

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

Regular Meeting  
Friday, May 17, 2024  
9:15 a.m.  
Gaia Hotel-Anderson, CA  
Zoom option available

**1. Call to Order:** 9:24 by Chair Cali McKinzie

## **2. Roll Call**

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

## **3. Introductions**

- a. Visitors: Cindi Freshour, We Care A Lot Foundation; James Ford, DDS; Pamela Becwar, Executive Director First Five Plumas County; Jackie Dubois, People First President; Taylor Berry, 24 Hour home care
- b. Staff: Audra Feedback, Chief Financial Officer; Melinda Roberts, Human Resource Director; Keith French, IT Manager; Larry Withers, Associate Director Client Services South; Tracy Duarte, Associate Director Community Services; Dr. 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.*)

Pamela Becwar, Executive Director First 5 Plumas County  
Concerns about the systematic process of the Far Northern Regional Center "Referral Line".

Working with appropriate channels service coordinators and supervisors

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trying to identify why calls take so long to be returned.  
Recommendation to the Regional Center is this line should be answered by a live person with the option of texting.

Also requesting a fillable referral form online that does not need to be faxed.

Concern: The lack of accountability is effecting children

Next step: Discussion on the process

Melissa Gruhler, Executive Director Far Northern Regional Center will be addressing this issue today in her report. We are aware and working on changing these processes.

No further public comment

**5. Approval of Agenda for May 17, 2024.**

a. Motion and second William Moore and Patricia McCarthy. No further discussion, Motion passed

**6. Approval of Minutes from March 15, 2024**

a. Motion and second Kim Leeseman and Terri M. No Discussion, Motion passed

**7. Report from Chairperson, Cali McKinzie**

a. Conflicts of Interest and Annual Forms

Cali emphasized the importance of these forms. Time will be allowed during Closed Session to fill out the forms.

b. Executive Committee: Met with Leading Resources, Inc discussing the "Strategic Plan". Very interactive process as the committee gave their input.

**8. Management Reports**

a. Financial Report-Presented by: Audra Feeback, Chief Financial Officer

i. Financial Report:

- We are still in good shape for this fiscal year in both operations and POS.

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- Total Operations projected funds available: \$165,964 feeling comfortable with this number even though it is larger than normal.
- Total POS projected funds available \$40,227,764
- Rates continue to be favorable, investing excess cash. This interest is allowing us to update the Chico office making more space as we continue to grow.
- Salaries still seeing an increase due to the addition of new staff related to growth.
- Facilities – Increase  
New space to accommodate increased staffing levels for both Chico and Redding. Office design changes for space utilization. Chico bathroom remodel to accommodate more employees.
- IT Equipment-Increase  
New equipment needed for new staff-increased licenses such as new payroll software to accommodate the growth. New software purchase to allow for scheduling as we have just implemented “Hoteling” in our Chico office.
- Bank fees page 36 discussed. The number of checks being issued is causing some of these fees. Audra will be checking with the bank on the earnings credit rate and get back to the board. Some of these fees may be able to be eliminated.
- POS still working on the SDP processes

ii. Any questions feel free to contact Audra directly at:  
[afeedback@farnorthernrc.org](mailto:afeedback@farnorthernrc.org)

- b. Community Services Report-Presented by: Tracy Duarte, Associate Director of Community Services
- i. Update Report:
- Page 51 Community Services Vendorizations report  
11 Early Intervention Services were added

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Butte County area day programs are needed. Funds received for Fiscal year 2023-24 for the development of two programs.

- Turning Point has been chosen and their program will be an adult program for individuals that require support. Individual support staff will be available. Opportunities for community integration as well with supports to engage in a full life. Full and part time days will be offered along with flexible hours.
- Curtis Homes also chosen. This will be an adult program licensed to support up to 35 individuals. Activities along with helping those seeking employment. Integrated setting giving access supports outside of traditional services. Full and part time days will be offered with flexible hours to access community activities.
- We will continue to search for more providers
- HCBS update
  - Onsite reviews of all settings need to be completed by August 31, 2024.
  - 270 sights-134 have been reviewed with 128 in compliance.
  - Eight Technical Assistance Plans/Corrective Action Plans have been written giving them 30 days to comply. Specifying the rule that is not in compliance and giving suggestions on what it would take to get into compliance. Contracted with Life Works in helping providers become compliant.
  - Reaching out to providers by phone so they can continue to collaborate with other providers and get ideas.
  - Areas we are seeing not in compliance include:
    - ✓ Common Areas
    - ✓ Update in Program Design
    - ✓ Documentations of new staff training and on-going training with current staff

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- ✓ Key to the house
- We will continue to do around nine visits per week to complete by August 31, 2024. There will be a small window of time to get into compliance after that date.
- c. Client Services Report-Presented by: Larry Withers, Associate Director of Client Services South
  - i. Update Report:
    - Theme continues to be growth.
      - We have never seen this type of growth before. New promotions, separations, retirements, causing internal movement within Case Management resulting in the need to move clients around.
      - Growth impacts office space resulting in the need to begin using the method of “Hoteling” in the Chico office. Those with Remote Work Agreements will need to reserve office space for the days they are in the office. We anticipate in the future we will need to use this system in other offices as well.
      - Construction taking place in Chico office going well
      - Redding office beginning to run out of space
  - ii. POS Guidelines:
    - Page 58 of the packet provides the summary of changes in addition to a new revision
    - Page 59 of the packet POS policy and the revision. Changes how the Regional Center purchases Social Recreation services. New legislation prohibits subtracting from respite or camp.
    - May 2024 Summary  
The following changes were made to the most recent Far Northern Regional Center Board approved Purchase of Service (POS) Guidelines. DDS requested additional changes after a meeting with the Office of Client’s Rights Advocacy (OCRA). The changes were related to section

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4688.22, a new addition to the Lanterman Act to provide more social recreation services to regional center clients.

- **April 14 Revision – FNRC POS Funding Policy** – Under CRITERIA FOR PURCHASE OF SERVICE, starting at the bottom of page one. The new language is in red under 1(a)(i), which states FNRC cannot require the need for camping, social recreation and non-medical therapies be related to the qualifying developmental disability.
- **April 14 Revision – CAMP** – In the definition, the last sentence discussing the use of CAMP as a form of Day Care was removed. In addition, all of the original #1, which discussed family responsibility and left open a share of cost arrangement was removed. I also removed all of #3, except for 3a, which is the new #2. I added new language which is #1 in the final guidelines which discusses that the camp must be able to meet the needs of the client and that FNRC will consider additional services and supports to ensure access to camping services.
- **April 14 Revision – Social Recreation Services** – I deleted the word *adults* and added *clients* to the definition. I removed the sentence under Guidelines that started with generally and discussed that families, clients, and residential providers had a responsibility to provide social recreation opportunities. In addition, I revised the approval authority to include services that are billed either hourly or by sessions.
- **April 14 Revision – Specialized Recreation Services** – I removed the first sentence under the sub header Guidelines, which stated that recreation is considered the responsibility of the client and/or their family.
- **Socialization Training** – Guideline completely removed. This guideline was supposed to cover social programs for children, but due to the request to remove “adults” from Social Recreation Services and the fact these guidelines are identical now, all social recreation services will be addressed under the Social Recreation Services Guideline regardless of age.
- **Recreation Therapy** – Guideline completely removed. There has not been a vendor for this program since 2009. The previous vendors are not interested in reviving the program nor do we

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- have any potential vendors on the horizon. If we do have an interested vendor, I can reinstate this guideline.

iii. Action Item #1

Action Requested: We respectfully request that the document, “Purchase of Service Guidelines” and Funding Policy, dated May 17, 2024 be approved by the FNRC Board of Directors. Motion and second Patricia McCarthy and Adrian Hugo, no discussion, Motion passed.

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

- i. No report

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

a. Consumer Committee Report, Adrian Hugo, Chair

- i. Far Northern Regional Center Strategic Plan presented by Karin Bloomer with Leading Resources, Inc

The “Strategic Plan” was discussed allowing for input from the Committee.

- ii. Terri M. reported on the Consumer Committee Meeting held in Chester, CA on April 16, 2024. Four individuals were present. A vibrant discussion took place covering a variety of topics.

Concerns were heard and solutions are being discussed.

The Next CAC meeting will take place July 9, 2024 in Trinity County.

- iii. CAC Newsletter for June-presented by Simonne Robidoux, Training and Communication Supervisor at Far Northern Regional Center

Everyone did a wonderful job on the articles. The newsletter will be available on the website May 31, 2024.

700 copies will also be printed and distributed.

The next newsletter will be going out in November. Article assignments will be assigned at the September Committee Meeting.

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- iv. Review of the Board Packet and Action Items-presented by, Melissa Gruhler, Executive Director of Far Northern Regional Center
- b. Membership Committee Report- Cali McKinzie
  - i. The Committee interviewed board applicant Haylie Torres for the Member at Large opening on the board.  
A motion was made and motion passed to invite Haylie to be our new Member at Large board member.
  - ii. The Committee reviewed SPAC application for Gayle Palmer  
A motion was made and motion passed. Gayle is now a new member of the SPAC Committee.
- c. Wellness Committee Report, Cali McKinzie
  - i. This is a new committee  
The Chair will be Cali McKinzie with Christina Johnson the co-chair.
  - ii. Currently working on the “Wellness Policy”
    - This is not a diet program the focus will be on wellness as a complete being. Different ways in which individuals can thrive.
    - The Committee is looking at a program already developed called the “Blue Zone” Those who have implemented this program are happy and thriving.
    - The Committee is hoping to have the policy ready to be approved by the next board meeting.
    - This will be a voluntary program that will help individuals find ways to make healthy choices. Examples: walking group, gardening etc.
- d. Service Provider Advisory Committee, Jamie Murray, Chair
  - i. Good attendance-appreciated the in person meeting
  - ii. Update on the in-person State Council meeting scheduled for May 21. Available both in-person and via Zoom
  - iii. Health and Wellness Initiative:



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- Introduction of “Healthy You” a six-part series collaboration with CalFRESH focused on wellness for individuals with disabilities. The final session is scheduled for June 12.

iv. Future Meeting topics and ideas:

- Potential speakers on Client’s Rights, DDS updates, and Self Determination specialists.
- Professionals are welcome to come and present information for example new software.

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

- a) ARCA bylaws. All 21 Regional Center’s are signed up. ARCA is much stronger as an organization-more capable of meeting the challenges.
- b) Acorns to Oak Trees tribal organization, in collaboration with Far Northern Regional Center, will be hosting the Northern California Native American Disability Symposium. Open to all. Wednesday June 12<sup>th</sup>, 9am-4:30pm in Corning. Onsite assessments will be provided for those 0-3. Over 3 preliminary gathering of information and providing how the process works.
- c) Rally at the State Capitol. ARCA and a coalition of other advocacy groups are pushing back against the service provider rate delay. Join us on Tuesday May 21<sup>st</sup>, starting at 10am.
- d) The Lanterman Act is now available in Spanish
- e) ARCA is actively working to support policies and legislation. Advocating for those with intellectual disabilities.

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

- a) Concerns regarding our referral line were shared today during the Public comment and also at the Consumer Advisory Council meeting that was held in Chester.
  - Calls are not being returned; next level of communication is not happening.
  - Some other items have been brought to our attention as well regarding the referral line.

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- The dashboard shows we received 228 referrals in the month of April. They are being processed; however, changes need to be made and hopefully this will take place within the next week. This change is dependent on setting up the correct IT system for the phone. This change will include a live person picking up the calls.  
We will implement an “Intake Officer of the Day” to take the calls once the intake assistant takes down the information. Other items in processes and procedures are being looked at as well.
  - We are working on these processes now and making adjustments with the hopes of having this change finalized in the next week or two.
  - Looking at a possible designated portal. The Department of Developmental Services is looking at a centralized client portal.
  - Tracking the intake process- we would need to develop a report on those who start the process and those who do not finish.
  - 0-3 we have up to 45 days to completion
  - Over 3 we have 120 days to completion
  - Phone calls we do try and do best practice and return calls within 48 hours. Currently working towards this goal and making corrections.
  - Some of the delay is due to the lack of available assessors to do the evaluations. We are looking at improving timelines greatly with the addition of assessors.
  - We will give another update at the June Board Meeting.
- b) Lanterman Act now available in Spanish
- c) Month of April attended Grass Roots day with Adrian and We Care A Lot Foundation. The purpose of this meeting was to advocate for the implementation of the rate increase. The group met with the office of Brian and Megan Dahle. Executive Directors met with Senator Mike McGuire.  
The Governor did release the May Revise; however, it is still stating that the rate increase will be effective July 2025.  
Another rally is taking place May 21<sup>st</sup> at the State Capitol.
- d) May revise:
- Areas being cut:

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- ✓ Tribal Engagement Funding
- ✓ Health and Safety Waiver Assistance
- ✓ DSP Internship Program
- ✓ Emergency preparedness resources-money for supplies and materials reduced
- ✓ No mention of any cuts in the Operation Budget
- ✓ Hearings are still occurring right now regarding the rate implementation increase.

### e) Strategic Plan

- Great meetings with Exec Staff, Management, Service Coordinators and Staff.
  - ✓ Developed a draft Mission Statement as well as values and goals to adopt
  - ✓ Currently the consultants at Leading Resources, Inc are compiling input and making revisions and will present the draft at the June Board Meeting.
  - ✓ One more meeting August 22 will take place in hopes the final “Strategic Plan” can be presented to the board for approval at the September board meeting.

### f) IPP Format

- The Regional Center system is looking at changing the IPP format. There is an IPP sample in the board packet. The Department is still looking at modifying it slightly. When we moved to the IPP in Sandis it was a heavy lift. The new IPP is similar to what we are currently using in Sandis.
- This will still involve time and training to get the document into the new format
- The idea is that the IPP will look the same throughout the state. Reflecting what is important to individuals.
- One area identified for change is the documentation of “Long Term Support Services”. We will modify and train our service coordinators where this information can be documented.
- In addition to the IPP formatting there is an IPP approval agreement for individuals. This will indicate that yes individuals had a conversation in the complaint process, whistleblower

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procedures, employment, voter registration, transportation plan etc.

### g) Dashboard

- Continuing to grow-currently serving 10, 234 individuals
- 419 currently going thru the intake process
- Status 1-842
- Status 2-8,684
- Status U-279
- With the shift in the intake process we will most likely have another growth spurt.

### h) Self Determination Program

- Currently 195 active clients
- At the Consumer Advisory Counsel, meeting in Chester an item was brought to our attention regarding a denial of service because it did not fit in the service description. Even though an appeal was not completed we were able to review and approve the service under a STIM project. Going out and being in the community has been beneficial even though attendance is low, it is good to hear the concerns.
- Met with the SDP team at VMRC and CVRC looking at ways for us to become more efficient. Currently not, ready to implement the changes as department meetings still need to take place.

### i) Baby Clinics

- Observed Valley Mountain Regional Center and how they implemented this program
- We will be looking at this and having some pilot programs locally. During the clinic, assessments are completed as well as intake staff are present to complete the process.
- This will be an added way to do intakes not the only way

### j) Caseload Ratios

- Caseload ratio letter included in the board packet. We did not meet our caseload ratios. We will be having a Public Meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup> which requires a corrective plan.
- 1:66 On Waiver we need to be 1:62
- 1:41 –Early Start requirement 1:40 we were at 40.7

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- 1:78-Others requirement 1:66

We will be looking at the “Strategic Plan” for ideas on how to keep up with growth. What can we do to continue to provide the services we need to provide? We are approaching almost 300 employees.

- k) Starting Medicaid audit in June – currently gathering records
- l) The Department of Developmental Services audit is scheduled for July.

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

- Terri M. – People First meeting held May 14 – Brian was the guest speaker talking about employment at the “Rest Stops”. \$206.76 in the treasury

Tehama County People First – very busy with the “Special Olympics”. Tina from SCDD talked about the health class. The next meeting will be May 21<sup>st</sup> via Zoom

- Edna Winkle-Peer to peer People First Zoom meetings are open to all consumers. They are every fourth Thursday from 6-7 PM. Zoom is available by contacting Cindi Freshour with We Care A Lot Foundation.
- William Moore-People First Conference Region 2 starting today (5/17/24) Each Chapter had different assignments for the conference.  
Chapters are doing more things in the community in hopes of getting the membership back up.  
The Peer Support group is open to the public every 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month.

Motion to move into close session Andreas Economopoulos 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 Edna Winkle and Adrian Hugo, No discussion, Motion passed

## **15. Employment Success Stores- Presented by Kathryn Boroff, Employment Specialist**

- May 2024 Outstanding Achievement Award presented to Allan Crowell. This Award is in recognition of the positive contribution Allan has made to the community workforce.
  - ✓ Achieved significant milestones over the past year.
  - ✓ Dedication/Strong work ethic in his internship
  - ✓ Work considered essential for a smooth running kitchen
  - ✓ He has overcome many hurdles to be where he is today
  - ✓ Enjoys working with food and doing food preparation
  - ✓ Hopes of bring his skills to the next level making it possible to advance from food prep to a sushi chef support.
  - ✓ Allan does not give up even when faced with obstacles
  - ✓ Allan is easy going, hardworking and dependable person
  - ✓ Enjoys being part of the team
- May 2024 Inclusive Workforce Award Recipient is Impact Solutions Sou Saechao and Staff. This Award is in appreciation of your continued excellence in building an inclusive workforce in our community.
  - ✓ Truly takes a whole person approach in support of individuals to help them explore and achieve employment of their dreams
  - ✓ All Staff are friendly, personable, and always take a person centered approach with the individuals they support

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- ✓ Impact Solutions leads with their heart in all they do and go above and beyond to support individuals in competitive integrated employment in a variety of settings
- ✓ They continue to have active and open communication to ensure individuals have a choice in the way that they are supported
- ✓ Impact Solutions stepped up to support many individuals when another local vendor closed
- ✓ Creative, motivation to help, and are always looking to learn to better support the needs of the individuals they work with.
- ✓ Impact Solution's never ending referral list speaks for itself, in that everyone hopes to get connected with them and access their support
- ✓ Thank you Sou and Impact Solution staff for all you have done for the clients we support.

**16. Next Meeting:** June 13 & 14, 2024 – Gaia Hotel in Anderson, CA

**17. Adjournment:** Motion and second William Moore and Edna Winkle, No discussion Motion passed

Meeting adjourned 12:24 PM

Respectfully submitted by:

*Shelly Nickle*

*Administrative Assistant*