

Testimony of Michael Bailey

Dear Chairman Beall:

I wanted to send you some comments on the California State Auditor's Report on Regional Centers.

The first thing that comes to mind is that the State Auditor did not talk to any client of any regional center and did not talk to any clients' families in any regional center. Something this important with a lot of potential impact should have had client and family input but no effort seems to have been made to collect any.

Another point is that the State Auditor is only concerned symbols on a piece of paper. Does the Auditor understand what the Lanterman Act is and does? Does the Auditor know how important the regional centers are to thousands of adults and children with developmental disabilities? What would the Auditor think should happen to disabled people if there were no regional centers? The answers to these questions will tell us if the Auditor really understands why the Lanterman Act and the regional centers are so critically important for many people across the state.

The way the Audit was done it looks like the Auditor wanted to tar the whole regional center system with a bad brush. We have 21 regional centers but only 6 were singled out. And some that are well managed and operating well like Regional Center of Orange County were entirely excluded.

The IPP process is the critical part for determining clients' services. The Auditor did not take this into consideration. The Auditor only looked at the idea of "Least Costly" in deciding who should be regional center contractors. But "Least Costly" undermines the entire IPP/IEP process. "Least Costly" removes client choice, it does not take into account the increased costs of serving clients who live in rural areas of the state, and it does not take into account that some programs that may provide "Least Costly" services don't provide some services that are more expensive to do like transportation. "Least Costly" should not be the thing that drives the entire system. The result is that to focus only on rates can bring about a loss of flexibility for DDS and regional centers and this would mean a loss of flexibility for clients--a loss of choice. This is not to say that cost effectiveness is not important. But it is to say that cost effectiveness in services should be the standard but not "Least Costly". The IPP is the most important part of the whole system and can and should be the means for making sure services are fare and are being delivered.

What I believe would be good to happen from this experience is (1) The role of families and clients in the system will increase; (2) families and clients will get access to more information about the IPP/IEP Process and the Lanterman Act rights; (3) The Regional Center of Orange County could serve as a model for the state on the issues of transparency and staff involvement; (4) it is critical that the needs of the clients be met and no 2 clients are exactly the same.

The Auditor has on this study of regional centers given an overly simplistic view of the system. A future audit needs to be more fare, more objective, more inclusive, and should have at least a basic understanding of the Lanterman Act--what it is and what it is for.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and best wishes,

Michael E. Bailey
Mission Viejo, CA 92692.