

## Life with the Power of Choice and Possibilities



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### VMRC Fiscal Year 2023-24

#### Purchase of Services Annual Report

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

In March 2025, Valley Mountain Regional Center (VMRC) hosted three Community Conversations focused on Purchase of Service (POS) spending data and ongoing equity efforts. During our public engagements, VMRC presented FY 2023–24 POS data and engaged directly with self-advocates and community members to foster meaningful dialogue. VMRC leaders shared ongoing efforts to increase equity and access for the diverse individuals and families served within VMRC’s five-county catchment area.

The purpose of the meetings was to engage the community in a conversation about how VMRC allocated funding during the previous fiscal year and to gather input on how we can improve our service delivery and overall practices. This objective was clearly outlined in the event flyer, and the presentation guided participants through VMRC’s expenditures in a clear and accessible manner. At the conclusion of the presentation, VMRC directly invited participants to share their input and recommendations.

#### Meeting dates:

- March 15, 2025 – VMRC hosted an in-person meeting for the Self-Advocate Council (SAC6) at Person Center Services (PCS) in Stockton.
- March 18, 2025 – VMRC hosted two Public Community Conversation meetings in-person in the Stockton office with a virtual participation option.
  - 4:00pm – English with Spanish and ASL interpretation
  - 5:30pm – Spanish with English interpretation
- Overall, VMRC had approximately 80 participants in all three meetings.

#### VMRC distribution of notices (flyers):

VMRC sent notices for the POS Community Conversations scheduled for March 15 and 18 in both English and Spanish more than 30 days in advance of the events. Flyers were created in both languages and widely distributed throughout the community. Distribution efforts included the following:

- VMRC Calendar
- VMRC Newsletter
- VMRC social media
- VMRC All-Staff sent via email
- Distribution directly to Community Based Organizations, Parent Groups, and Stakeholders

## **Cultural and linguistic competence summary:**

VMRC assessed its diverse population data to ensure that cultural and linguistic needs were addressed during the Purchase of Services (POS) meetings. More than 41% of individuals served by VMRC identify as Hispanic, making Spanish the second most spoken language by a significant margin. In response to this, VMRC provided Spanish interpretation, as well as American Sign Language (ASL), during its hybrid meetings. It is VMRC's standard practice to offer ASL interpretation at all public meetings. To ensure additional language needs were considered, VMRC included a note on its POS flyer encouraging attendees to request interpretation in other languages, if needed. No additional language requests were received.

In preparing for the meetings, VMRC also considered the cultural and linguistic needs of its diverse community when developing the POS flyers and PowerPoint presentation. The presentation used for the in-person meeting with Self-Advocates at the SAC6 meeting was specifically tailored for clarity and accessibility. VMRC was intentional in using plain language and designing materials with accessibility in mind. This included simplifying language, limiting the amount of text, and carefully designing visuals, charts, and font styles to enhance accessibility and understanding.

Lastly, VMRC took scheduling into consideration to accommodate participants' availability. Meetings were scheduled in the late afternoon to allow people time to attend after work. VMRC hosted two hybrid meetings: one in English with both Spanish and ASL interpretation, and another in English with Spanish interpretation. For in-person attendees, VMRC provided pan dulce and coffee as a gesture of hospitality and cultural inclusiveness.

## **Summary of the type of disparities identified and discussed:**

While data indicated disparities exist in purchase of service, VMRC also recognizes that individuals and families access some services differently based on choice, culture, language, and experiences. VMRC conducted a comprehensive spending review of services by ethnicity. During the presentation, VMRC highlighted how funding was allocated across various services, including Respite, Day Programs, Personal Assistance, Social Recreation, Camping, Residential Settings, and Self-Determination.

One of the more significant disparities observed by ethnicity was in residential and independent living settings. Individuals who identify as White had the highest rates of access to these living arrangements compared to other ethnic groups. Correspondingly, the amount of money spent on services for individuals in these settings was significantly higher.

While there are a variety of factors that may influence an individual's choice or ability to access residential or independent living, such as personal preference, family circumstances, or systemic barriers, it remains a fact that White individuals access these

settings at higher rates. In contrast, individuals from communities of color are more likely to reside in the family home, where overall spending on services tends to be lower.

Other notable trends emerged in VMRC's spending patterns. The Hispanic community accessed Respite and Personal Assistance services at significantly higher rates than other ethnicities. VMRC spent \$24 million on Respite services for the Hispanic community, which was more than triple the \$7.4 million spent on the White community, the second highest expenditure by ethnicity. Similarly, for Personal Assistance services, spending for the Hispanic community reached \$7.8 million, compared to \$4.7 million for Whites.

Conversely, Day Program services were used most heavily by the White community. VMRC's expenditure for Day Program services for Whites totaled \$27 million, well above the \$16 million spent for the Hispanic community. As noted earlier, these trends highlight distinct patterns of service utilization among different ethnic groups based on choice, culture, language, and experiences.

### **Public Input and Recommendations:**

While VMRC received less community input in the public meetings compared to last year. The feedback VMRC received highlighted several important key areas of services and access:

Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA): Despite limited data availability for social recreation, camping, and non-medical therapy services, it is evident that Spanish-speaking clients are receiving funding for these services at disproportionately lower rates than their English-speaking peers.

Family Member: Emphasized the need for more Financial Management Services (FMS) options that can directly cover the cost of social recreation services. Families are experiencing financial hardship when required to pay upfront and wait for reimbursement.

Family Resource Center (FRC) Member: Praised the Community Navigator Program for effectively helping families navigate the complex process of accessing basic services and resources.

SAC6 Member: Expressed strong interest in and support for social recreation, camping activities, and employment-related services.

As a follow-up to our public meeting, VMRC met with OCRA advocates to consider opportunities for clarifying data analysis and areas where our staff can work together to improve service access for our individuals and families served.

To summarize, VMRC acknowledges input from self-advocates, families, and the broader community has been essential in helping us identify key areas of focus and improve how we deliver services. Through this engagement, we've learned the importance of listening closely, offering materials that are accessible and easy to understand, and recognizing

how personal experiences and cultural values can influence the way individuals and families use regional center services. VMRC is committed to continuing its intentional approach to listening, recognizing it as one of the most effective ways to understand and meet the diverse needs of our community.