

Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center (ELARC)
Fiscal Year 2015/16
Purchase of Services (POS) Data Report
May 31, 2017

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I Background

As of June 27, 2012, the Lanterman Act was amended requiring the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and Regional Centers to annually collaborate in compiling data on Purchase of Services (POS). POS Data Report is based on approved authorizations, actual POS expenditures and the utilization rate of authorized services for all consumers. The data is displayed by consumer age, ethnicity, primary language and diagnosis. Additionally, the data includes the total number of open/active consumers who received POS funding and also consumers that did not have POS expenditures for the reporting fiscal year.

The POS Data Report is to be posted on the Regional Center website by December 31st. Regional Centers are required to conduct community meeting(s) no later than March 31st to present and discuss the data report with community stakeholders. By May 31st Regional Centers are to submit a written report to DDS that addresses the requirements of Welfare & Institutions Code (WIC) Section 4519.5 on attendance, meeting notes, issues identified in the data and recommendations to promote equity and reduce disparities in POS for the various ethnic groups served by each regional center.

II ELARC Demographics

ELARC serves a highly diverse population.

The top three ethnic groups served by ELARC are: Hispanic, Asian and White. The following figures represent the ethnic breakdown for all consumers served by ELARC in Fiscal Year 2015-16.

	Ethnicity	Consumers	%
(1)	Hispanic	8,943	70.7
(2)	Asian	1,551	12.3
(3)	White	1,297	10.3
(4)	Other	673	5.3
(5)	African-American	186	1.5
	Total Consumers:	12,650	100%

The two predominant ethnicities served by ELARC are Hispanic and Asians. Collectively these two ethnic groups represent 83% of all consumers served by ELARC.

III Attendance

ELARC hosted three public meetings. Two of the meetings were conducted in partnership with two long-established parent organizations in ELARC's service area: Fiesta Educativa and Chinese Parent Association for the Disabled (CPAD). These two groups are deeply rooted in ELARC's community. Both organizations represent the two largest ethnic groups served by ELARC: Hispanic (70.7%) and Asian (12.3%).

Notification of public meetings was promulgated by various methods which included:

- ✓ Posting on ELARC website, Facebook page/Twitter
- ✓ Posted flyers at ELARC's headquarter lobby and at satellite office in Whittier
- ✓ Distributed notices to community partners including:
 - Disability Rights California
 - State Council on Developmental Disabilities, Los Angeles Office
 - Fiesta Educativa
 - Chinese Parent Association
 - UVAS, Parent Group
 - PICI, Parent Group
 - Greater Long Beach/Whittier Autism Society
 - Family Resource Center
 - Vendor Advisory Committee
 - Consumer Advisory Committee

Meeting announcements were translated into Spanish and Chinese for distribution and posting.

The three public meetings were conducted as follows:

- (1) March 20, 2017
 - Meeting held at ELARC's Main Office in Alhambra
 - Interpretation services arranged but not utilized
 - Total attendance: 4
- (2) March 25, 2017
 - Meeting was hosted by the Chinese Parent Association (CPAD) and held in the City of San Gabriel where the parent group conducts their regularly scheduled meetings.

- Interpretation services were provided and utilized: Mandarin, Cantonese and Vietnamese.
- Total Attendance: 22

(3) March 28, 2017

- Meeting was hosted by Fiesta Educativa, an organization offering training and support to Hispanic families throughout the State.
- Spanish interpretation services were arranged and utilized.
- Total attendance: 28

Total attendance for the three meetings was 54 participants.

IV Meeting Notes (Attachment 1)

Extensive notes of all three meetings are included with this document as Attachment 1. The following is an overview of participant comments and discussions at each of the sessions.

(1) March 20, 2017

- Place emphasis on explaining to parents the person centered approach in conducting meetings.
- Accentuate an explanation of the various services and supports to families through discussion not just relying on written material and a list of services.
- Parents/Consumers have difficulty articulating specific service needs due to the complexity of the system, requires a more in-depth relationship between service coordinator and family.

(2) March 25, 2017

Audience primarily represented families/consumers of Asian ethnicity. Parent comments and discussion included the following points.

- Stressed the importance of obtaining specific information on supports and services.
- Registered concern over the quality of staff hired by vendors.
- Desire to better understand funding policy for conference attendance, emphasis placed on the value of knowledge and learning about new innovative approaches.
- Importance of families preparing for the Individual Program Plan (IPP) meeting, wanting guidance on how to prepare and maximize the outcomes of the meeting; can regional center send material in advance as a preparation phase to the family/consumer.

- Inquiries as to what materials are available in various languages.
- Concerned expressed that service coordinators did not return calls and did not inform them of parent organizations such as CPAD which can offer vital support.
- The various analysis and discussion on POS expenditures presented at the meeting were helpful to better understand the differences in funding by ethnic groups.

(3) March 28, 2017

Attended primarily by Spanish-speaking family members. The meeting had a high level of dialogue and interaction between participants and agency presenters. It was a well-informed audience which offered introspective comments and testimonials and a multitude of insightful questions. Participants inquired and discussion included:

- A high level of interest on the meaning of disparity, why it exists, and how to achieve a better distribution of funded services amongst all consumers.
- Discussion on better understanding residential services, the various living options and what is included in these more costly services.
- Lengthy discussion regarding the approved special projects under ABX2-1 funds for reducing disparities in POS, this included a detail discussion and inquiries on approved projects for ELARC such as:
 - ✓ Non-profit mini-grants
 - ✓ Behavioral Workshops presented in native language
 - ✓ Enhanced caseload ratio demonstration project for low per capita families/consumers, how participants are identified, and can families volunteer for the project.
 - ✓ Is the enhanced caseload ratio project being instituted at other regional centers.
 - ✓ How will the effectiveness of the project be assessed.
 - ✓ Amount funded for the various ABX2-1 projects.
- How to obtain detail information on POS data reports.
- How to determine how much POS funds are being spent on individual consumers.
- Suggestion to outreach to parent groups affiliated with school districts for outreach and information purposes.
- Concerns expressed over families/consumers with “No purchase of Services”, desire to understand why active cases would not be receiving services. Discussion on outreach efforts to these families and including them as part of the enhanced caseload ratio project.

- Concerns over the quality of services and staff hired by service providers and the lack of experience to effectuate a positive outcome.
- Concern over insufficient services and supports with bilingual staff which are sensitive to parent input and values them as part of the team.
- Need to expand the repertoire of services that are culturally relevant.
- Concern over the frequency of new service coordinators assigned to cases; emphasis should be placed on minimizing new assignment, it's a relationship that takes time to build confidence and trust which is essential to exploring the best options for families/consumers.
- Parent training and education is highly valued and can lead to a path of empowerment and better services.
- Social recreational services and respite are crucial support services for families which keep their son/daughter at home.
- Offer guidance on how to access generic services/resources.

V Community Presentations (Attachment 2: PowerPoint)

The meeting format for all three community presentations included two components. First a formal panel presentation on specific areas of the POS Data Report, followed by an open discussion with the audience to obtain their perspective on material presented and related recommendations.

The formal presentation consisted of:

- An overview and background on the process and reasons for compiling POS data.
- Review of ELARC projects to ameliorate POS inequities amongst the various ethnic groups over the last fiscal year.
- An introduction to ABX2-1 funded projects being implemented by ELARC to reduce POS disparities in current fiscal year (2016-'17).
- An open dialogue directed by audience questions/comments addressed by ELARC panel presenters, content of discussion documented under "IV Meeting Notes" of this report.

Presentation focused on the per capita differences amongst the three largest ethnic groups in ELARC's service area: Hispanic, Asian and White. A comparison of the last two fiscal years and the related per capita averages for all ages indicates a modest increase for the Asian and White population and a negligible expenditure growth for Hispanics. The table below compares the last two fiscal years per capita authorizations for all ages.

Per Capita (PC) Authorizations

For All Ages

By Fiscal Year (FY)

Ethnicity	PC FY 2014/'15	PC FY 2015/'16	Difference	% Growth
Hispanic	\$13,739	\$13,860	+ \$121	.88%
Asian	\$14,933	\$15,746	+ \$813	5.4%
White	\$32,088	\$32,255	+ \$167	5.2%

Worthy of mention is a prominent policy change which required California's Medi-Cal Managed care health plans (MCP's) to provide coverage for behavior health services. Beneficiaries impacted by this major policy shift were Medi-Cal children and adolescents ages 0 to 21 diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The new Medi-Cal benefit package offers a more robust coverage plan which is designed to ensure that children receive early detection and preventative care, in addition to offering medically necessary services including behavioral health treatment (BHT). This change is noteworthy because it impacted a large segment of ELARC's population, namely Hispanics.

Of relevance is that in December 2015 the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) identified 709 consumers for potential transition from ELARC funded behavioral services to Medi-Cal Managed Care coverage. Of the 709 total consumers identified by DDS 456 or 64% are Hispanic. It should be noted that ELARC's Hispanic consumer base largely falls into the 0 to 21 age group which will mainly be affected by this shift in policy. Of major importance is that this age group constitutes 80% of the total Hispanic population served by ELARC. Ultimately, the result of this requirement will translate into a reduction of regional center funded services for Hispanic consumers and impact the per capita authorizations (PCA).

The next diagram illustrates a comparison of the per capita growth, since the inception of the POS data report (2011-'12). These figures exhibit a more substantial growth in authorizations for ELARC's Hispanic population over a five-year period (2015-'16). Overall the per capita cost comparison shows a consistent increase in POS authorizations over a five year span for all ages in the three primary ethnic groups served by ELARC.

Per Capita Authorization Comparison
Fiscal Year (FY) 2011-'12 to FY 2015-'16

Ethnicity	FY 2011-'12	FY 2015-'16	% Change
Hispanic	\$12,922	\$13,860	7.26%
Asian	\$14,848	\$15,746	6.05%
White	\$28,639	\$32,255	12.63%

Nevertheless, despite the noted gains in POS authorization increases for the Hispanic and Asian groups, over the five year span, the White population continues to have an appreciable difference in the per capita funding over other ethnic groups. The following table displays the differences in the per capita authorizations.

Per Capita (PC) Authorizations Comparison
Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-'16

Ethnicity	PCA	Difference
White	\$ 32,255	+ \$ 18,395*
Asian	\$ 15,746	- \$ 16,509**
Hispanic	\$ 13,860	- \$ 18,395**

- * Compared to Lowest PC authorization
- ** Compared to Highest PC Authorization

The primary contributing factor for this sizeable authorization variation is the higher utilization rate of residential services by the White ethnic group. Residential services, in its various categories, constitutes the most costly of all regional center funded services. The end-result is a substantial disparity in the per capita authorization averages among the three ethnic groups as noted in the above figures. The following statistics reflect the residential placement trends for ELARC and the resulting effect on the per capita averages amongst the ethnic groups.

**Residence Type Comparison
By Ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Total Consumers	Living with Family # / %	Residential Placement # / %	Living Independently # / %
Hispanic	8,943	8,247 / 92.2%	292 / 3.3%	284 / 3.2%
Asian	1,552	1,439 / 92.7%	78 / 5.0%	24 / 1.5%
White	1,299	860 / 66.2%	241 / 18.6%	157 / 12.1%

As demonstrated by the above figures residential services is the principal cost driver creating the extensive funding disparity among the three ethnic groups. Therefore, it is essential to offset residential costs to reach a more careful POS comparison for ELARC consumers of all ages that are living at home. Hence the table below isolates residential costs and compares POS funding for consumers living at home.

**Per Capita Authorization (PCA)
For All Ages Living at Home
By Ethnicity**

Ethnicity	PCA	Difference
White	\$13,803	0
Asian	\$12,442	_ \$1,361*
Hispanic	\$10,293	_ \$3,510*

* Compared to highest PCA

The glaring difference in PCA for individuals living at home can be contrasted with the table on page 8 of this report, which includes residential costs. The PCA for Hispanics living at home, as compared to Whites, changes from a negative (-\$18,395) to (-\$3,510), representing nearly an 81% reduction in the POS funding gap. Similarly the PCA for Asians went from a negative (-\$16,509) to (-\$1,361), as compared to the White population.

This comparative analysis yields a more reliable comparison of the per capita authorization averages. The overwhelming percentage of Hispanics and Asian consumers are living with their families, at a rate of 92.2% and 92.7% respectively. In contrast to 66.2% of the White population. With this comparison, which again removes residential costs, the stark gap in POS expenditures changes dramatically.

Admittedly, despite the expenditure adjustment, there remains a disparity of the POS funding levels for Hispanic and Asian individuals living at home. It is these discrepancies in funding which will be the intense focus of ELARC efforts in curtailing the gap in POS funding for individuals living at home.

In summary the Purchase of Services (POS) data continues to show a pronounced gap in funding amongst the three primary ethnic groups, despite a modest narrowing over the last five fiscal years. As demonstrated in the aforementioned assessments and comparisons, the substantial gap in POS funding is reduced when residential costs are considered. Regardless, there continues to be a disproportionate differential in the per capita authorizations (PCA). To this end, ELARC will continue to intensely focus on efforts and activities that will attain funding parity amongst the various ethnic groups.

The following section of this report will highlight specific efforts being undertaken by ELARC and include recommendations to rectify the POS disparity.

VI Current Projects & Recommendations

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016-'17 Assembly Bill (AB) X2-1 went into effect authorizing, in part, the allocation of \$11 million in funding to assist regional centers in implementing plans that would promote equity and reduce disparities. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) approved ELARC's proposals in November 2016. The following projects have been initiated as of February 2017 by ELARC. In these early stages of implementation qualitative and quantitative outcomes are not yet available. The goal, over the long-term, is that these activities will yield valuable information which can result in far-reaching outcomes in the reduction of purchase of services (POS) disparities.

The following projects highlight ELARC's efforts in promoting POS parity.

(1) Reduced Caseload Ratio

Identify 200 cases of Hispanic and Asian consumers with the lowest per capita funding, including cases with no purchase of services. Cases will be assigned to a service coordinator at a substantially reduced caseload ratio of 1:40, current mandated average is 1:66, in order to allow for a concentrated approach to supporting consumers/families. Additionally two Person-Centered Coordinator positions (Hispanic and Asian) have been established to provide intense guidance and training not only to the specialized caseload of 200 but to extend their support to service coordinators throughout the agency with caseloads in the lower per capita averages.

Moreover, the focus of their activities will extend to newly registered consumers (Hispanic and Asian) to assist in the transition from intake to ongoing service coordination. This will be achieved through individual and group training meant to assist new consumers/families on how to navigate a complex system and prepare for the initial Individual Program Plan (IPP) meeting. The goal is that through these preliminary interventions families will develop a solid foundation to guide them in the initial IPP and in subsequent IPP's.

(2) **Outreach/Orientation**

Identify parent run organizations that serves population identified as underserved in ELARC's service area and partner to provide regularly scheduled orientations in languages other than English. The intent is to identify community partners that can increase awareness and understanding of regional center services. Efforts will include a partnership with local Family Resource Center (FRC) serving families in the early start program (ages 0-3).

(3) **Behavioral Management Sessions**

Training sessions in native language will be offered to Hispanic and Asian families. The intended outcome is for enhanced understanding of behavior management, skill development and to advance parent-to-parent sharing and support.

(4) **Cultural Competency Training**

Update cultural competency and communication training for staff as a means of reinforcing the overall efforts of the various projects.

(5) **Training Material**

Expand the variety of accurate, understandable and useful tools for families and individuals to better comprehend the regional center and services offered. Access to information about services will reduce barriers. The plan is to develop and translate selected materials specific to the ELARC community, as well as working collaboratively with regional centers on the development of easy-to-understand, informative publications in multiple languages. Topics being explored includes information on services available by age, generic resources and information on transitions.

(6) **On-Going Training for Parents**

ELARC will provide ongoing training for parents in the role of the regional center, understanding services and supports and related policies. There are two primary vehicles used by ELARC to advance these trainings.

- I. Understanding Regional Center (URC)
A four part series which includes an overview of the regional center system and how to develop the IPP and identify needed services and supports. Training is offered in English, in addition to Spanish and Chinese.
- II. Partners in Community Inclusion (PICI)
Training focuses on the long-term planning needed for a successful transition from public school to regional center support services. Emphasis is placed on creating a vision towards the desired long-term goals. Training is offered in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

Recommendations

(1) Restoration of suspended services, namely social recreation, camp and the lifting of the respite cap. These reductions went into effect as a temporary measure to contend with budgetary challenges dating to 2009. This policy change has disproportionately affected Hispanic and Asian consumers at ELARC. These are critical support services for a population that infrequently utilizes residential services.

(2) Reinstate start-up fund grants for the development of new models of service delivery that is responsive to linguistic and cultural needs.

(3) Funding of an independent in-depth analysis of purchase of services disparities coupled with community focus groups in order to provide greater insight into the reasons for the funding differences and recommendations for best practices in achieving equitable spending. The goal is to better understand the root causes of POS variances and to implement effective strategies and solutions that will lead families to greater service utilization.