

Self-Determination Local Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, March 21, 2024 - 4:00pm-5:30pm

MINUTES

Meeting is open to the public – all are welcome to attend

SDLAC Members:

Jennifer Walsh (Chair/Self-Advocate) - present
Sascha Bittner (Self-Advocate) – present
Elizabeth Grigsby (GGRC Consumer Rights Advocate/Self-Advocate)
Charlie Fagen (OCRA-Attorney/Clients' Rights Advocate) - present
Connie Johnson (Parent Advocate) - present
Alyson Sinclair (Parent Advocate) - present
Christine Kantor (Parent Advocate) - present
Ken Parekh (Parent Advocate) - present
Brenda Bachechi (Community Advocate/Provider) - present
Sandy Chin (Parent Advocate) - present

SCDD Advisor:

Sheraden Nicholau (SCDD-Regional Manager, Bay Area Office) - present

GGRC Advisors:

Lisa Rosene (Director, Case Management) - present
Juliet Sousa (SDP Supervising Social Worker) - present
Kori Mason (Participant Choice Specialist) - present
Janika Jamarillo (Participant Choice Specialist) - present
Anh Nguyen/Aria Alokazai (Recording Secretary) - present
Aria Alokazai (Recording secretary) - present

Guests:

Lilian AnsariLop Hou, GGRC CFO
Sophia Agafonow, DDS
Shannon GharrowGarrow
Barckary
Rhiannon MorschJennifer Chelone, parent
Paul Donald and Janeen Rojas, parents
Alex Gastelum, OCRA

- I. Welcome/Call to order (Walsh)
 - b. Approval of Agenda (Walsh) M/S Shasha, Ken
 - c. Approval of Minutes (Walsh/All) M/S Shasha, Brenda

- II. Funding to Support Implementation of the Self-Determination Program for Fiscal Year 2021-22 - (Walsh)
 - a. GGRC's SDLAC spending plan. update after workgroups meet
Lop reported the current spending update and shared the following details below.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Neurodiversity Agreement		(25,000.00)	SDP Services						
Neurodiversity Agreement		(14,749.70)	SDP Services						
Education/Conference Expenses		(849.30)							
Balance Available		-	To be encumbered by 06/30/2020 and expensed by 04/30/2022						
2020-2021					3/31/2023				
Budget Allocation B-1		55,488.00							
Neurodiversity Agreement		(15,250.30)	SDP Services						
NueroNav unable to spend		5,401.25							
AMP Public Affairs Agreement		(15,000.00)	Marketing/Website						
Translation Services		(2,834.00)							
Aveanna		(5,600.00)	Website Intermediary TMM - Develop website						
Aveanna		(27,089.00)	Website Intermediary Anh Nguyen - Ongoing website development						
From 2021-2022 funds	a	4,884.05							
Balance Available		-	To be encumbered by 06/30/2021 and expensed by 04/30/2023						
2021-2022									
Budget Allocation C-1		55,488.00							
Aveanna - Balance 2020-2021 Contract	a	(4,884.05)							
NeuroNav Contract		(37,300.00)							
AMP Public Affairs Agreement		(15,000.00)	Marketing/Website						
From 2022-2023 Funds	b	1,696.05							
Balance Available		(0.00)	To be encumbered by 06/30/2022 and expensed by 04/30/2024						
2022-2023									
Budget Allocation D-1		72,929.00							
AMP - Balance 2021-2022 Contract	b	(1,696.05)							
AMP - SDP Policies Development		(3,060.00)							

Question and Answers followed.

- III. Participant/Family/Public Feedback on SDP (All)
 - a. Comments are limited to FOUR minutes per speaker on items not on the agenda, 20 minutes total.

b. We welcome critiques and feedback but ask speakers refrain from personal attacks on individuals or the committee.

c. The committee will not be responding to comments but may address them further down in the agenda or in future agenda items.

Jennifer asked if there is any feedback for Bay Area Website. Lop to get back to Jennifer.

Rhiannon Morsch: I am an independent facilitator and person centered planner who was just recently vendored with GGRC. My business is called Life Leap Services.

Barckary: I am an independent facilitator working on vendorization.

Shannon Gharrow: I attended the Dec SDP introduction. I tried coming to the January meeting, but it didn't seem to be on. The SDP strongly encouraged us to attend. I am hoping (though I am not sure it is correct) that it will give me an idea how to start the process.

Lilian Ansari: I am a parent of 2 consumers in SDP and have newly moved to GGRC area and am part of the advisory committee in RCEB. My children moved to Marin County and are in rd year and are in transition to move from RCEB. It took us 8 months to transition to 3rd year and things are going smoothly now.

IV. SDLAC Workgroups (Walsh/Nicholau)

Ken shared the following updates:

CURRENT PROJECTS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Funding an SDP learning manual for GGRC social workers & updating GGRC website – approved and underway (starting 4/1/24 – Anh Nguyen – updating Case Mgmt. manual)
 - Consider adapting this manual/information/flowchart for use by IF's and communicating processes/practices to practitioners
2. Hold regular virtual meetings to share:
 - Consider alternating SDPLAC meetings (one month business, one month broader forum) or
 - ** Extending monthly SDPLAC mtg by 30 min, invite all participants to join after the business meeting and consider focused single topic per meeting
 - GGRC best practices (& best practices from other RC's)
 - GGRC specific processes/contacts/vendors/IF's/FMS's/timelines (with a push for standardization)
 - Advanced SDP training (FMS)
 - DDS memos/SCDD directives
 - Sharing FAQ's / flowcharts
 - Info on avail resources (Neuronav coaching (renewal 4/1?), SDP orientation & Ongoing support
3. Engage a Survey Monkey or similar service to confirm needs & priorities & success stories/best practices
 - Collect success stories as well as additional needs
 - We could confirm the above projects or poll on additional needs (see next page)

POTENTIAL PROJECTS FOR EXPLORATION

- SCDD recommendations:
 - → **Improve access to information about GGRC SDP**
 - → **Improve capacity & capability of IF's (and awareness of GGRC practices)**
 - Streamlining enrollment process (with GGRC) including FMS/IF's
 - Streamlining budgeting process (with GGRC) – spending plans
 - Reducing administrative burden
 - Creating a more equitable system and mitigate disparities
- DDS recommendations
 - → **Create a publicly shared agreement that outlines steps & timelines that each will take in 1) enrolling in SDP 2) transitioning between FY's 3) revising their spending plan (include FMS, IF's)**
- FMS town hall recommendations – lower priority (handled at the state level)
 - → **Public list/database of vendors that accept SDP and are approved by GGRC**
 - Provide a means for instantaneous purchases like music programs or social/recreational activities
 - Hire more Spanish/other language CSR's
 - Develop websites with FAQ's and resources
 - Dedicates customer service advocate to guide through working with all vendored FMS
 - Issue guidance on role of IF's

NEXT STEPS

- 1) Juliet to provide continuing update on Case Mgmt Manual (Ahn Nguyen contracted on 4/1 to start work – request to provide frequent updates/releases that could be shared with SDP participants and IF's
- 2) Jennifer to discuss how to extend the SDPLAC monthly mtg by 30 minute and/or structure with special topics which we would invite the broader SDP community to attend
- 3) Juliet to check on resources to see if we can set up a Survey Monkey to poll GGRC SDP participants and collect success stories and identify additional needs/concerns
- 4) Next working committee meeting scheduled on 4/15/24 at 3:30pm

Workgroups report out:

Participant Onboarding

Outreach and Equity Coordination

Data Coordination

- Best Practices Workgroup:

Brenda shared that the workgroup had not got a chance to meet yet. And it would be challenging for members to meet after the SDLAC meeting due to other obligations.

Sheraden suggests working and supporting those members who need meeting coordination help.

V. SCDD Update (Nicholau)

Sheraden shared information about the Statewide townhall and produced findings and submitted to DDS and posted online here <https://scdd.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2024/03/Dec18.2023-FMS.TownhallFinal-2.22.24.pdf>

The letter explains the report of public input/findings regarding delayed or missed payments, lack of standardization, reporting, waitlisting, training and technology, rate changes, spending plan changes, translation and support for Spanish speaking participant and families, background checks, lack of communication, FMS business model, public recommendation for FMS providers, other public recommendation for DDS and questions from the public.

Sheraden also shared the following highlights in the letter.

Highlights

Delayed or Missed Payments

SDP consumers and families continue to experience delays in payments to service providers. In some cases, this has led to a loss of access to services, as consumer's employees terminate employment due to untimely payment of wages. Townhall participants stated that they have also been unable to attend events or participate in classes/community activities due to lack of timely payment.¹

Lack of Standardization

Townhall attendees identified a variety of issues related to a lack of standardization. There continue to be vast differences in how regional centers interpret and respond to DDS directives. In addition, FMS providers operate independently, with each developing their own policies and practices, creating their own forms, and utilizing their preferred data systems. The lack of standardization has resulted in disparities among SDP participants depending on which FMS they use, and which regional center serves them.

Reporting

SDP participants rely on monthly reports from their FMS providers to determine which services and supports have been paid for, and whether employees' wages are processed accurately and timely. Townhall participants state that these statements often arrive late or not at all, are often incomplete, and are difficult to understand.

Waitlists

Many SDP participants are still being placed on waitlists to work with FMS providers. Townhall attendees recommend using business consultants to help FMS providers respond to the growing demand. Additionally, participants would like to have access to a public list of FMS providers with information about their waitlist status.

Training and Technology

Townhall attendees expressed a need for more training on their roles and responsibilities as employers, along with access to technology to support that role.²

¹ DDS Directive on Billing Requirements for Services may address some of these issues <https://www.dds.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/SDP-Billing-Requirements-for-Services.pdf>

² DDS Directive on FMS Transition Supports addresses some of these issues <https://www.dds.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Self-Determination Program FMS Transition Supports.pdf>

Rate Changes

Recent rate changes have occurred mid-year, requiring adjustments to participants' budgets and spending funds that were meant for other services or supports.

Spending Plan Changes

Townhall attendees stated that the administrative burden associated with spending plan changes leads to some SDP participants spending significantly more on Independent Facilitation services, as they require additional help implement the changes.

Translation and Support for Spanish Speaking Participants and Families

Spanish-speaking participants expressed a need for greater support in understanding FMS agencies and their function. In addition, participants urged support in communicating with FMS Providers. Participants stated that lack of access to Spanish-speaking staff and/or appropriate translation services with FMS providers leads to disparities and higher costs. Many Spanish-speaking families rely on Independent Facilitators for communication and translation services, which increases costs for services.

Background Checks

Participants continue to struggle with long wait times for background checks for their employees/providers and are not always informed when the background checks fail or processing is delayed.³

Lack of Communication

Several townhall attendees described situations where they experienced persistent problems when communicating with their FMS providers. Many stated that their calls and emails go unanswered. Overall, attendees expressed frustration about the inability for participants, Independent Facilitators, FMS providers and regional centers to communicate effectively with one another to resolve problems and keep each other informed.

FMS Business Model

Townhall attendees raised issues they have encountered with specific providers. Participants raised concerns about FMS providers operating independently since their individual policies have created problems. Participants are concerned about the changes in business model (from co-employer to sole employer), and FMS providers refusing to offer services to siblings.

³ DDS Directive on Service Provider Background Checks addresses these issues
<https://www.dds.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Self-Determination-Program-Service-Provider-Background-Checks.pdf>

No other significant technical assistance report to share for this month.

Lisa to Sophia Agafonow: GGRC struggles to find FSM that are based in our catchment area, and it makes it very difficult in terms of quality assurance and technical assistance provision to FSMs. Our area is very expensive. Can we use the committee funds to hire FSMs? Sophia to get back regarding this question.

Sheraden: The townhall SDAC report recs about waitlist issues:

- Utilize business consultants to assist FMS provider with responding to the rapid growth and increase in demand.

- Create a public list of FSM providers that include information about which providers have a waiting list and how long wait times are.

Can CRDP fund be used to hire FSM? This will be a question for Sophia/DDS to find out.

Question and Answers followed.

VI. GGRC SDP Team Update (Sousa/Reynard)

114 ish, probably more for summer with people wanting kids in summer camps.

New FMS March 1, 2024 – Action FMS, about 12 families want to enroll with them.

One of the primary concerns is a missed payment. If an employee isn't paid, the worker can quit and jeopardizes many things.

- a. Participant data points: number of persons currently enrolled, number of participants in the process, how long participants have been enrolled GGRC Updates (Zigman)
- b. GGRC's SDP Orientation post-participation "packet" of information
- c. Update on putting together the GGRC Social Worker SDP resources file.

Juliet: We don't have any data - Kori and Jennika can share numbers.

We have 114 folks and people coming on board. We have a lot of people coming in and those whose loved ones are participating in the summer camps. We have one additional FMS called Action FMS; we have several folks joining. All issues revolve around funding and a big concern is missed payments – the person/worker quits their job and that jeopardizes everything. We try to focus on the purpose of the program as the program is in its infancy stage. The change in the spending plan could delay the process further. We are hopeful that these issues will be resolved. We do as much as we can to communicate and put efforts to get the spending plan done in a timely manner.

Janika has 17 initials working on their SDP cases. 3-4 are set for a start date. It's a slow-moving process and hopefully see these number increase by fall. Meghan's March count of SDP clients enrolled is 116.

Lisa: The time it takes depends on the unique circumstances for the participants but yes, it can take that long depending on the FMS the person wants, the size of the Budget and the wait time for each particular FMS.

Brenda: how to increase the number of SDP participants?

Lisa: we need to advocate to keep funding for SDP Participants Choice Specialists to support the SDP program.

Kantor: There has process been made since Jenika and Kori joined the group and raising the capacity that we see in the SDP participants growth now. Kantor shared context in the process and shared that she sees positive movement towards the right direction.

VII. Disability Rights California Update (OCRA)
No update this month.

VIII. Adjourn

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, April 18th , 4:00pm – 5:30pm