

Purchase of Service Variance Report for Fiscal Year 2014-2015

Minutes from March 21, 2016 Public Meeting

VMRC Board Room 2:00 PM

Present: Ann Cirimele, Family Resource Network
Rita Gutierrez, Parent
Alicia Manzo, Parent
Isela Bingham, Translator
Dena Hernandez, State Council on Developmental Disabilities, North Valley Hills Office
Leinani Walter, Office of Clients Rights Advocates
Katie Hornberger, Office of Clients Rights Advocates
Christine Hager, Office of Clients Rights Advocates
Maria Pena, Department of Developmental Services
Tom Martin, VMRC Board Member
Tom Bowe, VMRC Board Member
Paul Billodeau, VMRC Executive Director
Jan Maloney, VMRC Executive Assistant
Carmen Hill, VMRC Assistant Director of Case Management/Resource Development
Cindy Mix, VMRC Director of Case Management
Anthony Hill, VMRC Assistant Director of Case Management/Special Projects
Larry Link, VMRC Financial Analyst
Angelique Shear, VMRC Project Manager
Nikki Gillespie, VMRC Program Manager
Wanda Farinelli, VMRC Program Manager

Valley Mountain Regional Center (VMRC) held its meeting regarding the Purchase of Service Variance Report for the Fiscal Year 2014-2015 on March 21, 2016 at 2:00PM in the VMRC Board Room. There were 20 individuals present at the meeting. Participants were made up of 9 VMRC staff, 2 family members, 5 local consumer advocates, 1 Department of Developmental Services (DDS) staff, 1 Spanish Translator and 2 VMRC Board Members. There was a diverse ethnic makeup of the participants that included 5 Hispanics, 1 African American, 1 Pacific Islander, and 13 Caucasian individuals. The use of a Spanish Translator was offered, however all of the participants present declined the use of a translator. All discussion that took place was in English.

Data from Fiscal Year 2014-2015 Purchase of Services was distributed to all participants. This data included information on purchase of services for consumers in the Early Start program (ages 0-3), Active Status (ages 3-22) and Active Status (ages 22 and over) that included different ethnicity, diagnosis, language and residential type. This data also included information regarding consumers with no purchase of services in the Early Start program (ages 0-3), Active Status (ages 3-22) and Active Status (ages 22 and over) that included different ethnicity, diagnosis, language and residential type.

The remainder of the meeting was used to discuss the information contained in the reports. There were no complaints about the reports themselves. A lengthy conversation ensued about why people thought that some of these disparities may exist and what ideas people may have to reduce disparities. The group agreed that there is need for research by an independent agency to look at disparities, and to provide some methods in possibly overcoming them.

Some of the ideas as to why these disparities may exist include:

- The data is not able to be sorted by region to account for more rural and urban locations
- The data on reports may not accurately reflect the correct ethnicity code of individuals
- Some families may not trust the “system” and not want to become involved
- Family’s cultural preference to not seek assistance from an outside agency
- Some families decline services
- There may be a lack of information
- Inconsistency in regional center Service Coordination staff
- Technology may not be user friendly for some
- Seasonal workers who come and go throughout the valley during the year

There was also discussion about what to do regarding the disparities so that they are no longer issues:

- There may need to be some more training for Regional Center Board Members and Staff. Some of this training could be around effective communication, cultural sensitivity
- Training for Regional Center Staff to ensure ethnicity codes are accurately documented
- Provide outreach in targeted areas that may appear to be underserved
- Provide parent training at times that works for families (in the evenings)
- Utilize the vendor and family ListServe more to communicate with stakeholders
- Provide training to community organizations regarding services

- Try to ensure that all materials are in “plain English” (6th Grade Reading Level)
- Review the website to ensure it is user friendly

The meeting participants all agreed that coming up with a list of reasons why the disparity may exist or what can be done to try to deal with them can help to actually reveal what and where the true issues are. The participants discussed the necessity of having an independent agency look at the disparities and help to develop plans to address them. With this in mind, the participants came up with a list of questions and ideas they would like for the independent agency to review. Some of the ideas that meeting participants would like to pose to the independent agency are listed below:

- Review the disparity data to analyze accuracy
- Review the data from VMRC and compare the statistics of the makeup of the VMRC catchment area to the makeup of individuals we serve. (Example compares the current VMRC data to the % of the population, VMRC serves X% of ethnicity xyz and San Joaquin County has a resident population of X% of ethnicity.
- Assess if there is a way to separate the Purchase of Service data by region (example city or rural areas)
- How can VMRC provide better access to services
- Look at the intake/assessment process to make sure that there is not something there that is creating a disparity
- Look at the referral process and see if there is a way to reach other individuals that we may not be reaching
- Review Case Management process to ensure that this is not something creating a disparity
- Review the outreach of VMRC to see where improvements can be made
- Are there language issues and, if so how may they be addressed
- Are there areas that VMRC can provided targeted outreach
- How can technology be utilized to improve access (website, mobile devices or other ways)
- Should a Variance Task Force be created and what would the makeup look like
- Is there a way to better increase education of VMRC and the services provided to the community, new parents, consumer and minority community leaders
- Are there any barriers to accessing information and services that is not being recognized

At the end of the conversation regarding the actual purchase of service variance report there was further discussion about different community organizations the consumer advocates have met with and, ways that have been affecting their meeting with them. The individuals at the meeting expressed a real interest in having the outside independent agency look at the information and provide feedback. This seemed to be the best way to try to find answers to the reasons, if any, for the disparity and ways to effectively address them. There appeared to be an understanding by the individuals present at the meeting that VMRC is not outwardly trying to create disparity but everyone was interested in trying to address any issues that may be there. The purchase of services variance will be reviewed again next year.