community over a seven-month period.



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Minutes from the in person meeting Listening Session

POS Listening Session – Spanish February 15, 2024, | 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Monica Munguia Introduction -> Vince addressed the audience- reference Social Recreation -> Maria Rodriquez delivered the POS presentation.

Public Input – 3 minutes (Roughly translated):

Speaker 1: regarding partnership with IRC last year. Has received a number of grants from DDS; One was leadership program for young adults—13 individuals graduated, run by a young man with Autism. 100 people attended the meeting, which was run by the program. Also working on a Early Start grant for Native American community and Foster program. CLASE update; has a collaboration with community leaders, we help each other and bring up issues and solve problems. ASIE will be sending a letter including 4 items – Social recreation services, delay in I.P.P.'s translated into Spanish, lack of providers, defining expectations of case workers. Thank you.

Speaker 2: Introduction of Padres con GANAS; topics include how to advocate for your children. Progress has been shown with IRC families, communication is something we work hard for. We are going in a good direction. What we observe in our families is that support is very important in their personal situations. Focusing on the POS data can help GANAS improve. Thank you for your time.

Speaker 3: Helping parents take advantage of IRC services; problems include technology, parents may be help with advocating for your children. Parents can have trouble getting clear and concise information. Parents have expressed difficulty understanding the instructions. Ives Torres has collaborated with IRC and other organizations to find providers. Encouraging families to continue to attend the classes because there are a lot of changes happening and there is still a lot of work to do. Identify ways to have a better voice; there have been problems communicating in the past. Hopefully everybody can have better services provided.

Speaker 4: One of the big barriers specifically for cerebral palsy is transportation. A lot of times the kids are stuck at home because there is no transportation; transportation providers say they cannot offer transportation because of different reasons. If they can't use those services, it's like they don't exist. Feels like cerebral palsy is left out of a lot of support.

Speaker 5: He is attending a program provided by IRC that the client and parent do not like. They put everyone in one room, but the needs are different. Teacher doesn't separate severity levels. Asked to have client moved to another program but C.S.C. said it wasn't possible because they are all the same. Have been trying to reach someone for two weeks and have no answer yet. What can she do to get the information she needs?

Speaker 6: Has a neighbor with down syndrome; complained about someone hitting her, so she doesn't allow her children to work with anyone except their own family. Some kids are more rebellious than others; not willing to let their kids (be around) just anyone. Everybody deserves respect.



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POS Listening Session – English February 15, 2024, | 5:30 – 6:30 PM

Monica Introduction -> Vince addressed audience about Social; Recreation -> Lavinia addressed audience and provided a welcome message -> Mari delivered POS presentation.

Public Input – 3 minutes:

Speaker 1 discussed grants, starting with a leadership class led by an individual with Autism, which successfully organized a conference with 119 attendees. The next project targets Spanish speakers, the Native American community, and foster children through an Early Start program. Another initiative, CLASE, serves the Latino and Spanish-speaking community with 50 leaders from over 25 organizations. ASIE sent a letter elaborating on Social Recreation concerns, particularly addressing disparities and delays in translating I.P.P.'s into Spanish. The fourth point emphasized the necessity of defining expectations for C.S.C.'s.

Speaker 2: Pamper my Baby focuses on early intervention, offering resources and access for parents. It is committed to assisting parents in advocating for their children, identifying disparities, and understanding the underlying reasons. The organization offers four main programs: Career Connect, EKAAMP, recently became vendorized for Social Recreation, and a sports program called STARS, which provides training in various recreational sports. There is a strong emphasis on expanding services for transitional age clients.

Speaker 3: Offering services in the Coachella Valley, this program teaches parents essential skills in advocating for their children. Overcoming communication barriers, not solely limited to language, is a primary focus. It assists parents in navigating the regional center system through a highly individualized and intensive program. Additionally, the program supports the family unit by organizing "sib shops" for typical siblings. The organization has also noted discrepancies in the quality of vendors and billing practices, raising questions about the extent to which billing issues contribute to inflated disparities.

Speaker 4: Speaking regarding translation pieces of I.P.P.'s; some take up to 6 months to receive.
Proposing solution: once I.P.P.'s are delivered, an interpreter can be sent to the home to translate in person.

Speaker 5: Discussing the limited number of programs in the Coachella Valley area, there's an expressed desire to expand initiatives and launch a recruitment campaign for the region. One potential solution proposed involves emphasizing the importance of self-determination. The organization is prepared to submit a comprehensive letter outlining its plans. They are enthusiastic about the ongoing collaboration with the Inland Regional Center.

Speaker 6: Despite the availability of social recreation services, accessing them can be challenging due to unidentified reasons. It's worth noting that the R.F.P. for social recreation is exclusively for Riverside County, although a portion of Riverside County falls under another regional center. There's a request for an F.R.P. for crisis intervention services in San Bernardino County, specifically targeting S.B. Behavioral Services, the Behavioral Team, and Sheriff's Department. The emphasis is on providing comprehensive



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training for law enforcement and first responders. San Bernardino County urgently requires 24/7 crisis intervention with qualified personnel, particularly during weekends when most incidents occur.

Speaker 7: A parent of an autistic adult raises concerns about the lack of support for individuals with autism after they secure employment. They question whether anyone follows up to assess their progress. They observe that high-functioning autistic individuals often struggle to find jobs and feel lost once they turn 18. There is a noticeable gap in opportunities for autistic adults, especially those with identified behaviors. The parent advocates for more initiatives aimed at this demographic, noting a predominant focus on ages 0-18. They are taking proactive steps by exploring the possibility of opening a private company and seeking funding to address these needs.

Speaker 8: In the fiscal year of 2023, collaborated with IRC to address three primary concerns: insufficient programs centered around the deaf community, a shortage of deaf interpreters, and a lack of awareness about deaf culture. The inaugural deaf resource fair, which attracted numerous participating organizations, was a significant milestone, showcasing the unity within the community. Remarkably, over 75% of attendees were not currently receiving services from IRC. Encouragingly, efforts have led to a 10% increase in service provision, marking progress in meeting the needs of the deaf community.

Speaker 9 (Spanish): As a co-founder of Inclusion in the Coachella Valley, particularly Palm Springs, and a member of CLASE and Padres con GANAS, I am here representing a specific case. I faced challenges when documentation for service initiation, including terms and conditions, was provided solely in English, leading me to sign them due to the urgent need for services. However, this language barrier has rendered me unable to access the services, creating significant hurdles for my daughter. Furthermore, my efforts to find alternative service providers have failed, leaving us with no viable options in our area. Additionally, denial of A.B.A. services occurred due to the need for signature on verification forms, exacerbated by documents being exclusively available in English, ultimately resulting in the suspension of services.

Speaker 10: I'd like to express my gratitude to IRC for offering ASL classes. However, I've encountered challenges in fully committing to IRC. Initially, I was told that my child's autism would be outgrown, but it wasn't until the age of 16 that an official diagnosis was made. Moving forward, I hope to have someone who can consistently follow up on evaluations.

Speaker 11 (Spanish): With 6-7 years of experience with the Regional Center, I am here to address the impact of language barriers within our homes. A significant issue arises from many coordinators' lack of proficiency in Spanish and the absence of interpreters. Despite submitting service requests to IRC, they are often denied, citing the availability of other services like IHSS. However, our quality of life continues to decline, despite providing evidence. When we request additional hours, IRC insists on involving other services, even without our explicit request. For instance, they introduce services such as Respite without our consent, exacerbating the problem.



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Speaker 12: No services available in area, stereotyped that the area is too dangerous. Advocating for sister. Asking IRC to provide parents with translators or provide a mediator to do the job that he is currently doing.

Speaker 13 (Spanish): From the Coachella Valley, one of the prominent concerns is the extensive wait time to access services. For instance, I've been on a waiting list for occupational therapy services for six months. The provider in the area struggles due to insufficient staffing. Additionally, the Regional Center faces challenges in providing respite care due to a shortage of personnel. Consequently, families often have to rely on support from relatives or acquaintances for respite services. Furthermore, although approved for \$100 per month for social recreational activities, navigating the reimbursement process is challenging because all the information is available exclusively in English.

Speaker 14: I propose the implementation of a decision support group where individuals can comprehend processes more effectively through visual aids such as decision trees rather than lengthy textual explanations. This could significantly enhance IRC's success rate. Additionally, utilizing Google A.I. translation could expedite the translation process, facilitating accessibility for non-English speakers. Furthermore, I advocate for increased transparency regarding financial management, including detailed information on expenditure, cost account codes, and income versus outflow. While I understand that IRC has contracts, not having access to all the contract information, including contract managers and codes, hinders my ability to identify any potential errors or discrepancies.

Speaker 15: Concerning Social Recreation funding, there are immediate barriers arising from the imposition of additional rules not explicitly stated in the regulations. Efforts are underway to seek clarification from DDS regarding Social Rec services, particularly for underserved communities. It's concerning that parents are being compelled to pay for services in advance, which is a blanket restriction not in accordance with the law. Recently, a directive was issued, and I strongly advocate for IRC to implement changes to their social recreation policies in response.

Speaker 16: Challenges in the social recreation realm include lengthy processing times and delays in receiving back payments. The annual expiration of Individual Program Plans (I.P.P.'s) creates gaps in service provision. Moreover, there is a need for improvement in communication from C.S.C.'s, as they often lack awareness of all ongoing events.

Speaker 18: There's a pressing need to clarify and establish clear expectations for CSC's. Families are encountering numerous inconsistencies, resulting in confusion, and missed services. Improved training for CSC's is essential to address these issues effectively. I propose the formation of a group dedicated to defining explicit expectations for CSC training. This initiative will facilitate better service delivery and enhance support for the community.



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Data Overview:

POS total Expenditures - 2021-2022 - utilized \$633,117,609.

POS total Expenditures - 2022-2023 - utilized \$715,263,552.

All Ages – FY 21/22- FY-22-23

Disparity	Total Clients 21/22	Total Clients 22/23	Clients Receiving POS	Clients No P.O.S.	Disparity Increase or Decrease
Autism	15,620	15,932	10,059	5,936	2.60% Increase
Hispanic	18,084	19,971	14,434	5,569	-1.30% Decrease
Black African American	4,268	4,512	3,380	1,138	-1.20% Decrease
American Indian or Alaska Native	101	105	69	36	-.40% Decrease
Monolingual Spanish Speakers	8,304	8,947	6,827	2,125	-.90% Decrease
Cerebral Palsy	1,285	1,243	858	386	-.50% Decrease
Epilepsy	545	535	377	158	-3.00% decrease

This year, IRC has observed new disparities in the areas of American Indian or Alaska Native populations, individuals with Cerebral Palsy and Epilepsy, as well as those who communicate using American Sign.

Language (A.S.L.). Deaf and Hard of Hearing Data Overview

Disparity ASL Clients	Total Clients 21/22	Total Clients 22/23	Clients Receiving P.O.S.	Clients No POS	Disparity
ASL	64/21.9%	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	

The 2022-2023 disparity data does not account for ASL and other less common languages. The “all other languages” category includes 428 clients with a primary language other than English, Spanish, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. There are 116 clients who do not utilize authorized services, resulting in a disparity of 27.1%. Current data for Clients who identified as deaf, hard of hearing, or use ASL as a primary language is unavailable.

Current Clients F.Y. July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023	Current Staff F.Y. July 1, 2022- June 30,2023
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48,086	961
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Barriers Identified by IRC:

A significant challenge that has persisted over the past ten years is the limited community participation when IRC seeks feedback or input. Throughout the year, IRC hosts various meetings open to parents, Clients, vendors, and agencies, especially CBO's that receive S.A.E. grant funding from DDS. Nevertheless, attendance at these meetings, which cover topics such as POS, NCI, and caseload ratio, continues to remain consistently low despite efforts to increase participation through aggressive marketing strategies and the availability of virtual options.

Additionally, the training sessions offered to the community to enhance their understanding of data and encourage public input also need more participation, especially considering the size and reach of IRC. It is worth noting that these meetings mentioned above and training programs are extensively promoted internally and externally and made available to the CBO's that receive SAE grant funding from DDS.

IRC's SAE Team can establish a positive connection between reducing complaints and fostering robust community engagement through the ASIE's utilization of SAE Grant funding.

The SAE Team has faced challenges when it comes to correlating a reduction in disparities with other agencies that receive DDS SAE funding. This issue stems from a lack of data provided to the SAE Team concerning the reduction of disparities within the current POS. We strongly believe that the decrease in disparities we've highlighted can be credited to the efficient use of resources. This includes the Enhanced Case Load Team, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Cultural Specialist position, the diligent efforts of the Cultural Specialist, and the successful execution of LACC funding and plan, bolstered by our robust partnership with ASIE.

Technology Barriers:

Using technology with monolingual parents can present several barriers, depending on various factors such as their level of familiarity with technology, language proficiency, and cultural background. Here are some common barriers identified by local parent support leaders who work closely with IRC:

1. **Limited Technology Literacy**
2. **Understanding of the Online Meeting Process**
3. **Privacy Concerns**
4. **Language Barrier**
5. **Fear of Technology**
6. **Lack of Access**
7. **Complex User Interfaces**
8. **Accessibility Issues**
9. **Resistance to Change**



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To address these barriers, it's essential to provide support and resources tailored to the specific needs and preferences of monolingual parents. This can include language-specific training, simplified user interfaces, culturally sensitive approaches, and access to technical assistance in their native language. Additionally, promoting digital literacy and bridging the generation gap through intergenerational learning can help overcome some of these challenges.

Training Implementation Plan: IRC will explore the following through LACC.

Language-Specific Training:

- Offer language-specific training sessions conducted in the native language of monolingual parents.
- Focus on providing information about available services, navigating systems, and advocating for their children's needs.
- Include practical exercises and role-playing scenarios to reinforce learning.
- Collaborate with community organizations and cultural centers to host training sessions in accessible locations within the community.
- Seek feedback from participants throughout the training process to continuously improve and adapt the program to meet their evolving needs.
- Partner with local language experts and cultural advisors to ensure the training materials and approaches are culturally relevant and effective.

Evaluation:

- Conduct pre-training and post-training assessments to measure changes in parents' knowledge, skills, and confidence levels.
- Gather feedback from participants to evaluate the effectiveness of the training program and identify areas for improvement.
- Monitor the uptake of services and resources by monolingual parents following the training to assess its impact on overcoming barriers and improving access to support.

By implementing this comprehensive training plan, we aim to empower monolingual parents with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to navigate systems effectively and advocate for their children's needs successfully.

Barrier of Gatekeeper Advocates:

IRC has expressed concern about the difficulty of gathering equitable public input and fostering participation in this report. We have seen and experienced what we consider to be Gatekeeper advocates, whether individuals or entities, who claim to represent marginalized groups or communities but often control or restrict access to resources, information, support, or opportunities within those communities. This challenges IRC when marketing meetings, surveys, hosting focus groups, events, and similar activities. Operating without transparency, they stifle dissent and perpetuate inequality by



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upholding existing power dynamics. Their actions undermine authentic representation, weaken advocacy efforts, erode community trust, and impede progress toward achieving equity and justice.

Old Data/Timelines

Nearly seven months elapse from the end of the fiscal year to the provision of data for analysis. Subsequently, an additional five months transpire from that stage until a report is submitted to DDS. Following this, there is a further three-month period before the report is made publicly available.

This timeline can be concerning for several reasons:

1. **Timeliness:** The delay in providing data for analysis means that decision-makers have to wait nearly seven months after the end of the fiscal year to even begin analyzing important information. This delay can hinder timely decision-making and potentially lead to missed opportunities or ineffective strategies.
2. **Operational Efficiency:** A five-month gap between data analysis and submitting a report to DDS suggests potential inefficiencies in the data processing and reporting workflow. Such delays can impact the organization's ability to respond promptly to emerging issues or changing circumstances.
3. **Transparency and Accountability:** The additional three-month period before making the report publicly available raises concerns about transparency and accountability. Delays in publicizing important reports may reduce stakeholders' trust in the organization and its ability to communicate vital information in a timely manner.
4. **Resource Allocation:** Prolonged timeframes for data analysis and reporting may indicate resource constraints or inefficiencies within the organization's data management and reporting systems. Addressing these issues could lead to more effective resource allocation and improved overall performance.

Overall, the extended timeline from data collection to public availability of reports highlights potential challenges that may impact decision-making, operational efficiency, transparency, and resource management within the organization.

FY 23/24 Action Plan:

Welfare & Institutions Code, [Section 4519.5](#), requires DDS and regional centers to collaborate annually to compile data on the purchase of service authorization, utilization, and expenditure. Within three months of compiling the data with DDS, each regional center must meet with stakeholders in a public meeting regarding the data. By August 31st, following the public stakeholder meetings, each regional center must post a Purchase of Service Annual Report to its website.

The report must include the following:

- Actions the regional center took to improve public attendance and participation at stakeholder meetings, including, but not limited to, attendance and participation by underserved communities.
- Copies of minutes from the meeting and attendee comments.



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- Whether the data described in this section indicate a need to reduce disparities in the purchase of services among consumers in the regional center's catchment area. If the data do indicate that need, the regional center's recommendations and plan to promote equity, and reduce disparities, in the purchase of services.

Currently, to enhance the ability of IRC parents and clients to provide feedback, the Community Engagement Team goes above and beyond the requirements outlined in WIC 4519.5 by offering the following initiatives:

1. Inland Regional Center Strength Assessment
2. Virtual POS focus groups conducted in English, Spanish, and American Sign Language (ASL).
3. IRC POS Survey along with data, a list of focus groups, and scheduled in-person meetings.
4. Utilization of the IRC Access Podcast and Blog to raise awareness about the POS meetings.
5. An in-person meeting was scheduled for February 15th at 11 am (Spanish) and 5 pm (English/ASL).
6. Meetings, focus groups, and surveys were scheduled by IRC based on community feedback and conducted in Spanish.

Note: Interpretation services for low-frequency languages were available, although not specifically requested.

In light of feedback received by IRC and the commitment to uphold W.I.C. Section 4519.5, the Community Engagement and SAE. Teams will explore the possibility of transitioning from virtual to in-person engagement on February 13, 2025, with the specific time to be announced, along with appropriate translation services.

IRC will establish a Community POS Work Group to implement Collaborative Community Research Initiatives. These initiatives aim to investigate service requirements, experiences, and preferences across diverse demographic factors such as income level, race, ethnicity, language spoken, and geographical location. This strategic endeavor is geared towards enhancing language accessibility and addressing technology-related challenges, as underscored by local community leaders.

Barriers to transportation and appropriate care for the parent's child are often brought up when IRC is speaking to community members. These barriers can affect different groups of people, including those with disabilities, low-income individuals, seniors, and those living in rural areas:

To address these barriers to attending in-person meetings, IRC will explore the following:

1. Gas/Uber cards for parents with transportation concerns upon request.
2. Explore additional respite care for parents who wish to attend the in-person meetings upon request.
3. Offer a Zoom Webinar link for those who want to participate virtually.
 - a. Provide a Seamless form to submit feedback to IRC up to the day of the meeting.
 - b. We acknowledge the challenges of offering public comments or Input to IRC through virtual platforms, as local parent support group leaders outlined.
 - i. **Technical difficulties**
 - ii. **Limited engagement**



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- iii. **Access barriers**
- iv. **Difficulty expressing nuances**
- v. **Technical literacy**
- vi. **Privacy concerns**

POS Survey Results

Purchase of Services Data Survey 2023 All Languages Sentiment Analysis:

The POS Data Survey 2023 reveals diverse sentiments among the 36 respondents, representing only three languages: English, Spanish, and American Sign Language (A.S.L.). From those responses, none of the surveys received in Spanish completed more than the first question, and no surveys were received in the low-frequency languages Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Tagalog, or Vietnamese, thus reflecting additional challenges in engaging and obtaining insights from these communities.

Notably, 35 participants have engaged with POS data, with 16 affirming and 19 negating familiarities. A closer look indicates that 13 English speakers find the data significant, while 5 Spanish and 2 ASL users express disinterest.

The Public Input Meeting presentation in English on February 15, 2024, at 5:00 PM, faced mixed responses. Six English-speaking individuals committed to attendance, whereas seven declined, including one ASL respondent. These insights underline varied engagement levels across linguistic communities. Regarding current IRC services, transportation and independent living remain unutilized, while respite services see a substantial uptake. Additionally, 8 out of 12 respondents, predominantly English speakers, acknowledge awareness of the Community-Based Organization facilitating connections with IRC-funded services.

Two respondents, both English speakers, expressed a willingness to be contacted for further information. However, 11 participants, primarily English speakers, declined additional contact. The majority prefer English for communication, highlighting a linguistic preference.

Lastly, the survey touches upon suggestions for IRC programs, revealing a mix of positive engagement and areas that require attention and improvement, emphasizing the need for effective communication, program enhancement, and a desire for innovative and community-oriented initiatives. The sentiments expressed indicate a need for tailored services that address diverse community needs and preferences voiced by respondents.

Promoting Equity in Data Compilation for Service Utilization in Welfare & Institutions Code Section 4519.5

Welfare & Institutions Code Section 4519.5 mandates collaboration between the DDS and regional centers to compile data related to the purchase of service authorization, utilization, and expenditure. However, it's crucial to amend this section to ensure equitable representation and consideration of the needs of lower socioeconomic communities. By incorporating mechanisms for community engagement,



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data disaggregation, and targeted outreach, we can enhance the inclusivity and fairness of the data compilation process.

Recommendation for Changes to WIC 4519.5:

1. **POS Community Workgroup:** Each Regional Center should establish a POS Community Workgroup, in collaboration with the Cultural Specialist, comprising representatives from lower socioeconomic communities, monolingual Spanish speakers, Deaf and hard-of-hearing clients, low-frequency language clients/parents, and community-based services who do not receive funds via POS. These POS Community Workgroups should actively oversee the data compilation process outlined in WIC 4519.5, providing Input on data collection methods, priorities, and outcomes. By integrating community voices into decision-making, we can ensure that the needs and perspectives of underserved populations are adequately represented. After collecting and analyzing the data, the POS Community Workgroup would hold a public input meeting, present its findings, and seek public Input as a workgroup.
 - a. **Collaborative Community Research Initiatives:** Cultivate alliances between regional centers and community-based organizations to conduct inclusive research endeavors that delve into the service requirements, encounters, and preferences across diverse demographic factors, including income level, race, ethnicity, language spoken, and geographical location.
 - i. These partnerships should prioritize methodologies driven by the community, such as participatory action research and community-based participatory research, empowering community members to contribute actively to data generation and interpretation.
 - ii. By placing community voices at the forefront of the research process, we can derive insights and recommendations rooted in the real-life experiences of those most impacted.

In conclusion, promoting equity in data compilation for service utilization under WIC 4519.5 is imperative for ensuring fair representation and addressing the needs of lower socioeconomic communities. While the mandate for collaboration between the DDS and regional centers is a crucial step, further amendments are necessary to enhance inclusivity and fairness.

Our recommendations offer tangible solutions to address these disparities. Establishing Community Advisory Boards, inclusive of diverse representation and guided by Cultural Specialists, ensures that the voices of underserved populations are heard throughout the data compilation process. These boards actively engage in decision-making, provide Input on methodologies, and hold public input meetings to ensure transparency and accountability.

Additionally, fostering Collaborative Community Research Initiatives between regional centers and community-based organizations allows for inclusive research endeavors that consider the unique needs and experiences of diverse demographic groups. By prioritizing community-led methodologies, such as



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participatory action research, these initiatives empower community members to actively contribute to data generation and interpretation, resulting in insights and recommendations grounded in lived experiences.

Overall, by incorporating these mechanisms for community engagement, data disaggregation, and targeted outreach, we can pave the way for a more equitable and inclusive data compilation process under WIC 4519.5. Through collaborative efforts, we can work towards addressing systemic disparities and ensuring that all individuals, regardless of socioeconomic status, have equitable access to developmental services and support.

Strategies for Service Access and Equity Assurance Plan

Here's a brief plan of action:

- 1. Outreach to Lower Socioeconomic Communities and Low-Frequency Languages:**
 - Strengthen outreach efforts to lower socioeconomic communities.
 - Expand partnerships with organizations proficient in low-frequency languages, such as American CodEAF Enterprises, offering trilingual support in A.S.L., English, and Spanish.
- 2. Community Partnerships:**
 - Continue to forge partnerships with key community stakeholders, including:
 - Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP)
 - Riverside City College (R.C.C.)
 - Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE)
 - Riverside University Health Systems-Behavioral Health (RUHS)
 - San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health
 - San Bernardino County Children Family Services
 - San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
 - Morongo Basin
 - Riverside Sheriff's Department
 - San Bernardino Sheriff's Department
 - Riverside Community College
 - Foster bilingual communication channels, particularly in English and Spanish.
- 3. Support Initiatives:**
 - Support the growth of the LACC Transition age BIPOC client/parent support group.
 - Continue the IRC Resource Roundtable.
 - Conduct annual voter registration classes for clients and parents.
 - Collaborate with Community-Based Organizations (CBO's) under DDS SAE programs.
- 4. LACC Funding Initiatives:**
 - Host the LACC SAE conference on May 4, 2024.
 - Expand ASL classes to IRC clients, parents, school districts, law enforcement officers, and IRC vendors.
 - Offer English as a Second Language Classes to IRC parents.
 - Organize a Transition collaboration with the Director of Transition and Special Services.
 - Sustain the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) to address and alleviate IRC disparities.



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Language Access and Cultural Competency (LACC) Activities Overview

The 2020-21 Budget Act includes \$16.7 million in ongoing funding for the twenty-one regional centers to improve and promote LACC to better support the language needs of individuals with developmental disabilities, their caregivers, and their family members. The primary purpose of these funds is to improve Client and family experience and to facilitate more consistent access to information and services for multi-lingual, monolingual, and diverse cultural groups.

Welfare and Institutions Code §4620.4 requires that the DDS implement this initiative through its contracts with regional centers. These funds shall not supplant any existing efforts or funds for similar purposes but are intended to augment and provide maximum additional benefit to the greatest number of persons served, their caregivers, and their families. LACC plans shall be posted on the Department's and regional centers' websites.

Overview of the LACC Project:

The LACC funds are crucial for improving the consumer and family experience and ensuring equitable access to services for diverse groups. Regional centers must create comprehensive plans addressing document translation, interpretation services, and community language needs assessments. The goal is to streamline services while maintaining accuracy and cultural appropriateness.

These plans also require a detailed language and culture profile of the service area and individuals served, obtained through data reviews, surveys, and direct stakeholder input. Activities include identifying language access and cultural resource needs, bilingual staffing, and community partnerships. DDS enforces accountability and progress through set timelines and reporting requirements. The plans are transparent and accessible through publication on the Department's and regional centers' websites, engaging all stakeholders.

IRC created a plan with activities directed at providing an understanding of our community while addressing current needs. Some of the activities include:

- Hiring new staff to support our activities. These positions include Parent Ambassador Spanish Language - Riverside; CST III LACC; ASL Consultants; and ASL Facilitator.
- Working with Consultants conducting focus groups and surveys in San Bernardino and Riverside counties to understand our community needs better.
- We are collaborating with other members of the IRC Community Engagement Team to bring recreational activities and training. Some activities include:
 - Multiple outreach events in our region.
 - Emergency Prep Training for CBO's and Training Series for the public.
 - Original video projects to deliver critical information about events and activities to our Clients.
 - Created an original newsletter providing relevant information for our community.
 - Created a Podcast to enhance general and specific knowledge about IRC and our activities.
 - And live videos to promote our events, among others.



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Overview of all D/HH Activities:

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) Cultural Specialist continues to support the expansion of American Sign Language (ASL) resources, provides expertise to regional center staff and community partners on effective communication and accessibility, and coordinates with the DDS on statewide initiatives to dismantle systemic and linguistic barriers, reducing inequalities.

ASL Consultants: D/HH Specialist formed a team of two ASL interpreters and one Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI), to work collaboratively with the LACC team to improve access to information about regional center services for the deaf and hard of hearing community; and increase utilization of services, programs and opportunities by Clients and families.

The IRC ASL team developed informational and outreach videos on:

- Coordinated Family Services (CFS)
- Tailored Day Services (TDS)
- Lanterman Fact Sheet
- Enhanced Services Coordination (ESC) modules (5)
- Disaster Preparedness and Active Shooter training series (8)
- Various CAC announcements

Outreach: Outreach efforts were made to reach the D/HH and ASL communities. D/HH Specialist hosted several events and attended community training and events tailored for the Deaf community and parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

- 7/22 to 6/23 IRC monthly Art classes
- 2/4/23 Educational Advocacy Support (ASTra) Training from California Hands & Voices
- 3/4/23 Love & Literacy event by CODIE
- 3/17/23 IRC Bowling Night
- 8/14/23 New Family Orientation at California School for the Deaf, Riverside

Pilot ASL Program: ASL can provide many individuals with communication disabilities a visual and tangible way to communicate, strengthening family connections and enhancing health and safety. Accessing ASL resources can be challenging because there is limited availability of specific materials and instruction tailored to their unique needs. This issue becomes more apparent when these resources are primarily concentrated in urban cities and are accessible in English only. Many Hispanic and monolingual Spanish-speaking families are unaware of sign language resources.

In March 2023, a pilot program in partnership with the Center on Deafness, Inland Empire (CODIE) was launched in three locations throughout the Inland Empire. The pilot program was funded by LACC, providing a total of 18 in-person classes. Native ASL users and members of the Deaf community provided instruction. Tri-lingual (A.S.L./English/Spanish) interpreters were provided for the first and last day of each session.



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Session	Date	Attendees	Survey responses collected
Desert Hot Springs	March 27- May 1, 2023 Monday mornings, 10am-12pm	12	English: 1 Spanish: 6
Riverside	May 8-June 12, 2023 Monday evenings, 4-5:30pm	4	English: 1 Spanish: 3
San Bernardino (Hybrid)	May 9- June 6, 2023 Tuesday mornings, 10-11:30am	8	English: 1 Spanish: 6

It is crucial to ensure that inclusive communication opportunities are available for all individuals, regardless of their hearing or neurodivergent status.

Parent Ambassador:

Parent Ambassador worked as the first point of contact for families on the initial application process and helped obtain all the required supporting documentation.

As a liaison between Services Coordinators and families, families were explained IRC services and eligibility to apply for them.

Families were referred to professionals within the Regional Center and connected with CBO's and support groups to obtain community resources.

Parent Ambassador created and organized workshops to help families work at home, creating educational materials, responding to our Client's needs and empowering families. Families were provided tools such as educational task boxes and visual supports they could use to help structure their routines at home. The goal is to empower families to build upon what is being taught at school to use the tools in addition to the classroom curriculum or to reinforce the homeschooling setting.

Every week, on average, five families receive information about IRC services and eligibility, seven families receive assistance with the online application and services, and twenty-five families receive assistance from the four-session Crafts and Chats Workshops.

Language Access and Cultural Competency (LACC) Goals:

1. **Enhance Language Services:** Continue to improve and expand language services for multilingual, monolingual, and diverse cultural groups. The team will explore English as a Second Language classes for monolingual-speaking parents.
2. **Community Needs Assessment:** The team will explore with D.E.I. consultants 1-on-1 interviews with parents to explore cultural and linguistic barriers.
3. **Bilingual Staffing:** IRC, as an agency, will continue to hire and train bilingual staff to serve diverse communities better.
4. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Foster stronger community partnerships and engage with stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, and outreach events.



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5. **Outreach and Training:** Continue hosting outreach events, emergency preparedness training for community-based organizations (C.B.O.'s), and training series for the public.
6. **Digital Communication:** Utilize digital platforms to deliver critical information through original video projects, newsletters, podcasts, and live videos.
7. **Accountability and Reporting:** Ensure transparency by adhering to set timelines and reporting requirements, with LACC plans accessible on websites.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D.H.H.) Goals:

1. **Expand ASL Resources:** Continue expanding American Sign Language (A.S.L.) resources and expertise to enhance communication and accessibility for the D/HH community.
2. **ASL Consultants:** Collaborate with ASL interpreters and Certified Deaf Interpreters (C.D.I.'s) to improve access to information about regional center services and increase service utilization.
3. **Educational and Outreach Videos:** Develop more informational and outreach videos on various regional center services and resources.
4. **Community Engagement:** Continue hosting events and attending training tailored for the Deaf community and parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children.
5. **Pilot ASL Program:** Evaluate the success of the pilot ASL program and consider expanding it to more locations to serve more families.
6. **Inclusive Communication:** Ensure that inclusive communication opportunities are available for all individuals, regardless of their hearing or neurodivergent status.

Parent Ambassador Goals:

1. **Enhance Support for Families:** Continue to be the first point of contact for families, assisting with the initial application process and supporting documentation.
2. **Liaison Role:** Strengthen the role as a liaison between Services Coordinators and families, ensuring families understand IRC services and eligibility.
3. **Community Resources:** Continue to connect families with community-based organizations (C.B.O.'s) and support groups to access community resources.
4. **Educational Workshops:** Organize and conduct workshops to empower families in their homes, providing them with educational materials and tools.
5. **Information Dissemination:** Increase the outreach efforts to inform families about IRC services and eligibility, assist with online applications, and offer workshops.
6. **Empowerment:** Empower families to support their children's education and well-being by providing them with tools and resources.
7. **Evaluate Impact:** Continuously assess the impact of the Parent Ambassador role in improving family engagement and access to services.

These goals and activities should help further the objectives of the LACC and D/HH initiatives, ensuring that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families receive culturally competent and accessible support. Regular assessment and adjustment of these goals will be essential to meet the community's evolving needs.



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Conclusion

In our relentless pursuit of equity, inclusivity, and service excellence, IRC embarked on a transformative journey by establishing the Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) initiative. This initiative was initiated on August 5, 2023, through a dynamic partnership with Nasaba Family Services and Consulting Inc., generously funded by the LACC program provided by DDS

In the spirit of true collaboration, IRC continues to reach out to economically disadvantaged communities, especially those with low-frequency languages. Our partnerships with a diverse array of community organizations and educational institutions exemplify our resolve to serve our community inclusively. We pledge to continue supporting and nurturing the growth of vital initiatives, such as the LACC Transition Age BIPOC client/parent support group and the IRC Resource Roundtable.

We are dedicated to promoting civic engagement through our annual voter registration classes and sustaining partnerships with CBO SAE programs under DDS. Our commitment to hosting the LACC SAE conference and expanding ASL classes underscores our dedication to enhancing accessibility and inclusion. Moreover, we remain committed to serving our Native American communities and providing English as a Second Language Classes.

In closing, IRC stands unwavering in its commitment to the principles of equity, access, and service excellence. Together, we forge a path towards a more inclusive and just future, where all individuals, regardless of their background or abilities, can thrive.

Respectfully submitted,

Mari Rodriguez

Mari Rodríguez, M.P.A.

Cultural Specialist

CLASE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE



COLABORACIÓN,
LIDERAZGO,
ABOGACÍA,
SERVICIO Y
EDUCACIÓN (CLASE)

February 15, 2024

Inland Regional Center
Attn: Mari Rodriguez
1365 S Waterman Ave
San Bernardino, CA 92408

Dear Mrs. Rodriguez,

The Autism Society Inland Empire and the CLASE Community of Practice leaders, including the undersigned organizations, are committed to protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities who rely on the Developmental Disability service system for their care needs.

We value the opportunity to comment on the Purchase of Services Data Report and the needs of our community related to the Purchase of Services.

Sincerely,

Clara Garcia
Director of Programs, Autism Society Inland Empire
CLASE Facilitator

cc: Dr CJ Cook

1. Many families have been utilizing the Social Recreation services and are grateful for this recently funded provision. We acknowledge that all services should be delivered person-centered. However, group leaders have observed considerable **disparities in the approval of Social Recreation services** by different consumer service coordinators (CSC).

The leaders of CLASE would like to collaborate with the Inland Regional Center to compile and publish a list of Frequently Asked Questions, including which services can be paid for and the process for receiving these services. This list would be a valuable resource for families and Inland Regional Center CSCs. We want to ensure that all parties clearly understand the services that can be accessed through this provision.

2. **Delay in IPP being translated into Spanish.** Families continue to report that receiving an IPP translated into Spanish can take six months. Parents feel forced to sign an IPP they do not understand because they want services to begin.

If the time it takes to translate IPPs can not be shortened, non-English speaking families should be told they can request an interpreter when the IPP comes, and the IPP can be read to the client or family member. This notice should be put in the family's preferred language.

3. **Lack of providers.** CLASE leaders acknowledge the workforce shortage and funding issues. However, the result is individuals and families being unable to access critical services, which puts extreme stress on families and can trigger health and behavioral crises.

We realize the California Department of Developmental Services is working on a new and consistent vendorization process across all Regional Centers. We would suggest Inland Regional Center work with a group of local stakeholders to:

- a. Identify services with the greatest need for innovative solutions. CLASE leaders feel that it is currently respite and personal assistance
- b. Recruitment. Make a concerted effort to recruit other vendors out of the area to meet the unmet needs.
- c. Work together to identify possible untapped businesses such as Latino Chamber of Commerce and other possible business opportunities to fill the gaps.

- d. Increase transparency. Reporting to the community about the efforts being made to close the gaps will increase trust and partnership.

- 4. **Need to define expectations for CSCs in case managing.** Families value CSCs who can focus on outcomes, solve problems, and provide resources across systems. Families are reporting that

Therefore, CSCS must be trained in the technical aspects of services, including person-centered training and resources, and soft skills such as communication, empathy, and problem-solving. Establishing a stakeholder group to give input on a clear protocol for CSCs to follow when delivering services can help standardize the quality of service across different regions and families. This protocol should be flexible enough to accommodate the unique needs of each family while ensuring that all families receive a high standard of service.





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Re: February 15, 2024, POS Public Input Meeting
CC: Dr. CJ Cook

Hello Director Lavinia Johnson,

We hope you are well.

We would like to share the following observations that have been made over the course of our work with families helping them navigate several services systems through our Padres con GANAS Program. Most of the families live in underserved areas of the Coachella Valley and are Spanish speaking. We believe the following observations and testimonials are linked to POS.

Progress we have observed with families we work with through Padres con GANAS and progress through Inland Regional Center to help increase service access:

- We are observing stronger communication between families and Coordinators. Parents are communicating their points clearly and coordinators are doing the same. There is less back and forth to get to the point which speeds up the process to get to the service.
- With our support and guidance, some parents are opening up to the coordinators about what their day-to-day actually looks like. These parents used to fear having their loved ones taken away and did not share the full story of what they are going through to provide their loved ones with the support needed.
- Some parents are starting to catch themselves entering an emotional roller coaster and bring themselves back to speak with a clear head.
- Some parents are starting to see and understand their roles in the team, are improving with filtering misinformation, and talking about having collaborative relationships with their IRC team.
- We have noticed some IPP documents better reflecting areas of need.
- We have noticed an increase in the range of services with some of our families' IPP's. For example, an increase in respite hours, personal assistants, swimming classes, recreation, tutoring, etc.
- We have observed Inland Regional Center seeking non-traditional trainings for their employees. For example, "Equity and Humility" Training – which uses a well-crafted train the trainer model to foster diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice for all. It is an in-person training experience and not video modules.



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- We observe Inland Regional Center being aware of many of their areas of need in disparities and is working towards targeting them (e.g., continuing to focus on the various languages who need support such as the Spanish language community, providing ASL classes, including teaching ASL etiquette, and others)
- IRC developed and is continuing to invest in an Enhanced Service Coordination Unit to help those with low to no POS.
- Inland Regional Center is focusing on hiring more personnel to help with the increasing demand.

What we observe from families that impact service access:

- Individualized support is the most effective way to help families access services. Although, it does require a lot of time, due to the required repetition and teaching parents how to connect to a service while helping them build advocacy skills, the result is parents being able to generalize their skills and teach others.
- Some new parents do not understand how IRC works and they discontinue or disregard IRC because they do not know how to connect to services. See testimonial #2.
- Many of the families we work with think that like many other service systems, IRC has a “menu of services/programs” and do not understand the individualized nature of service access.
- Some parents are afraid to share their true barriers and challenges. Some parents think their challenges are within their natural responsibility as a parent when they are not.
- Some parents have well documented needs and follow the IRC process, then receive a denial or a service that does not fit the documented need. Those that get the denials may choose not to pursue the appeals process due to fear and feeling intimidated by the thought of being in front of judges and lawyers.
- Some parents continue to have trouble articulating a need which can result in inaccurate descriptions on their loved one’s IPP and result in not pairing with appropriate services.
- We have even observed a unique situation where the parent wanted to accept services, but ended up rejecting it for fear of losing other services they already had because they were misinformed by someone (e.g., rejecting respite services and IHSS for fear of losing their qualifying status with their specialized HUD housing for agriculture workers).

Observations we have made from Inland Regional Center and DDS system that impact service access are the following:



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- Lack of Vendors is still a barrier and beyond that, quality vendors are a barrier. See testimonial 1 and 3.
- There is a hyperfocus on POS data. Adding importance on other data types and analyzing them in a timely manner could help us get a clearer picture and develop stronger, time-sensitive interventions.
- There continues to be communication barriers between coordinators and families which lead to IPPs that do not reflect accurate needs, outcomes, and services.
- Some coordinators take what the parent is saying at face value instead of asking follow-up questions to dig deeper. (E.g., a coordinator hearing that a teen gets, “stressed out when I ask her to do something” can sound like typical teen behavior. But if the parent is bringing it up, and asked a follow-up question of “What do you mean ‘stressed out’? What does that look like?” Then more accurate information comes out that she exhibits self-harm behaviors.
- There is still a feeling of disconnect between IRC and from some parts of their catchment area, such as the Eastern Coachella Valley. Families may be in Inland Regional Center, but they do not know the name or know there’s an IPP. We don’t ask a family, “Are you in Regional Center?” We ask the family, “Does someone come to your house about once a year or calls you once a year to talk about your child and writes a report about it?”
- This is possibly due to being new to the IRC system, but there are some coordinators who share misinformation.

Ideas to help work towards tackling these issues which we also offer ourselves to collaborate on as a CBO are:

- IRC could connect more with the community by reaching out and diversifying the areas they go to. This could improve trust and service access as a result. See testimonial 2 and 4.
- Continue to strengthen relationships between IRC and CBOs
- Develop a streamlined vendor application and process.
- Develop clearly defined roles within the team (coordinators, individuals, parents, etc.) and share them using plain language with example scenarios and non-example scenarios at IRC orientations, presentations, and refreshers. How is this Team mechanism supposed to function?
- A quality assurance system to be developed between the Regional Center and the vendorized provider where we ensure that vendors are being professional, do not take



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advantage of billing, and results in negatively impacting the client. See Testimonial 1 and 3.

- Use intensive, in-person evidence-based strategies for the onboarding training of coordinators and (e.g., Train the Trainer/Behavior Skills Teaching model” when working with service coordinators and the standard over all.
- Develop a Resource portal for coordinators to quickly enter information, filter information for their specific cases and connect with supports. Or use and enter information into connectie.org.

Parent Testimonials:

Names have been omitted for privacy reasons.

1. “My name is M, and I'm here to share my testimonial about our journey with the Regional Center and the services it provides. My son J has been part of this community since he was diagnosed with severe autism at the age of three. He has made remarkable progress, transitioning from severe autism to being high functioning. We owe a great deal of that progress to the support systems in place, including the assistance from the Regional Center.

However, our journey hasn't always been smooth sailing. One significant challenge we encountered was with an IRC-provided tutor, who invoiced for unrendered hours, which resulted in their resignation. Anticipating my son's relief at a pause in tutoring, I was heartbroken to an unexpected response: “Not surprised, the tutor doesn't want to work with someone like me; it's my fault.” This situation deeply affected J, who felt a sense of responsibility.

It's crucial to note that J was initially honored tutoring as low academics were affecting his self-esteem. Despite our efforts to improve his academic performance, the billing discrepancies only exacerbated his already fragile confidence.

Unfortunately, this wasn't the only issue we faced. We also encountered session cancellations and billing inaccuracies, which further added to our challenges. It's important to note that this issue not only affects families like ours but also has broader implications. For instance, this issue affects the client POS as it reflects a higher amount of service purchase, but due to vendor unrendered hours, the client is receiving less service.

Despite these difficulties, we remain optimistic. We see potential for improvement, and one key solution we propose is the implementation of a quality assurance system. Such a system



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could help prevent discrepancies like the ones we experienced, ultimately enhancing the reliability and quality of the services our children receive.

In conclusion, while our journey with the Regional Center has had its share of challenges, I'm here to share my testimonial of gratitude for the support it has provided us. We believe that by addressing these challenges head-on and implementing measures for improvement, we can create an even more supportive and effective environment for our and families. Thank you."

2. "Regional Center does not come to mind when I think of needing help for my daughter."
3. "Uno de los servicios que recibe mi hija es tutoría. La tutoría de señas ASL solo es via zoom y no en persona. Cuando estamos en tutoría, muchas veces, la tutora esta en cama, en pijama, y con luces muy baja y no puede tener la atención del estudiante que tiene problemas con su vista. Si intenta hacer movimiento para que le llame la atención al estudiante y le da muchas ideas al estudiante con la intención de conectar con ella. Aparte, se le tiene que recordar en lo que vamos cada sesión. Lo que podría ayudar en esta situación es, primeramente, mantener un nivel de profesionalismo. Algo más, si hubiera alguna aplicación para usar durante tutoría para que haya interacción. También, tener apoyo con el costo de internet más rápida para que se mire la persona y las señas claras para que el estudiante los imite. Aparte, tomar en cuenta las necesidades visuales del cliente y entrenarnos a usar tecnología o conectar video a la televisión para que se mire grande el video de la tutora."
4. "I am someone who needs step by step help. I'm dealing with legal documents [IEPs and IPPs] and the coordinators haven't been in my house for four years. They try to come to the IEP instead of coming to my house. Last year I had the best experience with a coordinator. She took the time to listen to my concerns but she was only a temporary then I was left hanging again until I found you [GANAS]"

Thank you for your time. We are excited to see the investments that have been made by IRC and look forward to continuing to work together to reduce disparities.

Best Regards,

Martha Barragan
Executive Director, GANAS