

**Kern Regional Center
Board of Directors Meeting**

February 23, 2021

6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Zoom Webinar

3200 N. Sillect Avenue ∞ Bakersfield, CA 93308 ∞ 661-327-8531

MINUTES

KRC BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Oscar Axume, President
Jasmeet Baines, MD, Vice President
Kevin Gosselin
Ryan Jones
Nickolerene Mensch, Treasurer
Mark Tolentino
Martin Vasquez, Secretary
Simon Verdugo
Shawn White, VAC

KRC BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

STAFF PRESENT:

Kristine Khuu, Assistant Director of Client Services
Cherylle Mallinson, Director of Community Services
Celia Pinal, Director of Client Services
Tom Wolfgram, CFO
Michi Gates, Executive Director

GUESTS PRESENT:

Megan Mitchell
Edwin Pineda, DDS
Mitzi Villalon

INTERPRETER:

Marisol Resendiz

CALL TO ORDER

Oscar Axume, President, called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM. All Board Members were present.

APPROVAL/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

Tom Wolfgram reported that there would be no hard copy Financial Report, so Attachment 2, as it appears on the agenda, should be deleted.

A motion was made to accept the agenda for the Board of Directors meeting dated February 23, 2021 with Attachment 2 deleted and the other attachments renumbered as appropriate.

M/S/C (Gosselin, Axume)

Ayes = 9; Nays = 0; Abstained = 0

Motion Carried

REVIEW OF MINUTES

All Board Members have reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting. A motion was requested to approve the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held on January 26, 2021.

M/S/C (Mensch, Vasquez)

Ayes = 9; Nays = 0; Abstained = 0

Motion Carried



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PUBLIC INPUT

No public input was submitted in advance and no public input was presented at this meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Oscar Axume, President

Nominations for Board of Directors President

Oscar Axume is stepping down as president effective the end of today's meeting, February 23, 2021. Jasmeet Bains has been nominated for the office of President and has accepted. No other nominations were brought forward. A motion was made to elect Dr. Jasmeet Bains for President of the Kern Regional Center Board of Directors.

M/S/C (Gosselin, Mensch)

Ayes = 9; Nays = 0; Abstained = 0

Motion Carried

The office of Vice President was left vacant with the movement of Dr. Baines to President of the Board. President Axume asked for nominations for the position of Vice President. Ryan Jones and Nickolerene Mensch were nominated. Mr. Jones expressed appreciation for the nomination, but declined. Ms. Mensch accepted the nomination. A motion was made for Nickolerene Mensch to be elected Vice President of the Kern Regional Center Board of Directors.

M/S/C (Gosselin, Tolentino)

Ayes = 9; Nays = 0; Abstained = 0

Motion Carried

The office of Treasurer was left vacant with the movement of Nickolerene Mensch to Vice President. President Axume requested nominations for Treasurer. Kevin Gosselin was nominated and, after clarification about the role, Mr. Gosselin accepted the nomination. A motion was made for Kevin Gosselin to be elected Treasurer of the Kern Regional Center Board of Directors.

M/S/C (Bains, Mensch)

Ayes = 9; Nays = 0; Abstained = 1

Motion Carried

BOARD PRESIDENT REPORT

Oscar Axume, President

President Axume expressed his appreciation for being able to serve as the President of the Board of Directors. He is looking forward to accomplishing great things this coming year as a fellow Board Member. He thanked everyone for their participation during an unprecedented year.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Tom Wolfgram, Chief Financial Officer

Mr. Wolfgram explained that the Financial Reports are not closed until the end of the month, creating an issue of delivering the report by the time the meeting packet is distributed for review before Board Meetings. To resolve this, the report for this meeting will be postponed. The January 2021 report will be reported at the next meeting and will follow thereafter each month, allowing the Financial Report to be part of the packet for review before each regularly-scheduled monthly meeting.



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Without the actual hard copy report, Mr. Wolfgram provided a brief verbal overview of the financial data for informational purposes. The B2 has not been received, but it is expected this week. General Operations has been allocated \$25 Million. POS was allocated \$192 Million for a total of \$218 Million. The B2 report should provide some additional money to our present data.

Due to the change of officers within the Board of Directors, authorized signatures on the bank account will need to be changed. The newly-elected officers will be contacted to coordinate signing the required cards from the bank.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dr. Michi Gates

COVID-19

Since March 2020, Kern Regional Center has had 417 clients and 413 Service Providers with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. Statewide, there are 14,441 positive cases and 493 deaths. Early on in the pandemic, Kern Regional Center was #2 & #3 within the ranking of the 21 RCs; we are now #11.

The second surge seems to be subsiding. We are seeing a drastic decrease of positive cases in individuals and providers, however, it is important to remain very careful. It is going to take months for a significant number of the population to get vaccinated due to vaccine supply. It is important to continue to practice precautions, particularly with the new strains that are emerging. Even though the numbers are declining, we have seen an increase in deaths. Most of the infections are occurring in those living with family; there has been a decline of cases in care homes. Care homes were included in the earlier phases of the vaccine, so this could be the reason for the drop in cases.

Testing for COVID-19 has been a problem in many areas. Kern County has numerous testing sites, but getting test results back within 48 hours is a challenge. We are investigating hosting a testing site ourselves to facilitate quicker turnaround. The recent DDS Directive concerning vaccines instructed regional centers to concentrate on those individuals who are 65 years and older. Kern Regional Center has 303 individuals in that group. Some of those individuals are in care homes and have already received the vaccine. For those who have not received it, we are focused on ensuring they are registered to receive the vaccine and follow through to being vaccinated. On March 15, the vaccine will be available to a larger portion of our population. The new categories are rather broad, so, conceivably, all of our individuals could be eligible. It will be the Regional Center's task to ensure that all of our individuals who are eligible to receive the vaccine can get registered and have access to it. Kern Regional Center is in the process of identifying those who are most at risk, who may have difficulty accessing a vaccine site, and assisting those who may have trouble registering for the vaccine. We want to make sure we are taking a strong role in successful vaccination of our individuals. Dr. Gates said that Kern Regional Center will be running data internally to determine who should be prioritized for the vaccine. Kern Regional Center has been working with the Kern County Office of Emergency Services in order to expedite the vaccinations of individuals served by Kern Regional Center.

2021-22 BUDGET PROCESS

The 2021-22 Budget process is underway. It began in January 2021 with the Governor's release of his budget proposal. The Governor's proposal was better than anticipated due to greater than expected revenues for the State. The Assembly Sub 1 and the Senate Sub 3 committees on Developmental Services have met this week to do their initial review of the budget proposal. The current budget proposal maintains the regional center budgets without cuts and also allows for growth. Service Providers received a rate increase in 2019 that had a sunset date; the proposal will extend the sunset date another year. There was positive discussion at the Assembly and Senate to completely eliminate sunset dates. This is great news because our service providers do an extraordinary job.



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Disparity continues to be an area of great concern. A Community Navigator position has been proposed to connect individuals and families with community and regional center resources as a strategy to reduce disparity. This position is being proposed as a way to bridge the gap between individuals, families and services by building more trust.

An Emergency Coordinator position for each Regional Center is also being proposed. The State has experienced so many disasters in the past few years that it was deemed necessary to have these positions. The Emergency Coordinators would work locally to provide a community response as well as together as a team for a Statewide response.

Intake numbers significantly dropped for Regional Centers during the pandemic, but particularly in the Early Start program. Early Start is very important and, when an individual is missed, it can have negative impacts on their life. This usually results in requiring more extensive services in the future. There is no hard data yet about the cause of the decline, but speculation is that the pandemic affected access to referrals, with schools closed and people being home.

The Board asked for clarification on how Kern Regional Center is continuing to communicate with the community about Early Start and other services. The Assistant Director of Client Services reports that Kern Regional Center continues to liaison with Valley Children's Hospital, local pediatricians, First 5, and other groups as way to get the word out. Pediatrician referrals dropped seemingly due to parents not being able to bring babies in for well-baby check-ups and other appointments during the pandemic, but connection and communication with pediatricians continue on a consistent basis.

Investments in Developmental Services Systems was addressed by the Assembly and Senate subcommittees. A proposal has been made to continue the suspension of fees for families such as the Annual Family Program Fee and the Family Cost Participation Program. Kern Regional Center would be in support of permanent suspension of fees. There was also discussion of personal assistance, independent living services, and supported employment participant directed service options being continued throughout the State of Emergency and possibly beyond. There is a proposal by ARCA and SEIU to add funding to allow Regional Centers to meet the mandated case load ratio, adding 850 Service Coordinator positions Statewide.

The next step in the budget process will be the May revision.

Self-Determination Program

Kern Regional Center had 95 individuals allotted for the Self-Determination Program, 75 have chosen to be in the program and 42 are actively enrolled in the Self-Determination program. Statewide, of the 2,500 allowed to be enrolled, there are less than 500 who have transitioned. Kern Regional Center has one of the higher percentages of transitions in the state, probably because we have been a pilot area for Self-Determination and have experienced providers. The target date to open up the program to everyone is June 7. There was some reluctance in the Senate session about whether the program should open that soon given the rollout has been slow and there are refinements that need to be done to make the program better. During the recent Self-Determination Committee meeting, emphasis was placed on proposals to make things work better and faster and not focusing on barriers. We heard examples of where planning teams are getting stuck in the process, specifically budget certification and spending plans. It is challenging for teams to come to agreement. A fast-track service is in place, so we do have facilitators who can help individuals who are interested in transitioning and helping them move as fast as they can. There are 21 individuals who are in process on one of those steps. If they can be transitioned by June 7, we it will be a significant accomplishment.



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Technology Infrastructure

Our IT infrastructure became particularly important when staff were forced to work at home due to COVID-19. Laptops were recently purchased to replace previously-issued iPADS. We are in the process of transitioning from our current network which is strained to its limits to the Cloud. Transitioning to the Cloud is happening unit-by-unit. As units transition, the present system will work more efficiently for those still using it.

Staffing

Thank you to all Kern Regional Center staff, and many more, who play a role in hiring. We have been hiring a lot of Service Coordinators. Even though our intake numbers are down, we have had to hire for vacated positions, as well as added positions for growth. We have been hiring since September so that we can orient employees in smaller groups. A large portion of those needed positions have been filled and we hope to get the funding to hire more in the future. We have also hired a new Program Manager in order meet unit ratios. The Board asked about the size of case ratios after service coordinators are hired. Dr. Gates replied that we strive to get an overall ratio of 1:74. The quality of the services we provide are directly related to caseload size. If we can keep the caseloads per service coordinator in the 70s, we are better able to maintain quality supports for our individuals.

VENDOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Shawn White, Board Member

The VAC Committee did not meet for the month of February, so there is no report. The next meeting will be on March 23.

STAFF REPORT

Cherylle Mallinson, Director of Community Services

Employment First Policy

Ms. Mallinson presented the Employment First Policy, explaining that the policy is not a requirement, but it is consistent with the Lanterman Act. The purpose of her presentation is to get the Board of Directors' opinions, thoughts, and feedback on the document. She will be presenting this policy to the VAC Committee as well.

The policy addresses the employment of individuals with developmental disabilities. Some of the ways you can see this policy in action is through the Performance Contract and with PathPoint, who coordinates Competitive Integrated Employment and Paid Internship Programs. Kern Regional Center works with an Employment First Specialist, assigned by DDS, who assists in increasing the numbers of individuals with developmental disabilities that acquire employment. The plan is to present an understandable written form of the policy for the community, conduct a public meeting, circulate a draft of the Employment Performance Contract and then provide a final presentation to the Board of Directors in April 2021 for approval to make the document an official policy. At this time, Ms. Mallinson requests that the Board Members review the document and provide any feedback to her over the next few days.

ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further to discuss, President Oscar Axume adjourned the meeting at 7:35 PM.

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, March 23, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Darlene Pankey



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