

Far Northern Coordinating Council on Developmental Disabilities dba Far Northern Regional Center Minutes

Regular Meeting
Friday, January 24, 2025
9:15 a.m.
Sheraton Hotel-Redding, CA
Draft -Minutes

1. Call to Order: 9:15 by Chair Joe Cullis

2. Roll Call

- a. Present: Cali McKinzie; Tim Howard; Lori Childres; Kim Leeseman; Dan Strauss; Edna Winkle; Joe Cullis; Araceli Garcia; Terria M.; Christina Johnson; Patricia McCarthy; William Moore; Adrian Hugo; Selene Mercado; Andreas Economopoulos; Haylie Torres; Jamie Murray
- b. Absent: Debbie Anderson
- c. Visitors: Cindi Freshour, We Care A Lot Foundation; James Ford, DDS; Renee Bauer, SCDD North State Office; Amy Facca, People First of California
- d. Staff: Keith French, IT Manager; Adam Knight, Information Systems Specialist; Tracy Duarte, Associate Director Community Services; Dr. Christine Austin, Medical Director; Wayne Doering, Associate Director of Client Services North; Melinda Roberts, HR Director; Tamra Panther, Associate Director of Client Services North; Chere Sullivan, Associate Director Children's Unit; Tristan Cauntay, Controller

3. Public Meeting- Far Northern Regional Center's FY 23-24 Year-End Performance Contract Presented by Tracy Duarte, Associate Director, Community Service

Note: Copies of the full report were made available at the meeting. The full report will also be available on the transparency page of the FNRC website.

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Yearly Far Northern Regional Center (FNRC) releases a Performance Contract that provides data and measures on topics that include:

- Where client's live
- FNRC's compliance with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) standards
- How well FNRC is doing at getting individuals working
- How well FNRC is doing at promoting service access & equity

DDS establishes contracts with regional centers that include, specific, measurable, performance objectives, which are reviewed by the public on an annual basis. In accordance with W&I code section 4269 (f)(1) each Regional Centers governing board must hold a public meeting regarding its prior year's contract performance objectives and outcomes.

- Charts were presented on who FNRC clients are and where they live.

FNRC wants to improve every year and meet or exceed the requirements FNRC has done well since the last reporting period.

- Regional Center Goals (based on Lanterman Act)
 - ✓ Fewer individuals live in developmental centers
 - ✓ More children live with families
 - ✓ More adults live in home settings
 - ✓ Fewer children live in large facilities (more than 6)
 - ✓ Fewer adults live in large facilities (more than 6)
- For children FNRC is focused on providing:
 - ✓ Person Center Planning
 - ✓ Crisis Intervention Support
 - ✓ Behavior Services
 - ✓ Collaboration with Educators
 - ✓ Partnering with Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans
- For adults FNRC is focused on providing:
 - ✓ Person Centered Planning
 - ✓ Housing Access Services
 - ✓ Supported Living
 - ✓ Crisis Intervention Services

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- ✓ Behavior Services
- ✓ Coordinated Family Supports
- ✓ Partnering with Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans

A table reflecting how well FNRC did in meeting DDS compliance standards displayed.

- Areas Measured

- ✓ Passes independent audit – Yes
- ✓ Passes DDS audit – Yes
- ✓ Audits vendors as required – Met
- ✓ Didn't overspend operations budget – Yes
- ✓ Participates in the federal waiver –Yes
- ✓ CDERs and ESRs are updated as required – 99.91%
(CDER =Client Development Evaluation Report)
(ESR=Early Start Report)
- ✓ Intake/Assessment timelines for individuals Age 3 or older met – 92.24%
- ✓ IPP (Individualized Program Plan) requirements met -- 98.99%
- ✓ IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) requirements met – 96.9%

FNRC has made Competitive Integrated Employment for clients a priority. We have seen an increase in the average annual wages, which can partially be attributed to raises in minimum wage.

During 22-23 fiscal year FNRC saw an increase in the number of individuals who participated in the Paid Internship Program.

Coordinated Career Pathways is a new service design to support individuals within two years of graduating school or with 5 years of leaving a WAP or subminimum wage. We have two new vendors and three in the process of being vendored.

FNRC continues to:

- ✓ recruit and maintain culturally diverse staff
- ✓ working in partnership with community groups

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- ✓ developing outreach that provides information about the regional center service system in a culturally sensitive manner.

4. Public Input/Open Forum *(This section is for members of the public only; and is to provide the public an opportunity to comment and/or present information to the Board on any matter. Each member of the public will be afforded up to five minutes to speak. If you have additional information you are encouraged to submit it in writing.)*

No public comment

5. Approval of Agenda for January 24, 2025

- a. Motion and second Andreas Economopoulos and Dan Strauss
One change the Financial Report will be presented by Melissa Gruhler not Audra Feedback, no further discussion, Motion passed

6. Approval of Minutes from November 15, 2024

- a. No changes
- b. Motion and second William Moore and Adrian Hugo, no discussion, Motion passed

7. Report from Chairperson, Joe Cullis

- a. Other – Reported that the Closed Session today may be a little longer than usual.

8. Management Reports

- a. Financial Report: Melissa Gruhler, Executive Director
 - i. FNRC Actual and Projected Operations Expenses
Contract year 2024/2025 – January 2025
 - o Salaries and benefits – increase over prior year 11.1%
Increase due to continued addition of new staff. A 2% annual increase given to all employees 7/1/2024 as a result of Union negotiations. Salaries also adjusted 7/1/2024 for wage survey comparisons.

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- Facilities (Rent, Maint, and Utilities)
Decrease of 8.9%
Chico remodel expense in prior year-Redding minor improvements in current year.
Facilities will be discussed further in Closed Session
- General Office
Increase of 7.9%
New office furniture for Redding 2nd floor suite, prior year printing expense not yet paid.
- Legal/Consulting/Audit
Decrease of 4.4%
Prior year had fees for union negotiations, Strategic Plan consulting (\$82,500) Prior year SDP Funding of \$55,600 not yet paid.
- Interest Revenue/ICF SPA Admin/Other
Rates continue to be favorable, investing excess cash in short-term Treasury Bills.
- ii. POS – Purchase of Services –
 - Currently keeping a close eye on POS due to the unpredictability due to late billings and rate reform.
- iii. Other- Rate Reform- Tracy Duarte, Associate Director of Community Services
 - Background California legislature conducted a study in 2019 looking at services and rates throughout the state of California.
 - This study led to the “Rate Reform”.
 - Full implementation scheduled for January 31, 2025
 - Rate models recommended reducing or eliminating some service codes.
 - As part of the “Rate Reform” existing service providers service codes will be changed to align with the services being provided.

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- First directive received in October 2024 and we are continuing to receive directives listing the requirements in implementing the “Rate Reform”.
 - On March 31, 2025 all new rates and service codes will need to be updated with the new service code descriptions.
 - Community Services and Fiscal are currently meeting with every vendor that is affected by the “Rate Reform”. Meetings are held in Redding, Chico, Zoom and over the phone.
 - At the meeting service providers are required to sign an acknowledgement form.
 - The “Rate Reform” is affecting 100’s of vendors we currently have over 300 meetings scheduled.
- b. Client Services Report: Tamra Panther, Associate Director Client Services North
- i. IPP Changes
 - New Sandis IPP was implemented as of January 1, 2025 This change is a standardized IPP throughout the State of California.
 - ✓ The new IPP has added some new sections that are more person-centered driven
 - ✓ Families now have more choices such as:
 - Employment
 - Safety
 - Supports
 - Home Life
 - Transportation
 - The categories can be moved around
 - ✓ The IPP can be long or short depending on the number of services requested.
 - ✓ This is a mandated change from the Department of Developmental Services
 - ✓ All 21 regional centers will now look the same
 - ✓ Adjustments can always be made to the IPP

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ii. Other:

○ Community Employment-Success Story

An individual began the internship program working in a desired area in 2023. He completed the program and was hired by the company and is now receiving over \$41 per hour.

He is motivated to continue his training and success. Wonderful example that this program does work.

9. State Council on Developmental Disabilities: Renee Bauer, Regional Manager, North State Office

a. State Council on Developmental Disabilities met on 1/21/25 in Sacramento. During this meeting, 2025 SCDD highlights were shared. Highlights included in-person and virtual meetings, events and trainings that were offered.

It was reported that 13,300 individuals were provided technical assistance throughout the state.

b. At the state level they are working on the next five-year plan 2027-2031. Stakeholder information will be requested. The current plan runs through 2026.

c. During the January Council meeting, we heard from Vance Taylor, Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES), and Tamara Rodriguez, Department of Developments Services (DDS). Representatives provided the Council with real-time updates on the Los Angeles Fires. Emphasizing the importance of updated contact information for consumers.

d. The National Core Indicators project is running smoothly

10. FNRC Board Committee Reports and Action Items:

a. Consumer Committee: Presented by Adrian Hugo, Chair

○ Newsletter assignments were discussed

The cover will be Spring along with a group picture

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- Review of the board packet presented by Melissa Gruhler
 - *Went through the agenda and board packet materials
 - *Discussed OnBoard and how we might be able to use it in the future.
- Board member concerns and announcements:
 - *Adrian announced the Consumer Advisory Committee meeting that will be held in Orland February 19.
- b. Bylaws Committee: Presented by Adrian Hugo, Chair
 - Forward to the March 2025 meeting
 - Further clarification and discussion needed
- c. Membership Committee: William Moore, Chair
 - Election of the committee chair
 - *William Moore nominated for the position.
 - Motion and 2nd for approval Joe Cullis and Adrian Hugo
 - no discussion Motion passed.
 - Discussion of future board member openings
 - *Looking for someone that may have legal expertise
 - *Committee members will reach out to those they know that might be interested
 - *Reviewed Board application for Plumas County.
 - The committee approved the application and will invite the applicant to the March board meeting for an interview
- d. Executive Committee: Joe Cullis, Chair
 - FNRC office space discussed-details discussed in Closed session
 - A new policy will be developed addressing Executive Members Hiring family members. This is to meet the requirement of AB1147 that recently passed.

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- The new “Public Records Act” discussed
 - Looking at OnBoard for communication
 - Cali proposed a work group utilizing the experience of the board members that are terming out this year. Keeping consistency within the communities.
- e. Health and Wellness Committee: Presented by Cali McKinzie, Co-Chair
- Committee Responsibilities
 - ✓ Oversight
 - ✓ Reporting
 - ✓ Consent
 - ✓ Not responsible for day-to-day operations
 - Proposals discussed in detail
 - ✓ Letters will be going out notifying the providers what the next steps will be
 - The committee will hold another meeting in February to discuss details on how to move forward, funding etc...
 - This program has been received with excitement. This will continue to be a priority.
- f. Service Provider Advisory Committee; Presented by Jamie Murray, Chair
- Meeting held January 22, 2025
 - ✓ Rate Reform discussed
 - ✓ The Health and Wellness Project
 - Melissa Gruhler presented the Strategic Plan leading to a conversation on hiring.
 - ✓ Bringing the right people on at the right time
 - ✓ Providers are spending a lot of money just to keep up with the hiring, interviewing etc...
Those who stay have a genuine interest in people
 - ✓ An Owl was purchased for the SPAC meetings

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making it easier to hear for those in-person and on Zoom

11. Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA): Presented by Dan Strauss, Representative

- Developmental Services Master Plan
 - ✓ Increasing transparency related to funding and navigating services
 - ✓ Supporting families, including respite guidelines that consider the needs of the family unit
 - ✓ Better collaboration across service systems that jointly support people served by regional centers
 - ✓ Upcoming Master Plan Workgroup 1 (Person-Centered Services): January 28, 2025 12 PM-3 PM- (registration required)
- Regional Center Performance Measures (RCPM) Workgroup.
 - ✓ Develop performance incentives and measures to promote improvements in consumer outcomes and regional center performance.
 - ✓ Date: January 30, 2025 10:30 AM-12:30PM (registration required)
- 25-26 Governor's Budget, January 10, 2025
 - ✓ The People we Serve
 - *By June 2025 we will be serving 465,165 and by June 2026 we will be serving 504,905 people.
 - *About 8.5% growth, only two regional centers serve more than 39,000 people.
 - ✓ The Funds to Serve Them
 - *The total funds budget is project to grow by 20.2% to 19 billion, increasing the total budget by \$3.2 billion. (\$18.6 billion is the regional center program budget)

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*The state's general fund makes up 64% of the total budget with other resources (primarily Medicaid) making up the remaining 36% (\$6.84 billion)

- ARCA Executive Director's Report-Amy Westling
 - ✓ Refine rate reform for developmental services
 - ✓ Advocate for an equitable and sustainable regional center operations funding methodology.
 - ✓ Support the development of needed services identified by individuals served and families.
 - ✓ Promote more efficient coordination of regional center and generic services.
 - ✓ Develop meaningful metrics to support measurement and improvement of regional center effectiveness.
 - ✓ Support greater consistency and enhanced performance across all 21 regional centers balanced with local decision-making.
 - ✓ Communicate with diverse communities and advocate alongside them for the services and supports necessary to promote good outcomes.
 - ✓ Support the work of regional centers and their community partners to increase community inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities.
 - ✓ Support regional center board member development and effectiveness.
- CalHHS Emergency Resource Guide
 - ✓ <https://www.chhs.ca.gov/blog/2025/01/08/calhhs-emergency-resource-guide/>
 - ✓ View the [Emergency Resource Guide in Spanish](#)
 - ✓ **CALL TO ACTION**
 - ✓ In an emergency, we all have a responsibility to check on our family, friends, and neighbors, especially older individuals, those with disabilities, and our children.

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- ✓ Please take a moment to check-in on each other, especially the most vulnerable among us. We are stronger together.

- Dan thanked the board for the opportunity to represent the regional center at ARCA. Cali McKinzie will now become the ARCA representative

12. Report from Executive Director, Melissa Gruhler

i. Report

- Presented a “Thank You” gift to board member Dan Strauss as he has fulfilled his term on the board.
- The Masterplan packet was provided in the board packet All information and email contacts are included in the packet.
- Concluded Holidays Are for Caring in December
 - ✓ Funds generated July – Dec, 2024= \$4,855.
 - ✓ \$3,000 donation from Tri-Counties Bank
 - ✓ Total donations = \$7,855.
 - ✓ Purchases slightly over \$9,000
 - ✓ We were able to deliver wrapped gifts to nearly 150 individuals
 - ✓ We look forward to next year in hopes of reaching even more
 - ✓ Along with donations we have “Giving” trees located in our Redding and Chico lobbies. These trees have gift requests that staff can sign out, purchase, wrap then return for delivery. Our staff enjoy the opportunity to give back.
 - ✓ Staff wrap and deliver all the gifts
- In December the Department of Developmental Services appointed Pete Cervinka, Director

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- A copy of the State budget is in your packet
 - ✓ This budget will be reevaluated in May and we possibly will see some modifications
 - ✓ Currently we do not know what this will look like
 - ✓ What we do know:
 - *Huge growth – Anticipated growth 39,700 individuals will be added over the next year.
 - *The current budget did factor in this growth; however we will have to wait and see if the May revise reflects any changes.
 - *Change is anticipated due to the wild fires in Southern California. Looking at the possibility of more families moving into Northern California as well.

- Our team is preparing for the implementation of AB1147
 - ✓ Looking at developing a policy specific to hiring practices
 - *The Bill states certain staff members at the regional center cannot hire family members.
 - *Policy and Protocols will be developed

- The Public Information Act will go into effect 2026
 - ✓ Looking at our record retention policies

- AB 162
 - ✓ Implementation July 2025
 - ✓ Remote options for IPP's and IFP's
 - ✓ Provisional status and eligibility
 - *The growth in the provisional status did impact our growth numbers.
 - *We are currently serving over 11,000 individuals

- Recruiting and Onboard – Melinda Roberts, HR Director
 - ✓ Looking at 2024
 - *New employees 79
 - *Turn over 42 people -over half of those who left had only been with the agency less than a year.

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- *Net gain of over 30 people
- *Currently have over 300 employees with 12 people currently in the onboarding process.
- *Over 50 people were promoted or moved to another area within the regional center.

- Strategic Plan Highlights
 - ✓ Focusing on recruiting, onboarding and retention of staff
 - ✓ Relationship building with our community and service providers
 - ✓ Working to bring back regional center orientations
 - ✓ Continue to provide a program like the “Family Wellness Program”
 - ✓ Continue to be in the community-outreach
 - ✓ Planning a resource event addressing end of life care
 - ✓ Strength of the Lanterman Act
 - ✓ Developing a survey for our families and service providers

This is just a summary of what we are currently working on
The Strategic Plan is a 3–5-year project.

13. Announcements, Reports, Questions and Answers, Summary Comments: All Board Members

- i. Adrian Hugo announced the Chico State 3rd annual Native event
There will be a job fair in Susanville-sending Tre’ the information
- ii. Dan Strauss recognized William Moore as the recipient of
excellence award from his employer
- iii. Terri reported on:
 - The Tehama County Coordinating Council meeting
Will report on the January meeting in March
 - Reported on the People First of Red Bluff December meeting
Had a fun Christmas party with cookies and punch
- iv. William Moore reported on People First Region 2.
 - Next meeting will be April 12, 2025 in-person

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- Shasta County trying to get more members

Motion and second to move into closed session Araceli Garcia and Cali McKinzie, no discussion, Motion passed.

14. Transition to Executive (Closed) Session, W & I 4663 (a),

- (1) Real estate negotiations.
- (2) The appointment, employment, evaluation of performance, or dismissal of a regional center employee.
- (3) Employee salaries and benefits.
- (4) Labor contract negotiations.
- (5) Pending litigation

Motion to leave closed session Adrian Hugo and Dan Strauss, no discussion, Motion pass

15. Adjournment: Motion and second Cali McKinzie and Tim Howard no discussion, Motion passed

Meeting adjourned 12:59 PM

16. Next Meeting: March 14, 2025 – Sheraton Hotel in Redding, CA

Respectfully submitted by:

Shelly Nickle
Administrative Assistant