



Sharing Your Story *Service Provider Organizations*

Lanterman Coalition, made up of the 21 major stakeholders in California’s community-based developmental service system, is uniting around a single critical concern. Years of underfunding, cuts, rate freezes, old funding formulas, and inflation have hurt service providers and regional centers’ ability to ensure people with developmental disabilities and their families get the services and supports they need. To fix this, our system needs a 10% across-the-board funding increase now, and 5% increases yearly, until funding for provider rates and regional center services is reformed. As you meet with Legislators, send letters, and spread the word, figuring out what to say can sometimes be the hardest part. Here are a few tips that might help!

The Basic Format

Sharing your story, whether in a letter, at a hearing, or in a one-on-one meeting, starts the same. Thank the Legislator for their time! Then tell a bit about the issue, and give a few examples from your own life. End your letter, public testimony, or meeting starts by urging the Legislator(s) to remember you when they are voting on developmental services issues, and thank them again.

Talking Points

What you bring to this conversation is important, and it’s critical that you share your expertise! In these messages, draw from your experiences and share the truth you live every day. When looking at these possible talking points, be sure to use your own words, and your answers touch on our universally-shared theme: Funding reform will help our system better serve people with developmental disabilities.

- *Low rates make it hard to find staff to serve people with developmental disabilities.*
Every day you work to ensure you have the best staff possible to meet the needs of the people you serve. But rates haven’t changed in years. You know how true this is every time you make payroll. And the people you serve, the people you care about, deserve the best. How have low rates made it harder for you to hire the right staff?
- *Low rates mean that some programs operate at a loss.*
Many providers continue to operate programs with rates so low that they lose money, but the providers don’t want to deprive the people they serve. We now see organizations dropping important services like individual supported employment because the losses are too big to cover. Share information on what services you operate at a loss and any services you have shut down.
- *Low rates mean you can’t expand your program, or develop new ones.*
Many providers have thought of expanding a program to serve more people, or wanted to open up a second facility. In some cases, regional centers put out requests for proposals, but the rates

make it impossible for it to work. Running the numbers, it becomes obvious that it's just not possible to make ends meet. Have you ever wanted to serve more people with developmental disabilities, either in your current program or a new one, but found that the numbers just don't add up?

- *Low rates means higher staff turnover.*

Your employees work hard to provide quality care to the people you serve. But median rates make it impossible for you to pay them the money you know they deserve. In some cases, good employees leave for higher pay elsewhere, even though they want to stay. This leaves you to find, hire, and train a new employee, and integrate them into the team. How does staff turnover hurt the people served, and what problems does it create for you?

- *High regional center caseloads make it harder for you get the support you need.*

Regional center service coordinators are working under historically high caseloads, for the same reason your rates are so low – an outdated way of calculating how much money goes into our system. With higher caseloads, service coordinators have less time for each individual – and the service providers who work with them! When it's harder to get the time you need, how does this affect your ability to serve people with developmental disabilities?

- *The cost of doing business makes it harder to do your real business – serving people.*

California has the highest Workers' Comp rates in the country. In some cities, it costs up to \$50 per square foot to rent office space each month. Housing prices make it hard to buy, or even rent, the space you need. What costs of business have you seen go up that haven't been recalculated in the rates you receive?

- *The rates don't address all of the required wage increases.*

While DDS budgeted for the impact of the state minimum wage increase on earnings for hourly workers, it didn't address the state requirement that supervisory staff (who are usually exempt staff) must earn twice the minimum wage, so providers have had to absorb that additional cost. A number of cities are now raising the minimum wage beyond the state level. The mechanism to apply for an unanticipated cost increase doesn't apply to all programs. Have these issues had an impact on your organization?

- *New regulations mean more work, with no new money – taking away from your clients.*

New regulations or laws are meant to address a problem, whether specific or general. And they usually require more work, which takes away from time that would otherwise be spent directly serving the people in your program. Have you encountered a new rule or regulation, but didn't get additional money to meet the new requirements? And did you then have to cut into time that you'd otherwise spend in service?

- *Low rates mean limited training and oversight.*

Service providers work hard to ensure their staffs are fully trained and supervised, meeting all state requirements and standards set by regional centers and CARF. But funding is so tight that providers struggle to reach required levels when there is much more they want to do to improve the quality of care and supports. And, without additional training, it is difficult to groom care givers to become supervisors. Have you had difficulties providing training with a static or shrinking budget?

Your advocacy matters! Our system is facing a monumental challenge. It's big, it's complicated, and there are a lot of moving parts. But we have to start somewhere, and a 10% budget increase for our system is the first step the Lanterman Coalition is rallying around. To make that – and comprehensive reform – happen, we need you to stand up for people with developmental disabilities, their families, service providers, and regional centers. The system that supports people to live in communities of their choosing needs you. Every voice throws light on a part of this common problem we are facing, and we need you to let your light shine!

P.S. Please let us know how it went! While this is a grassroots push, any feedback you have will help us all better focus our work. Have any questions? Get a Legislator to send [a letter like Senator Beall's](#)? Learn that they have a family member with a developmental disability? Told directly that this isn't their priority? Sharing the intel will let us ensure that everyone – including you – can make best use of their time and talents! Please go to www.lantermancoalition.org/contact and drop us a line, or email info@lantermancoalition.org!

Links: Senator Beall's Letter – www.lantermancoalition.org/docs/Beall.pdf