



VMRC Fiscal Year 2022-23 Purchase of Services Annual Report

Welfare & Institutions Code Section 4519.5(e)-(f)

1. VMRC Public Community Conversation on 2022-23 Spending Data & Equity Efforts Report

Valley Mountain Regional Center (VMRC) conducted three Community Conversations on spending data and equity efforts in March and April 2024. VMRC shared FY22-23 Purchase of Service (POS) spending report and engaged with the community in a meaningful way. During these engagements, VMRC leaders shared ongoing efforts to increase equity and access for the diverse individuals and families served within VMRC's five-county catchment area.

Meeting dates:

- March 11, 2024 – VMRC hosted the Public Community Conversations meeting in-person in the Stockton office with a virtual participation option. Spanish interpretation was provided with headsets in-person and virtually.
- March 16, 2024 – Hosted a Self-Advocate Public Community Conversation meeting in-person at Person Center Services (PCS). This meeting included participants virtually.
- April 18, 2024 - Hosted a Spanish POS Meeting in-person with English interpretation by Mark Gutierrez. This meeting participants virtually.
- Overall, VMRC had 255 participants in all three meetings.

VMRC distribution of notices (flyers)

VMRC sent notices for the Community Conversation on March 11 and April 18 in both English and Spanish. Flyers for the meeting on March 16 were distributed in English. Distribution to our community included the following:

- VMRC Calendar
- VMRC Newsletter (including VMRC Constant contact list)
- VMRC social media (Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, and Instagram)
- VMRC all-staff sent via email
- Distribution directly to Community Base Organizations, Parent Groups, and Stakeholders (e.g., SCDD, FRN, DRC, ICC, Escuchen Mi Voz, and Families First)

2. Cultural and Linguistic Competence Summary:

Hispanics make up 40% of the consumers being served by VMRC. The meeting on March 11 was presented in English with Spanish translation with closed captioning to reduce language barriers for participants. The meeting on April 16 was conducted in native language of Spanish

with English Interpretation by Mark Gutierrez who is a well-respected and highly trained interpreter. The meeting on March 16 was conducted in plain language English in collaboration with the Self-Advocacy Council 6. The presentation was created in plain language and presented accessible to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. All VMRC's flyers included the contact information of a VMRC staff person to request additional interpretation, underscoring our commitment to linguistic inclusivity.

3. Community Conversation, Comments, and Input:

While data indicate disparities exist in purchase of service, VMRC also recognizes that individuals and families access some services differently based on choice, culture, language, and experiences.

- Some people from culturally diverse communities do not choose certain services as their Caucasian individuals and families may choose.
- Cultural and individual preference impacts decisions to accept services. As VMRC community grows, Hispanics are the fastest growing community while also having our youngest population served in our catchment area. This impacts POS data as adult consumers typically use higher cost services (e.g., residential placement and supported living services).
- VMRC data indicate Hispanic families access respite services and services provided in the family home at a higher rate than other populations. For example, Hispanics use respite and personal assistance more than Caucasian families. When looking at the data and purchases from our FY 2022 -2023, the percentage of Hispanics with a purchase authorization is 71.8% compared to the White population of 76.4%.
- Respite and personal assistance for Hispanic families is typically provided by a family member or someone the family trusts. By comparison, Caucasian families utilize out-of-home placement in care facilities at a higher percentage than all other communities and this cost is significantly higher than the cost of respite.
- One challenge noted is the inability to break down the ethnic group "other" in an understandable way due to the categories limited to the CDER (Consumer Development Evaluation Reports) and SANDIS groupings in place. Our data shows a difference when comparing languages regarding disparity rather than ethnicity. VMRC puts forth significant effort to help our families better understand the services VMRC offers and how the services are being utilized.
- Breaking down the data and presenting it in simpler language helps our community better understand why the existence of certain disparities exist among services within the different Ethnic groups we serve.

VMRC staff were asked to share experiences or concerns as information was presented.

- VMRC Executive Director, Leinani Walter, discussed DDS equity initiatives and explained how funding is provided to regional centers and shared purchase of service data by specific service types, by disability and by ethnicity. Leinani discussed the differences in authorizations and expenditures by age, race, language, diagnosis, and residence type.

- Due to the feedback from the POS Meeting in 2023, VMRC implemented new initiatives to better support our diverse individuals and families.
- Some of the equity focused initiatives highlighted included:
 - Service coordinator education identified as an ongoing training need which continues to be a priority of training provided.
 - Person-Centered Planning – VMRC continues to invest in developing management staff certified to provide training for VMRC staff, vendors, and families.
 - Community Training will continue to be provided and developed to support families in understanding how to access regional center services in a more efficient and meaningful way.
 - VMRC has improved its pool of interpreters in public meetings and individual planning meetings by expanding contracted services.
 - VMRC has invested in modern technology and headset equipment to support our non-English speaking community for in-person meetings to reduce language barriers and improve language access.
 - Hired the Multicultural Access Specialist to increase interpretation and translation capacity within VMRC and within the community.
 - Bilingual stipends continue to be in place to increase and maintain service coordinators' language capacity.
 - Continue to use the VMRC lobby public service announcement to provide relevant resources and information (e.g., events, training opportunities, and community resources).
 - VMRC continues to expand and improve the VMRC website by increasing the quality of key languages. With new language tools on the website to allow viewers to translate contact information into their preferred language and improve navigation within the website.
 - VMRC will continue to conduct listening sessions with our Spanish, Cambodian, Tagalog, and Vietnamese communities.
 - VMRC Community Outreach Ongoing immigration services/consultations are available to those in need. Continue attending Community events in our five attachment areas and creating community partnerships. Please continue to work closely in supporting Community-Based Organizations with their SAE Grants, such as Hear My Voice, Integrated Community Collaborative, Voice United, Hlub Hmong Center, Acorns of Tree, and many more.

VMRC's commitment to community support and ongoing improvement is demonstrated by multiple community engagements and ongoing collaborations with community partners and Self-Advocate support groups to foster collaboration and shared responsibility. VMRC actively engages with the Office of Clients Rights Advocacy/ Disability Rights of California and Self-Advocacy Council 6.

- Some of the challenges families voiced continue to be focused on needing to know or understand how services work and what services are available. Gaining access to services continues to be the biggest concern families expressed during the meeting.

VMRC continues to collaborate with our community-based organization leaders to work with families served to build trust and positive working relationships.

- Families expressed the need to understand adult services and how they work.
- Families continue to express how they would like to see more services provided at home.
- During the Public Community Meeting, we found that families felt comfortable discussing and providing feedback. Their input is invaluable to us, and community conversations are always helpful in understanding families and their needs, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their concerns are addressed. We continue to learn and emphasize the importance of more education and practical knowledge, which are necessary for all to understand services currently offered, changes that may be needed, or services re-imagined with cultural nuances as part of the fabric of the development.
- VMRC's commitment to learning and improving services is unwavering and community conversations provide optimism for our staff and our community of families served.
- Self-Advocate voices - VMRC is determined to learn more from adult consumers and to raise the voices of the people we serve. Self-advocates provided meaningful input on March 16th. Some people noted that as the world changes and as we become even more aware, self-advocates stated the need to experience a full and well-rounded life.

Topics of discussion included:

- Increasing access to technology and training
- Providing more information and resources in plain language
- Increase and encouraging care home utilization of technology
- Expanding multicultural self-advocate groups
- Increasing opportunities for person-centered planning and training
- Consumers being interested to help train new Service Coordinators

Other topics raised by community members include:

- The need for more individualization and privacy in care homes;
- Need for more ILS programs for transition-aged youth to enhance other skills learned in schools; and
- Caregivers desire more wrap-around services as they express the need for personal assistance.

Summary: Self-advocate, family and community input and ideas have been invaluable to better understand the areas to focus of our work and to improve our service delivery. We have learned through this community engagement process that we must listen carefully, provide accessible and easy to understand materials, and be aware of the many ways subjective experiences and cultural values may impact how individuals and their families may choose and utilize regional center services. VMRC will continue listening intentionally with purpose to our community as we know that is the most effective way to meet the needs of the diverse community we serve.