



Eastern Los Angeles
Regional Center



2020

COMMUNITY REPORT

ELARC: Resiliency During Changing Times

Cover: Daniel Monteon with SC Anais Bravo-Jimenez

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We want to take the opportunity to highlight some Service Coordinators and the families they have worked with. Our hope is that through stories and pictures, we are able to share with you the relationships our Service Coordinators have built with those they serve.



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The year 2020 is definitely one for the history books. “Social distancing” became a normal term used probably on a weekly basis. All of us own many face masks/coverings and have gotten very used to owning a few bottles of hand-sanitizer. Maybe you had to double your order of hand cream due to the many hand washings that left your hands completely dry and cracked. Terms like “stay safe,” or “how are you doing?” meant something completely different in 2020 than in any other year. In 2020, these terms

were weighed down with more meaning; more depth, more emotion.

Maybe some of you experienced the illness, or had a family member that did. Or maybe you have experienced the painful loss of a loved one. TIME Magazine’s December issue, with its giant red “X” over the number 2020, called the year 2020 “The Worst Year Ever.” And although there is some truth to that phrase, and we definitely do not want to make light of any part of 2020, we found stories of individuals

who persisted through their year with positivity. We met those who took advantage of their free time to find a new skill or improve an old one, and we spoke to those who were an encouragement to others despite their own difficult situations. We hope that these stories bring you hope. Hope for a better future and the knowledge that if and when we are hit with difficult times, you know that you belong to a community that pulls together to help, to provide, and to encourage one another.

Our Mission

Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center is committed to serving individuals with developmental disabilities and their families by promoting partnerships which empower them to achieve meaningful and fulfilling lifestyles in their communities.



Before we proceed and present the amazing stories from those we serve, we want to take some time to think about those we lost. These individuals brought love, joy and laughter to their families and to all those around them. Their lives were cut short, but their memory and their spirit will live on. We honor them and dedicate this report to them. To their families we give our deepest, heartfelt condolences. We wish you comfort and peace in the days ahead.

"I know for certain that we never lose the people we love, even to death.

They continue to participate in every act, thought and decision we make.

Their love leaves an indelible imprint in our memories.

We find comfort in knowing that our lives have been enriched by having shared their love."

~ Leo Buscaglia, Author, Speaker, and Special Education Professor at USC

Keeping People Safe with PPE

By working together, and taking responsibility for the safety of ourselves and our friends, we can continue protect the health of our communities! ELARC has worked with the Department of Developmental Services to obtain and distribute Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the ELARC families, providers, and individuals we

serve. We have distributed over 130,000 of PPE items based on need to individuals served by the Regional Center. In addition to families and service providers picking up PPE items at our Alhambra office, ELARC partnered with transportation providers in a new process to distribute PPE in our catchment area.



Overcoming Transportation Barriers

ELARC has been very committed to the distribution of PPE to our families. Many families have been able to come to ELARC to pick up PPE. However, we are aware that transportation is difficult for some families and our goal has been to ensure that all families in need of PPE are able to obtain it. In many cases Service Coordinators have delivered PPE to the family home. They are required to follow all safety guidelines and deliver with minimal or no contact. Service Coordinators have shared that families are extremely grateful and often wave at them through a window! Another option

that we have for PPE delivery is to utilize the services of our transportation vendors. They pick up the PPE from ELARC and deliver it to the family home when the Service Coordinator is not available to do it themselves.

The safety of our community is highly important to us. We are pleased to share that we have gone through great lengths to ensure that families unable to pick up PPE could get it delivered to their homes.



Judy Perez, Service Coordinator Becky Ly, during an outdoor IPP meeting

Fielding PPE Requests

Wendy Torres, Service Coordinator for the Federal Programs/Community Residential Unit: “Administrators from facilities that we serve have been informed that

Community Care Licensing, ELARC, and LA County are able to provide PPE for the residential facilities and staff. The administrators have been grateful and know they can

contact me to put in a request for PPE packages. It is satisfying to know that I can assist residential facilities and their staff to feel safe and supported.”

Helping Families with Positive COVID Cases



Jose Pastrana

Jose Pastrana, Service Coordinator for the Family Services & Supports Unit: “Through our wellness checks I’ve been able to have conversations with families on my caseload relating to their needs. Parents, family members, or our vendors have been able to pick up PPE. I think that in the cases where we had positive

COVID in the household, families felt that they were not alone and that we were able to support them through their struggles. It has also helped other consumers in being able to continue with community activities. I’m happy that the care kit requests are easy; kudos to Elisa and Eren for their hard work!”

An Organized Approach to Requesting PPE

Albert Feliciano, Community Services Specialist, Community Services Unit I, shares “I typically receive requests from Residential providers. The request will come in via email for the home which includes the vendor number, number of staff, and number of consumers in the home. I will approve the request and forward to Elisa and Eren (Office Assistants) to prepare

and distribute the PPE. Residential providers have been happy and grateful receiving these items. They are also happy with how easy it is to schedule a pick up date. Elisa and Eren are very organized. My experience has been great. Residential providers know what needs to be on the request which in return makes it easier for me to approve and for Support staff to arrange.”



Albert Feliciano

The Joy of Giving Committee Takes Initiative, Helps Families



Judy with gift bags full of PPE and gift cards

“During a meeting in November, one of my Service Coordinators asked if it was OK to donate food to a family in her caseload who has facing challenging times. When this idea was shared with our Executive Director, Gloria Wong, she generously offered funds from the Joy of Giving account. However, she requested that I take on the task of dividing the funds and figuring out how to fairly

distribute them across all of the ELARC units who provide case management.

I then organized a committee that had to make decisions in warp speed. As a sign of the times, the committee had to meet by Zoom and then continue discussions by emails. Families facing challenging times were chosen randomly through a raffle system. The Joy of Giving

account allowed for us to purchase forty-five gift cards to Walmart in the amount of \$100 each! We also received an additional \$500 in Walmart gift cards from a donation through a contact that our Associate Chief, Lonetta Johns-Yarleque, had. In total we delivered fifty \$100 gift cards to ELARC families in need. Service Coordinators and Supervisors volunteered to deliver the gift cards which also included a box of masks and 2 hand sanitizers from our PPE supplies.



Some gifts were made by delivery and others by drive through pick up. Safety was our #1 concern. Our staff was required to follow all guidelines and wear gloves, mask, and a shield. There was a lot of hard work behind the scenes and I am very grateful for the outpouring of support from ELARC staff. We successfully pulled this off and met our

goal to make fifty deliveries before the end of the holiday season.

Service Coordinators shared stories with me of families impacted by illness due to COVID-19, hospital bills, loss of jobs, displaced from their homes, and many other challenges. One of the most touching stories I heard was a dad who opted out of receiving the gift card. Although his family was facing challenging times he wished for someone else more in need to get the gift card instead. Families shared with us that these gift cards were truly going to make a difference.

Some families planned to buy food, others essentials, and others toys for their kids; a gift card allowed for self-determination. Some families cried when they learned the news that they had been chosen by the raffle to receive the gift card and others sent very thoughtful thank you notes. Judy Perez, Supervisor for the Family Services Unit, sums up the project, “This is an experience that I will never forget and I am so happy I was a part of.”



Quarantined Twice and Still Optimistic - Pamela's Story



Pamela with friend, neighbor Robert

Meet Pamela. Pamela has been receiving services from ELARC for over 10 years. She was very happy to share her story with us, as she hopes it will bring encouragement to those facing difficult times. "Before Covid-19, I was working at La Habra City School District as a Noon Duty Supervisor. My job was to watch the students during play time, during lunch, etc. After COVID hit, I received a letter telling me that they were laying me off." This letter was just the first set back for Pamela in what felt like a long list of setbacks. She actually found another job after that; however, she had to be quarantined for 14 days due to her

mother's renter testing positive for COVID. Pamela had been at her mother's house a few days prior. So in order to keep everyone safe around her, she isolated herself in her apartment. Pamela expressed feeling very down during those 2 weeks. She had a lot of Zoom calls with friends and neighbors, which helped her a lot.

Sometime later, once she was done with the self-quarantine, she found out that a family member had tested positive for COVID. She had to quarantine herself once again because she had been to a family gathering where that family member was present.

She states, "I went through it once and it was really hard, but now I knew I could handle it again. I said to myself, 'you can do it.'" After being quarantined the 2nd time, she received notification that she could go back to her original job at La Habra City School District. "I'm still considered a Noon Duty Supervisor, but since school looks different now, we have different tasks. I do temperature checks and sanitize as much as I can. I help teachers. I supervise the children in a different way now. They have to be 6 ft. apart and they can't touch each other." La Habra City School District is considered to be part of Orange County; therefore, their school guidelines are different than that of LA County's.

You would think that all of this would get Pamela down. But the complete opposite is true. Pamela is a burst of energy and positivity. Even though she suffers from anxiety, she knows how to look at the bright side of things. She was asked how she dealt with it all. How is she still dealing with it all? Pamela says, "What

has helped me is the support of my family, friends, and neighbors. I was able to keep in contact through phone or zoom. I am very close to my mom and it was very hard not being able to be with her, but I was able to get through it. Also, because of my anxiety, I have to doctors and therapists who are there for me. My therapist adjusted my medication during the hardest moments, which was helpful. I also have my faith which has helped me a lot.”

Pamela lives independently and has had her own apartment for about 5 years now. She was able to secure the apartment with the help of her Service Coordinator, her ILS instructors, and through an ELARC vendor who provides housing. Through this same vendor, she is involved in an art program. Pamela states, “I’m not a drawer, my brother draws, but not me. My drawings have always been stick figures! During these last few months, I learned how to draw, and my drawings have improved. I never thought I would be able to do that!” Pamela also

joins Zumba classes through YouTube. She also loves arts and crafts and will often make little gifts for friends and family.

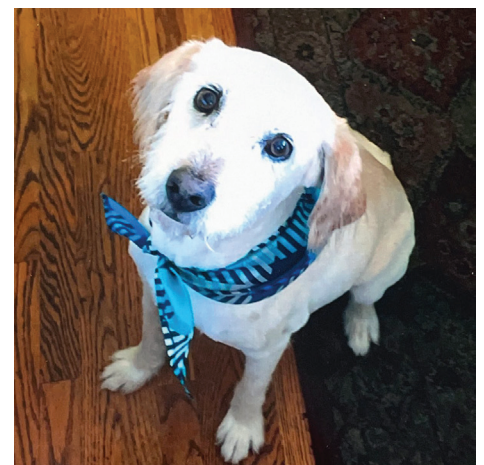


Pamela's drawing

Pamela has been able to continue to receive services, like Independent Living Skills. Her ILS instructor still comes out to her home 3 times a week and she continues to learn new skills. Pamela also receives Personal Assistance. The PA helps her in completing her job’s timecards and reporting cards. She provides Pamela with computer/technical assistance.

Pamela’s encouraging words are, “Never give up...it is hard and it is frustrating, but I never gave up. Always stay in touch with those around you.

Stay active. I counted down the days when I was quarantined. I was discouraged the first time, but the 2nd time got easier. Also, always have supplies of hobbies you like.” In talking about those around her, she wants to especially thank her neighbor, Robert. She states, “He has been my neighbor for 2 years. But have gotten close the last 1.5 years. The first time I was quarantined we watched movies via zoom. When I felt down and depressed he was always there to bring my spirits up. He is a good, faithful friend and neighbor. I believe that we will grow closer together during these difficult times because we have our faith and we support each other. I could not have asked for a better neighbor and friend.”



Pamela's puppy

Navigating New Terrain: Balancing Work & Art in COVID



Jesse with his Miniature of The Matterhorn at Disney

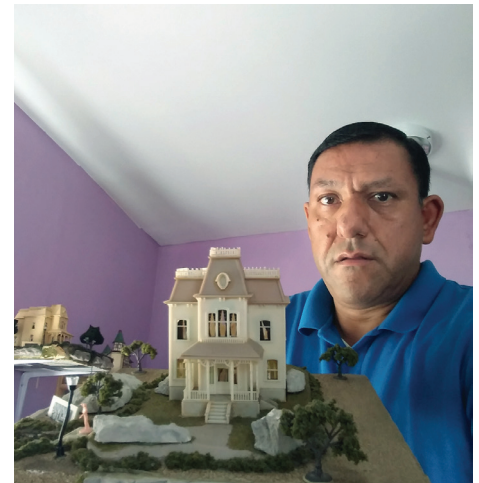
Jesse has been receiving services with ELARC for less than a year; with his initial IPP taking place just a month before COVID-19 hit the US. He states that he never really knew that he had a diagnosis of Autism as he grew up, and expressed problems with bullies throughout his years in school. Now as an adult, and as he understands his diagnosis, it appears as if a whole new world has been opened to him. Jesse has been competitively employed for

a while now. He works part time as a Customer Service Associate at Lowes, and enjoys it very much. Before Covid-19, he was working over 30 hours a week. Since the pandemic, his hours have been cut, but he's still able to work anywhere from 20 to 30 hours a week, as he is considered an essential worker. He states that his job has made the working environment very safe. His superiors make sure that everyone, including staff, is always at least 6 feet apart.

They must also wear masks while they are working and can only take them off during breaks. Jesse doesn't mind this, as he understands the need to be safe. He brings in own masks, but can get them at work if needed. He says the only downside to wearing masks while working is having to talk a little louder to customers. "I have to be very patient and make sure I take my time in explaining things, as the customers sometimes can't hear or can't understand what I'm saying. But it's ok; it's just part of the job." He states that his job also provides with hand sanitizers and that every night, after closing, a cleaning crew comes in to disinfect all the aisles. He says, "They come in completely covered from head to toe in these suits like in those movies. They walk up and down the aisles spraying everywhere. It's actually pretty cool." He continues, "I've always been careful with germs, even before this pandemic. I wash my hands often." It's true that this pandemic has hit everyone a little different. In speaking with Jesse, it was very apparent that he was not about to let this

pandemic get him down. He didn't have to say the actual words; you could just hear the positivity in his voice. Jesse has so many goals and dreams and knows that Covid-19 won't stop them. Aside from being a Customer Service Associate, Jesse loves being creative. He builds mini physical models. His favorite creation is a mini Raider's football stadium and Disney's Matterhorn. One of his dreams is actually to work for Disney as an Imagineer. His dream is to design. Jesse has always worked on these models, but the shut down in March of 2020 and the extra time he had made him focus more on this hobby and amazing skill. Now that he's almost working his full hours, he still makes time for them

and hopes that one day it will lead him to far greater things. "When I was younger, not a lot of people believed in me. Some teachers would even tell me I would never get ahead in life. While working for other companies, my supervisors would say things like 'you're just a janitor, you won't move up.' And look at me now. I'm doing well, and succeeding!" We asked Jesse to share some encouraging words to those who may be reading his story. Jesse didn't hesitate and quickly said, "Everything is temporary. Nothing lasts forever. Just hang on. We are all going through this, and we are all in it together. Things have to get a worse before they get better. And don't give up on your dreams!"



The Psycho Bates Mansion



Miniature Allegiant Stadium



Imaginary City

Resilient Roxy Stays Active During the Pandemic



Roxy monitoring zoom

Roxanne, or “Roxy” as she likes to be called, has not let COVID-19 come in the way of what she loves to do. For the past 10 years, Roxy has been volunteering at a public elementary school, the same school she attended as a child. Roxy was helping twice a



Roxy in the classroom

week in Mrs. E’s kindergarten class. She stepped up to assist 5 days per week after school closures in which everything moved to online learning. Her duties include monitoring the class and muting the children if needed. There are 3 live online sessions per day, each being 30 minutes long and she attends all sessions to make sure children are present, listening, and engaged.

We spoke with Roxy’s mother who stated, “Roxy loves children and enjoys helping them learn. Kindergarten is a big step for kids. Roxy is kind, pa-

tient, gentle and dependable.” On top of this, Roxy used to babysit the younger nursery children during Sunday services. Now that her church conducts services online, she also participates online helping with the children’s program. Roxy continues to keep herself very busy. During her free time, she’ll go bicycling with family and friends.



Roxy poses with a toddler

Wise Words: An Interview with Xavier Romo



Xavier at Captain Marvel World Premiere

How long have you been receiving services through ELARC? “I started receiving services when I was in elementary school, and have just celebrated my 33rd birthday.”

Are you currently working? “I work at Marvel Studios as a Plates Lab Wrangler. In a nutshell, what I do is sort out information that is sent to the studio from around the world and send it to different vendors with my co-workers. I have been employed there for almost two and a half years.”

What services are you receiving through ELARC? “Because of both my current work schedule, and the pandemic, I am not currently

receiving any services. That being said, some of the past services I have received include independent living skills, social skills, and recreation programs.”

How have you been handling this pandemic? “I have been lucky to not have to face this pandemic alone, as I am still living with my family. We’ve all been working hard to stay healthy through this period, and on a personal level I have found peace of mind by communicating with friends online, developing new hobbies, and having my job as a source of stability in my life. Aside from work, I have been catching up on photography, taking more walks, and find-

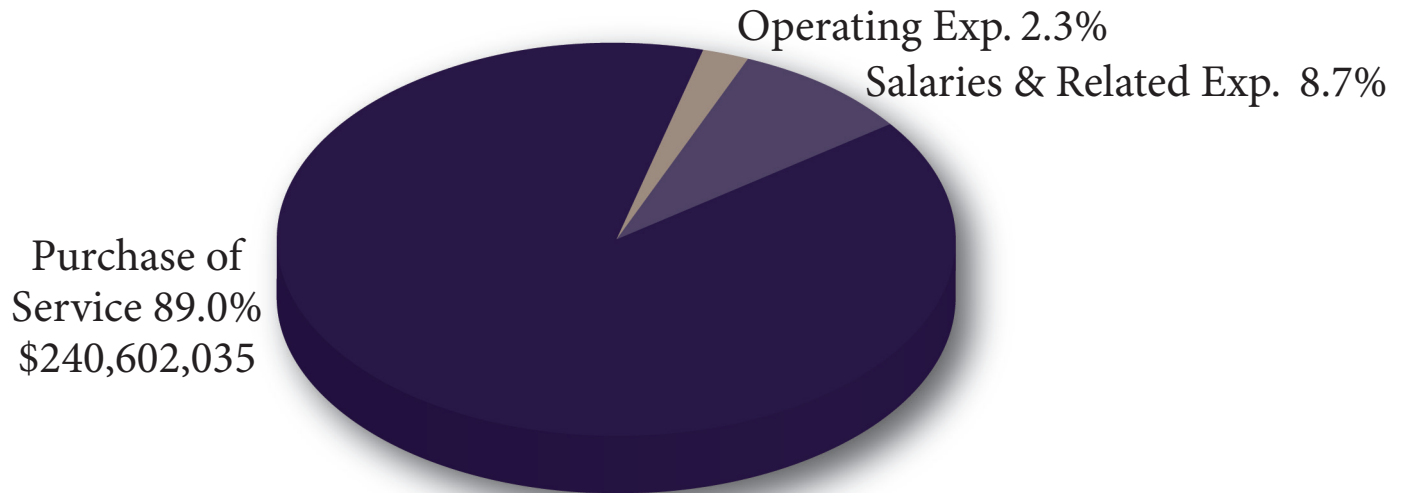
ing time to meditate as well. After taking a class over video on meditation techniques, I learned that I can actually combine the two, as when I am on my walks I try to clear my head and just focus on the present moment. This especially helps if I start to feel stressed out or have too much on my mind. Once I am done, I find that I am able to think more clearly.”

Do you have any words of encouragement for those going through difficult times during this pandemic? “We all have standards for ourselves in life, but with this period it is important to be more patient with yourself. Take the time to understand what your body needs, and how to keep yourself going mentally, and take note of how you are feeling. Nothing is normal about this period, but if we all do what we need to, we will make it through this pandemic.”



Xavier at premiere of Avengers

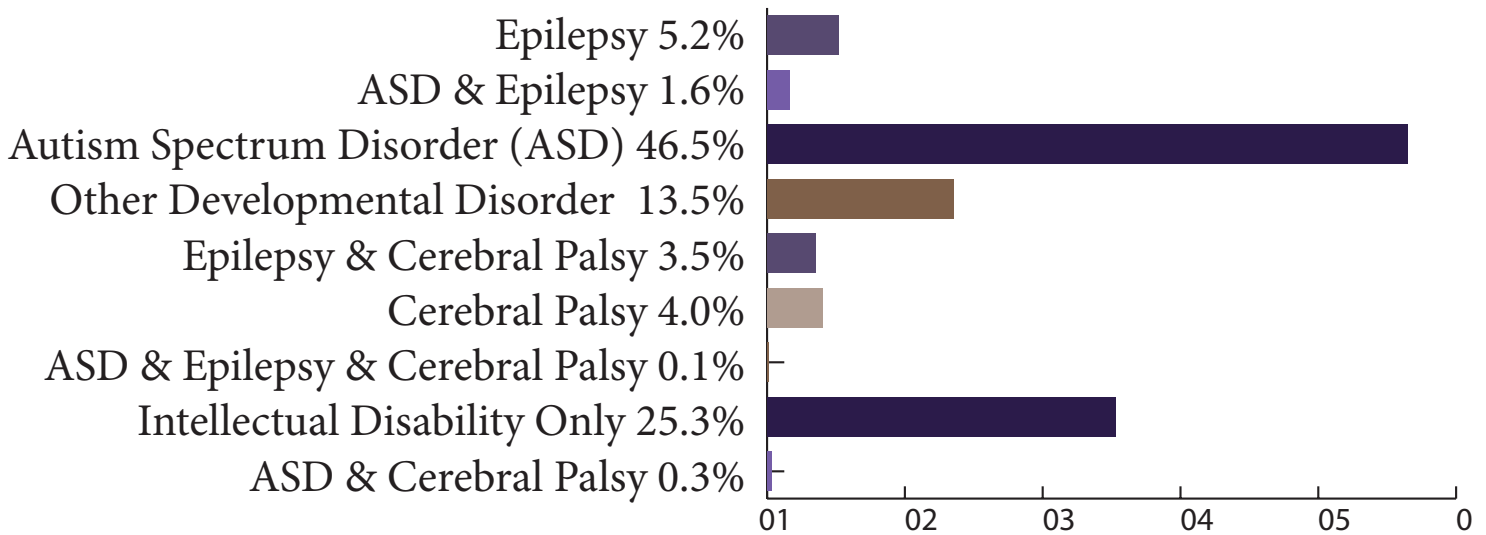
Overall Expenditures



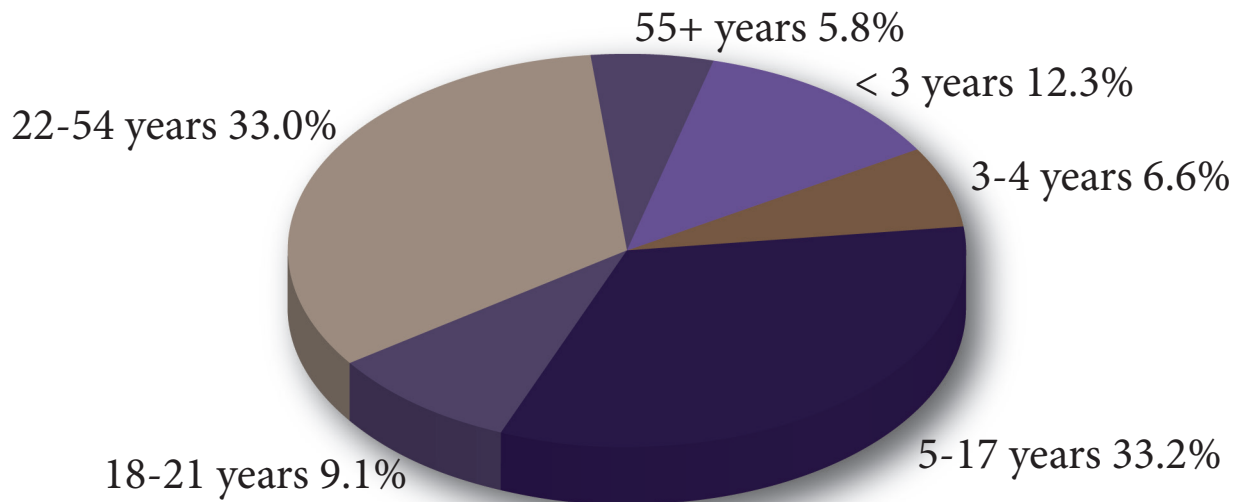
Purchase of Service (POS) Expenditures

| Category | Jan 2020 Budget |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| CCF & ICF | 53,315,722 |
| Adult Day Programs | 45,175,556 |
| Other Services | 37,480,768 |
| Supported Living Services | 27,103,364 |
| In-Home Respite Services (agency) | 22,354,504 |
| Prevention | 14,150,352 |
| Community Integration Services | 12,610,862 |
| Adaptive Skills Trainer | 9,526,314 |
| Transportation | 5,814,760 |
| Habilitation Programs | 4,446,454 |
| Medical Care | 2,702,388 |
| Com. Placement Plan | 2,070,785 |
| Behavior Mgmt Consultant | 1,846,715 |
| self Determination | 1,405,060 |
| In-Home Respite Services (parents) | 598,431 |

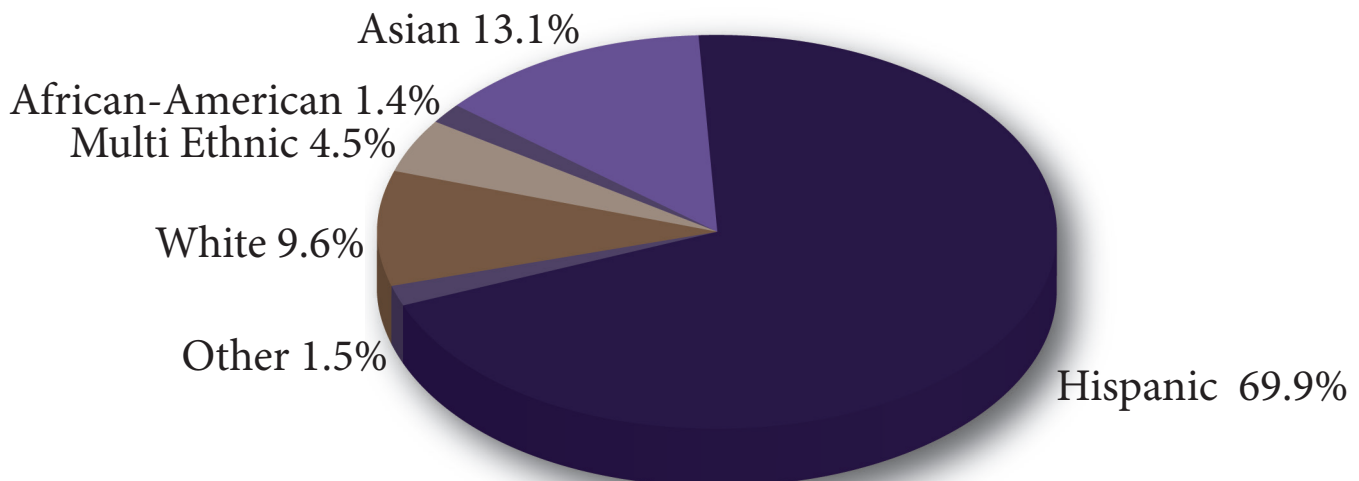
Diagnosis



Age



Ethnicity





Eastern Los Angeles
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ELARC Partnerships BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center Board of Directors is committed to ensuring that the mission of the agency is carried out. The Board is made up of volunteers from our community, parents, consumers, professionals, and others with specific skills and knowledge who provide guidance and leaderships for the agency.

CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The ELARC Consumer Advisory Committee exists to advocate, advise, empower, lead, plan, inform, and educate so that consumers may understand their rights under the Lanterman Act and achieve their goals.

VENDOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Vendor Advisory Committee provides recommendations, guidance, and technical assistance to ELARC's Board of Directors. They meet to review and discuss both agency and state issues that impact service providers in our community.



ELARC LEADERSHIP

Gloria Wong
Executive Director

Edith Hernandez-Daniels
Chief of Consumer Services

Patricia Alvarez
Chief of Administrative Services

Lonetta Johns-Yarleque
Associate Chief of Consumer Services

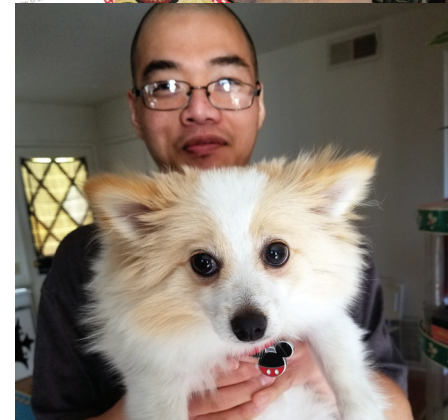
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Elizabeth Harrell
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