

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

Regular Meeting  
Friday, March 15, 2024  
9:40 a.m.  
Sheraton Hotel, Redding, CA/Zoom

**1. Call to Order:** 9:40 AM by Vice-Chair Joseph Cullis

**2. Roll Call**

- a. Present: Deborah Anderson, Kim Leeseman, Daniel Strauss, Josh Flom, Joseph Cullis, Araceli Garcia, Terri M., Andreas Economopoulos, Adrian Hugo, Selene Mercado, Patricia McCarthy, Edna Winkle, William Moore, Lori Childres, Timothy Howard, Christine Johnson, Cali McKinzie
- b. Absent: Ginger Moyle

**3. Introductions**

- a. Visitors: Cindi Freshour, We Care A Lot Foundation; Renee Bauer SCDD; James Ford, DDS; Amy Facca, People First of California Travis Howard, Guest
- b. Staff: Audra Feedback, Chief Financial Officer; Melinda Roberts, Human Resource Director; Keith French, IT Manager; Wayne Doerning, Associate Director Client Services North; Tracy Duarte, Associate Director Community Services; Christine Austin, Medical Director

**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 input

**5. Approval of Agenda for March 15, 2024.**

- a. Motion and second Patricia McCarthy and Adrian Hugo. No further discussion, Motion passed

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## **6. Approval of Minutes from January 26, 2024**

- a. Motion and second Christina Johnson and Timothy Howard No Discussion, Motion passed

## **7. Report from Chairperson, Joseph Cullis, Vice-Chair:**

- a. Other: Reminder to be recruiting for potential board members as you come across individuals in the community. Looking for diversity in background and experience.
- b. Dan Strauss, ARCA Representative announced he is unable to attend the June ARCA meeting. If you are interested in attending please see Dan for details.

## **8. Management Reports**

- a. Financial Report: Audra Feedback, Chief Financial Officer
  - i. Auditors Report: 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Auditors Presented by: S. Scott Seamands with Lindquist, Von Husen and Joyce.
    - Required Communication was discussed including:
      - Key audit risks
      - Revenue recognition
      - Expense recognition
      - Compliance
      - Any significant difficulties encountered in performing the audit
      - Audit adjustments and uncorrected misstatement
      - Any disagreements with management
      - Any consultation with other accounts
      - Any significant issue arising from the audit
    - Financial Statement highlights
      - Page 1- Auditor's Report-Unmodified (clean) opinion No issues were notated
      - Page 27-Government Auditing Standards
      - Total Assets

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- Total Liabilities
- Total Support and Revenue
- Total Expenses
- Results of Internal Control Testing
  - Internal Control Walkthroughs performed
  - Financial close and reporting
  - General computer controls
  - Bank reconciliation
  - Cash receipts
  - Cash Disbursements-POS; OPS
  - Cash disbursement POS and OPS sampled 40 checks and invoices
  - Cash Receipts
  - Payroll
  - Medicaid waiver eligibility
  - State claims
- \*Results: No exceptions noted. Controls were found to be operating effectively
- Testing Compliance with Requirements
  - Opinion –unmodified Far Northern Regional Center was found to be in compliance.
- Once the board accepts the report the team will move forward in submitting the report.

ii. Action Item #8

Recommendation and Requested Action:

Regional Center management has reviewed and discussed the audit with Lindquist, Von Husen, and Joyce and recommends the Board of Directors accept the audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023.

Motion and second Finance Committee and Andreas Economopoulos, no discussion, Motion passed. Audit report is finalized as of today 3/15/2024.

iii. Purchase of Service Report FY 23-24-Presented by Audra Feeback – Chief Financial Officer

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Audra explained the columns on page 41 of the financial reports Projected funds available column shows a balance in total operations of \$100,876 Audra feels comfortable with this amount.

POS projected funds available \$20,358,017 surplus. We are searching for providers and new services. Even with this high surplus we do not feel that the Department (DDS) will diminish these funds in the future but we do want to be prepared.

- iv. Operations Report, FY 23-24-Page 43 of the board packet Presented by Audra Feeback – Chief Financial Officer
- Salaries and benefits: Continue to see an increase due to the growth of the agency and the need for support staff.
  - IT equipment increase due to the planned replacement of iPads. Laptops to replace virtual connections.
  - Facilities (Rent, Maint, and Utilities)- Increase due to new space needed to accommodate increased staffing needs in Chico and Redding. This also includes the Chico bathroom remodel to accommodate more employees.
  - Interest Revenue –seeing a slow down as we are currently waiting on the government to pass the budget holding off until then. We will resume investing excess cash once this is accomplished.
  - Vendor Rate increase- Advocating for July 2024 to award an increase to vendors to meet the growth requirements. We will not know until the budget is passed if this will be implemented in 2024 or if they will push it back to 2025.

A DDS rate analysis is currently taking place. They are looking at how rates are being implemented and how the rates are calculated. Our goal is to be consistent with the current vendors as well as the new vendors coming in.

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We will continue to follow up on this topic as the process continues.

Meetings will begin next week. Audra and Tracy will both be sitting in on these meetings.

- b. Community Services Report-Presented by Tracy Duarte – Associate Director of Community Services
- i. HCBS update:
- History: Many services individuals receive are paid for with state and federal money from the federal center of Medicare and Medicaid Services known as CMS.
  - Home and Community-based settings are places where individuals with disabilities live and spend their days. The new rules explain what these settings should be like.
    - Purpose: is to ensure that individuals receive services in settings that are integrated in and support full access to the greater community. This includes opportunities to seek employment and work in competitive and integrated settings, engages in community life, control personal resources, and receive services to the same degree as individuals who do not receive regional center services. Individuals have an active role in the development of their plan, the planning process is person-centered, and the plan reflects the individual's service and supports and what is important to them.
    - In 2020 we began the process of assisting providers with self-assessments followed by transition plans to ensure policies and procedures aligned with the HCBS Final Rule by March 17, 2023. We were successful with that goal.
    - On December 1, 2023, the Department of Developmental Services issued a directive that

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states Regional Centers shall complete an on-site review of all HCBS settings to verify their full compliance and implementation of the HCBS settings requirements by August 31, 2024.

- In addition, that Regional Centers should work collaboratively with service providers to make efforts to immediately remediate any findings during the monitoring visit. Seeking input from individuals served on how areas of noncompliance may be corrected, completing training and/or training staff on the federal requirements and person-centered service planning, or updating any conflicting documentation to support full implementation of the federal requirements.
- Participating in the Northern California Learning Institute (NCLI) led by Beth Gallagher and Kirk Hinkleman from Lifeworks.
  - Trainings for our providers, client advocates and regional center staff.  
Discussing person centered thinking practices and philosophies on the HCBS Final Rules. Lifeworks completes coaching calls with providers on the months that we do not have in person meetings. Promoting collaboration and to discuss what we have been doing in regards to meeting the HCBS rules and to discover what more is possible.

Additional trainings are planned over the next year to assist providers in not only becoming compliant but in community of practice.

FNRC developed teams to complete the monitoring's. We have 270 settings that need to be reviewed which consist of 180 residential sites and 91 day service sites that include supported

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employment. As of this week we have completed site visits for 54 residential sites with 51 being compliant and 3 requiring technical assistance and further training. We have completed 34 day program site visits and they were all in compliance by the end of the visit. Currently at 31% in compliance overall.

Some common areas that we have seen providers needing some updates on policies including “Grievance Policies” being reviewed with individuals being served annually, documentation of HCBS trainings with new staff and ongoing annual trainings, individuals having a lock on bedroom door and a key to their residence, and access to meals at non-scheduled times, house meetings to discuss house agreements.

Overall we have found a lot of houses are in practice meeting the HCBS rules but not giving themselves credit by documenting what they are doing and/or staff not understanding that tasks or activities that they are doing pertain to the HCBS rules.

Encourage providers to connect with each other by working in collaboration.

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

#### **i. Report:**

- North State Office has been busy providing Lanterman Act trainings to Regional Center Consumers as well as Emergency Preparedness trainings to various day programs.

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- Continued work to extend our reach into rural Northern California. Building rapport with agencies and supports in Siskiyou and Trinity Counties.
- Statewide Self-Determination Advisory Committee has been seeking content for its “Best Practices Platform”. FNRC Self-Determination Advisory Committee is of interest in paving the way related to “Best Practices”. The committee is innovative, proactive, and always planning.
- State Council next meeting is March 19, 2024. Meeting agenda and packet are posted at <https://scdd.ca.gov/councilmeetings/>. Members of the public are welcome to attend and comment. Meeting packet includes 2024 Legislation-Bill Support List and status.
- Systemic Advocacy and Leadership Academy (SALA) March-June 2024 out of the SCDD LA Office. Two North State Self Advocates are currently enrolled. Classes focus on: Social Justice, Critical Thinking, Individual to Systemic Advocacy, ADA etc. Each Participant will be involved in a final project and graduation.

### **10. FNRC Board Committee Reports and Action Items:**

- a. Consumer Committee, Adrian Hugo, Chair
  - Newsletter-presented by Simonne Robidoux, Training and Communication Supervisor
    - Distribution of the March newsletter discussed. This will go out digital only
    - Distribution of future newsletters discussed. It was decided that three copies will be going to the programs and two copies going out to residential facilities. Hard copies will also be available at each of the FNRC offices. The target date for distribution will be June 3, 2024.
    - Assignments for the next newsletter were discussed and assigned. Articles will be due April 10, 2024. May 16 at the committee meeting the final newsletter will be



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presented for approval. May 22 the newsletter will be sent to the printer.

- Instead of having a September edition the committee will put together a special holiday edition which will be distributed in November.
  - Board Member recruitment was discussed
  - Review of the Board Packet and Action Items-Presented by Melissa Gruhler, Executive Director
  - Board Member concerns and announcements:
    - The next CAC meeting will be held next month April 16 in Plumas County. The meeting will be held at the Best Western Hotel in Chester.
- b. Nominating Committee- Cali McKinzie, Chair
- Present 2023-2024 Slate of Officers nominations
    - Nomination for Chair: Joseph Cullis
    - Nomination for Vice-Chair: Patricia McCarthy
    - Nomination for Secretary: Lori Childres
    - Nomination for Treasurer: Timothy Howard
    - Nomination for Parliamentarian: Adrian HugoThe slate of officers will be presented for vote at the annual meeting in June.
- c. Finance Committee, Lori Childres, Chair
- Action Item #1-Bravo Program  
Action requested: The Board approve contract PST-2702 with Zikan, Rodney dba Bravo Program (HF0182) for Transportation Services effective April 1, 2024 through March 31, 2026 for a total maximum contract amount of \$513,194.40.  
Motion and second Finance Committee and Araceli Garcia, no discussion, Motion passed
  - Action Item #2-Modoc Work Activity Center

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Action Requested: The Board approve contract PST-2701 with Modoc Work Activity Center (H31012) for Transportation Services effective April 1, 2024 through March 31, 2026 for a total maximum contract amount of \$257,317.68.

Motion and second Finance Committee and Timothy Howard, no discussion, Motion passed

- Action Item #3- New Vision Services, Inc

Action Requested: The Board approve contract PST-2706 with New Vision Services, Inc. (HF0487) for Transportation Services effective April 1, 2024 through March 31, 2026 for a total maximum contract amount of \$328,440.00.

Motion and Second Finance Committee and William Moore, no discussion, Motion passed

- Action Item #4- Paratransit Services

Action Requested: The Board approve contract PST-2707 with Paratransit Services (HF0339) for Transportation Services effective April 1, 2024 through March 31, 2026 for a total maximum contract amount of \$473,788.56.

Motion and Second Finance Committee and Adrian Hugo, no discussion, Motion passed

- Action Item #5- Semper Valeo, LLC

Action Requested: The Board approve contract PST-2708 with Semper Valeo, LLC (HF0650) for Transportation Services effective April 1, 2024 through March 31, 2026 for a total maximum contract amount of \$394,128.00.

Motion and Second Finance Committee and Selene Mercado, no discussion, Motion passed

- Action Item #6- Loan

Action Requested: It is recommended the Board of Directors authorize the Chief Financial Officer and Executive Director to sign the Required Documents, which will enable the Regional Center to borrow up to \$27.0 million using three-month

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committed and nine-month uncommitted loans with U.S. Bank. Interest charged at the banks reference rate (currently 8.5%) on any amounts loaned.

Motion and Second Finance Committee and Cali McKinzie, no discussion, Motion passed

### d. Executive Committee, Cali McKinzie, Chair

- Wellness Program Policy- Discussion on how to make this an everyday lifestyle choice. Current programs have activities but not necessarily a health and wellness component.

Dan Strauss presented a program called “Blue Zones”. In different places all over the world they have happiness, longevity and healthy lifestyles.

Conversations are taking place with providers in hopes of them opting in on this way of thinking. Providers have to truly believe in this program themselves in order to make it successful. This would become part of the service design of the program.

Example of simple changes that could be made:

- Movement is just part of daily life such as walking rather than driving.
- Stress reduction
- Getting enough sleep
- More of a plant based diet
- Relationships-joy-purpose-socialization
- Include pets
- Religious affiliations

Next step: Develop a small committee that will come up with the language for this policy and present it again at the next board meeting.

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- Action Item #7-Wellness Program

Action Requested: The FNRC Board of Directors institute a Wellness Policy in an effort to make wellness an integral part of everyday life for the individuals we serve. Once developed, regional center staff will institute procedures that can be utilized to enhance services that can directly and indirectly address wellness in the daily activities of living. Such procedures can include requirements for new program descriptions and can encourage existing programs to enhance their services to include improving outcomes for individuals receiving their services. FNRC will develop a 2-year pilot program to improve wellness activities, for up to 50 clients living in Supported Living Services and for an additional 40 clients receiving Independent Living Services. Individuals participating in the pilot program will be followed to determine the effectiveness of the program for up to five years. Motion and second to move forward in establishing this policy Executive Committee and Christina Johnson, no further discussion, Motion passed

- Appointed the committee for the Executive Director Evaluation

e. Service Provider Advisory Committee, Josh Flom, Chair

- Best Attendance in some time 17 were present

- HCBS update – presented by Tracy Duarte, Associate Director of Community Services

- Regional Center completing on site review for full compliance and full implementation of onsite requirements. The deadline date is August 31, 2024 100% compliance
- The Regional Center met the February goal to have 25% providers in compliance- currently at 31%.
- Do not hesitate to ask if you need assistance or support

- DSP Stipend – presented by Tracy Duarte, Associate Director of Community Services

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- DSP Stipend is still available through June 30, 2024.
- Increase interest, skills development, and learning opportunities
- Reimbursements are being sent out every two weeks
- 1,700 DSP have attended this training
- NCLI – presented by Megan Swope, Supervisor Community Services
  - Wrapping up NCLI 2.0
  - Person Centered Focuses
  - Encourage Collaboration
  - Seeking “What more is possible”
  - More information to come on the NCLI 3.0
  - 2.0 is focused on follow up with Beth and Kirk
  - 3.0 is intended for further focused training and ruling focus
- State Council on Developmental Disabilities-presented by Renee Bauer, manager of the North State office
  - Flyer coming out for Cal Fresh/Healthy Living
  - Focus talks about being a strong self-advocate
  - Surveys are incorporated and evaluated to offer great support and resources for those receiving support
  - RFP’s released to the community from SCDD headquarters
  - Application for proposals is April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Grant money for a variety of services offered, finance, legal, technical etc.
  - National Core Indicator Survey Cycle is running through June for families.
- Success Stories were shared
- Election of a new Chair/FNRC Board-presented by Josh Flom, Chair
  - Current members, Jamie Murray, Katrina Woodcox, Viola Forge, and Andrea.
    - \*Jamie Murray was voted new Chair
    - \*Katrina Woodcox was voted Co-Chair
- SPAC Meeting Schedule
  - Next Meeting May 15 in person-Red Bluff Visitor’s Center

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### **11. Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA): Daniel Strauss, ARCA Representative**

- Recruiting for Regional Center Board
- What does Board Service Entail
  - Duty of Care-Pay attention to the organization's activities and operations
  - Duty of Loyalty-Put the interests of the organization before personal and professional
  - Duty of Obedience-Comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws; adhere to the organization's bylaws; and remain the guardians of the mission
- Management-Doing things right-efficiency-time
- Leadership-Doing the right things-how we spend our time
- Governance –vs- Management
  - Governance-To exercise authority, make and administer policy, set direction, and oversee organizational health.
  - Management- To direct, supervise, or handle the daily operations
  - How should this effect our agenda? Are you well informed on the decisions that are needing to be made? Is there a better way?
  - Not sure? Here are some guiding questions
    - \*Is it big?
    - \*Is it about the future?
    - \*Is it core to the mission?
    - \*Is it connected to our core values?
    - \*Is a policy decision needed?
    - \*Is a red flag flying?
    - \*Is a watchdog watching?
    - \*Does the chief executive want and need the Board's support?

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### **12. Report from Executive Director, Melissa Gruhler**

- Thank you to Josh Flom for all he provided as the SPAC representative.
- Thank you to Araceli, Selene and William for your willingness to attend the budget hearings in Sacramento. There is value in hearing from these voices. Selene and Araceli committed to stay and speak even though the meeting was long and translation was not available. Veronica provided translation and their voices were heard.

The hearings were about services and the rate implementation. There will be continued hearings and more opportunities to submit your opinion if you want to have your voices heard. Do you want to advocate? If so send the information to Melissa.

- Dashboard Indicators-Page 85 of the board packet
  - This chart continues to show the pace of our growth with a total of 195 intakes.
  - Eligibility review discussed a record number of cases last week approving over 50 individuals for services. This reflects in our children's units 1/40 caseload ratio we grew an entire caseload in one day.
  - The growth effects all areas-Community Service Department in searching for services and providers. Staffing continues to be impacted for the providers. The Department supporting HCBS and DSP.
  - Butte county will be seeing two new providers soon.

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- With so much growth more services are needed overall not just for the 0-5 age group.
- Caseload Ratios page 86 of the board packet
  - We have met four out of the six areas in our caseload ratios
  - Five and under required ratio 40 we are at 40.6
  - Clients moved from DC in last 12 months required ratio 45 we are at 8.0
  - Complex needs required ratio 25 we are at 19.4
  - Low/No POS required ratio 40 we are at 40.0Areas we need improvement
  - Medicaid Waiver required ratio 62 we are at 65.6 – We are currently working on this category. We recognize that we need to increase Medicaid waiver so we can access the federal dollars associated with this waiver. We have determined that another staff member needs to be added to the Medicaid waiver team
  - All Others required ratio 66 we are at 78.4
- SDP –Page 91 of the board packet
  - Currently we have 179 Active Clients
  - We have eight orientations scheduled. We have limited the orientations to 30 individuals
  - We are working internally on improving the process
  - A survey was sent out –located in the board packet pages 92-96.
    - \*Question 7 –Have you experienced a loss of service or interruption in service due to non-payment or delayed payment from FMS? 14 responded yes.We will follow up and see if this has changed with FMS services added and also an increase in pay.  
We will also take a closer look at the comments on the barriers within the FMS programs.



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- Burns Study Rate Implementation
  - Despite the possible delay in the implementation of the rate increase our fiscal department is continuing to move forward.
  - We have received responses from the Department in layers on the implementation.  
The next three months our Community Services and Fiscal departments have a lot of work ahead of them. Contracts, service designs etc. We appreciate our teams and also the retired annuitants that are willing to come in and help providing their expertise in these areas.

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

- William Moore-Region 2 People First Conference – 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.  
Donation letters going out and raffle prizes are being collected.  
Some scholarships are available.  
Registration: Contract We Care A Lot Foundation.  
  
Shasta Chapter-Transportation was discussed
- Terri M. – People First Chico meeting held by Zoom – 11 people were in attendance. Talked about the conference coming up in May.  
  
People First Red Bluff  
Basketball tournament discussed. Had two guest speakers Kathryn from FNRC discussing employment and Tina from SCDD discussing the Lanterman Act.
- Edna Winkle will be going to school in Sacramento studying to become a medical assistant

Motion to move into close session William Moore and Araceli Garcia no discussion, Motion passed

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**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

i. Closed Session

Motion and second to move out of closed session Terri M. and Adrian Hugo, No discussion, Motion passed

**15. Next Meeting:** May 17 – Gaia Hotel in Anderson, CA

**16. Adjournment:** Motion and second Adrian Hugo and William Moore, No discussion Motion passed

Meeting adjourned 12:14 PM

Respectfully submitted by:

*Shelly Nickle*

*Administrative Assistant*