



Eastern Los Angeles  
Regional Center



*Cover: Denis contemplates at the beach*

**2021**

# COMMUNITY REPORT

Journeys through Self-Determination

# Table of Contents

Self Determination is here! This exciting program will allow for a new way for the people we serve to have more authority and freedom in how their services and supports are planned and implemented! In this Community Report we hope to provide you with information on not only what Self Determination is, but also provide you with stories of those who have transitioned into this program.

## In this report...

Denis & Wesly Find Opportunity in Self-Determination .....	3
Adrian's Win-Win with Self-Determination.....	6
How the SDP is Helping Andres Reach his Goals.....	9
The Self-Determination Implementation Team .....	12
Fiscal & Demographics Reports.....	14
ELARC's Partnerships & Leadership Team.....	16
Contact Us.....	16

### What is Self Determination?

Self-Determination was developed as a voluntary alternative to the traditional way of providing regional center services and is intended to offer people more freedom and control over how their services are provided and more freedom and control in who supports them. This program opened up for anyone receiving Regional Center services in July of 2021!

The statewide Self-Determination Program adheres to the following principles to ensure those who participate have:

**Freedom** – You plan your own life and make your own decisions, just like people without disabilities are able to do

**Authority** - You decide how money is spent for your services and supports

**Support** – You pick the people and supports that will help

you live, work and play in your community

**Responsibility** – To make decisions in your life for using public money and to accept your valued role in the community

**Confirmation** – You are the most important person when making plans for your life. You are the decision maker about your services. Self-Determination means “nothing about you without you.”



## 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.

### Denis & Wesly Find Opportunity in Self-Determination

When Denis and Wesly were first diagnosed on the spectrum, we had many questions and concerns. As a Black family, we knew our sons would face challenges, but what program could help them prepare for the world in which we live?

One of the guys is the more practical and verbal one who cares about the groceries, laundry, and the daily news reports worldwide. The other is the quiet, artistic, soulful presence who likes to take his time making decisions. So how could we support and celebrate each of the guys as individuals and keep their relationship as brothers? How were we ever going to teach them how to advocate for themselves?

The answer, of course, is that no one program can address both our sons' needs and our family's concerns.



*Denis enjoying his music*

## Denis & Wesly Find Opportunity in Self-Determination



Florists, Amazon/Whole Foods, and Art/Work/Place. Oh yes, the recreational support: Manta Rays Swim Team at Pasadena's Rose Bowl and Lincoln Lions Bowling Team at El Monte's Action Lanes. These services have supported the individual and unique needs of our twins.

I have to admit that getting through the details of the finances and paperwork has taken patience, persistence, and prayer (and yes, some tears have been involved). However, we found that each negotiation and workshop has shed light on new vendors with fresh takes on working with the guys. Most impor-

The Self-Determination Program has allowed them the opportunity to be fully involved in creating a supportive community: a team of aides and teachers like Mr. Alvarado, Christy, Jonathan, and Jovita,

a group of willing vendors like ECF South Central Art Center, ReDesign for Learning Adult Services, and Roman Empire Living Skills Services and there is also a list of willing employers like Frida Pickles





*Wesly's art*



tantly, we learned to trust our sons' instincts on who they wanted to work for them.

I could keep going on about each team member and how Self-Determination led us to them. Still, as the cliché goes, the proof is in the pudding: Dad and I were called away from home to assist an ailing relative. Staying home with their uncle, the guys thrived. We called, and they answered with enthusiasm; their uncle reported they didn't need his help. Likewise, Denis and Wesly were confident with their schedule and their activities. They did not need our hovering; they had their team. That is a peaceful feeling.



*Wesly at the beach*



## Adrian's Win-Win with Self-Determination



Adrian is 5-years-old. Since he was very little, his family noticed he needed extra support to help blossom. He has a complex disability profile, and because his abilities can seem to spread out like spilled marbles, it has always been difficult for his therapists to understand the complexity of his disability, and how to better support him. Since he started with Self-Determination, he has providers who truly get it, they know him and work together to provide him with the most effective and tailored interventions that he could receive. As with so many of us, the pandemic has negatively influenced every aspect of his emotional and social

life. This has created a lot of stress for him and his family. The Self-Determination Program (SDP) has helped him immensely to navigate these difficult times. It has provided him with amazing providers and many social and enrichment opportunities.

Self-Determination has improved his life in so many ways and has given him the opportunity to access services and supports that are tailored to his unique and complex needs. His highly qualified and experienced providers truly understand him and can effectively support him in ways he wouldn't have been able to benefit from otherwise.

He has been more involved in the community and has had opportunities to learn social skills in a natural and organic way, which will be invaluable to him throughout the rest of his life. Since the beginning of this journey with Self-determination, he has started developing meaningful friendships with others, exploring his passions like, cooking, drumming, and swimming, and building confidence in himself and his abilities.

Adrian's Drums teacher is part of the Self-Determination package. He comments, "I started working with Adrian a few months ago as his drums teacher. It has been a joy to





work with him, every week Adrian comes to class on time, very motivated and ready to learn. He is a very talented kid, and I can see music is in his soul. I know that sometimes Adrian's words might fail to express his thoughts and feelings, and that is exactly when his music speaks. I am honored to be part of Adrian's SDP journey."

Adrian's Mother reflects on Self-Determination, "We are just extremely thankful that while we're still figuring out everything that makes Adrian special and unique, we have the flexibility to edit focus points as his different needs present themselves." Adrian

expressed that sometimes anxiety creeps up on him and he's not sure what to do with it. He now has qualified support to help navigate reactions, dissect possible causes and create solutions to tackle the trickster that anxiety can be.

Adrian is grateful for every person who has supported his family with his transition to SDP and everyone who works hard to make his program work, including his providers, his family, his FMS, and ELARC.

The SDP has enabled Adrian to take a different path. He has the opportunity to spend time with the sweet woman

who runs his environmental enrichment program each week who helps him find ways to understand and be in more control of his body, be more aware of the world around him, and to create some really cool projects at the same time! She also gives Adrian great strategies for calming himself when he is experiencing major emotions and speaking up for himself when Adrian is with friends or other people in his community. He also is able to see his social coach each week, who works with him to understand the "hidden rules" in his environment so that he can respond to others appropriately in the different situations he may face in life.

## Adrian's Win-Win with Self-Determination (continued)



*Adrian mimics Greek discus thrower*

The SDP has allowed for Adrian to have a trusted and specialized mentor come to his house each day and take him on special adventures. Together they create plans for topics Adrian is interested in, and he gets to see them through, which really builds his confidence in himself. He is greatly motivated by cooking and desires to practice it whenever he can, so he loves creating or finding a recipe, learning about the ingredients involved, writing a list of the things they may not have, and making trips to

8 | Community Report | 2021

the store for what they need. Adrian feels so proud of what he has accomplished after he returns and creates delicious and healthy things to eat or drink, and everyone can see a positive change in him, on days we accomplish all of this! Adrian's mentor also takes him to see his friends in their Friendship Pod, a group of kids with similar ages here in Whittier that meets up each week to spend some focused time building social skills and meaningful bonds. This isn't always easy for Adrian to do, and when he spends time

with them not only does he try new things, he has never done before, but he also gets to practice sharing, having conversations, taking turns, and working with others towards a common goal. Adrian also goes to the park once or twice a week, and there he practices the friendship skills he has been working on with his friends with new friends at the playground, with some help from his supporters.

The SDP has been a win-win for Adrian. He has been able to participate in a wider variety of community activities and events like play dates with friends, story time at the park and library, shopping trips to learn real life skills, family bonding time at his local YMCA pool, and friendship and hiking clubs. He has started to establish meaningful friendships with some same-aged peers in his friendship pod and is able to engage in a wider variety of family activities like going to the movie theater and dining at local restaurants, which historically has been difficult for Adrian. With consistent support, his communication skills have been developing. As a result,



## How the SDP is Helping Andres Reach his Goals

he conveys thoughts, feelings, and ideas to others more appropriately. Adrian has shown improvements in body awareness and is practicing his skills and learning to cope better in unfamiliar situations. All his SDP interventions are taking place in the most inclusive and integrated way possible in his community.

Venturing out this way and finding new ways to shape a little one's life skills can seem daunting, but Adrian and his family see the benefits of this choice every day. The work his mom does to manage this program pays off tenfold in the ways he has grown since the program began. Adrian is very lucky because he has the contributions of an amazing team who get to be a part of his daily life. The areas in which Adrian needs to grow are targeted in natural and organic ways; methods that make him feel heard and secure. The program focuses on his strengths, interests, dreams, and passions. It has opened many doors for him. Being able to choose his own staff and providers has been an added bonus. ■



*Andres draws with a friend*

Andres is a 12-year-old in the Self-Determination Program (SDP). Since he was very little, his parents have struggled to decode his complex special needs and find interventions that could help him to communicate and to connect with those around him. Andres truly wants to make friends, have meaningful relationships, and live a happy life.

Andres's transition to Self-Determination was lengthy. It was led by the transition team; Andres's mom, his Independent Facilitator, his ELARC

Service Coordinator and his supervisor, who all worked hard to navigate a brand new program. The team worked together to provide the best possible program for Andres, not only to treat his social, behavioral, and emotional needs, but also to help bolster his passions and strengths.

Andres finally has a strong team of qualified, experienced clinicians who truly understand his profile and can help Andres to be more regulated and connected to others, to make sense of the world

## How the SDP is Helping Andres Reach his Goals (continued)



around him, and to learn coping strategies for when his emotions feel out of control.

With all of the benefits of the SDP, Andres is happier and more active in his community than ever before. He is exploring his passions and has now discovered a love of art and music.

Andres was introduced to water color painting a few months ago. Each week he plans and anticipates what to paint next. He really enjoys painting his favorite cartoon characters. It is copied so his teacher can paint along with him. She explains, “As we paint together, we determine what

sequence to paint and talk about the emotions, thoughts, and feelings; it truly is a moment of strong connection. His painting techniques and quality of strokes continue to improve. Andres is also better at following directions.”

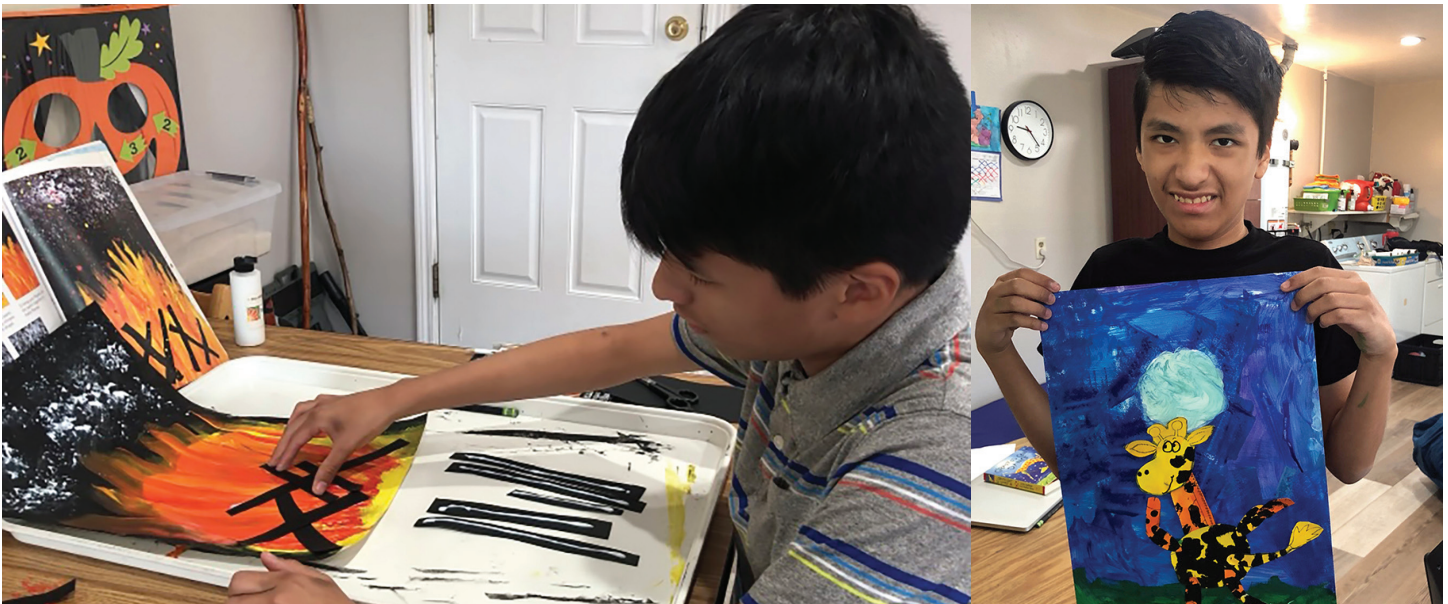
Andres has been taking drum lessons in a local music studio. Each week he enjoys his classes, instructors’ company, and the small conversations he has with other kids in the lobby while he waits for his turn. When Andres is playing, he forgets about his anxiety and focuses on the rhythm; the vibration of the drums feels extremely calming to him. Now he has his own set

of drums at home, and since practice makes perfect, he will continue to practice a lot.

The Self-determination program has helped Andres to be more active. Physical activities are critical to keep his body and mind regulated, but it has taken some effort for his family to find which ones are motivating for his mind as well as his body. Andres loves swimming, hiking with his hiking club, and riding his trike and scooter along with his family. He looks forward to going on his afternoon walks and picnics with his staff and family.

Since Andres was very little





it has been very hard to communicate and connect with others. It has always been challenging to use words to let others know about his feelings and thoughts and to understand theirs. Now that he is becoming a teenager he is very interested in people and really wants to develop meaningful relationships with them.

Andres now enjoys a life improved in immeasurable ways with the SDP. After years of different approaches, he is on the right track, is more in control of his own body, learning to manage his frustration and to cope with his anxiety in a more regulated way. Andres is

learning to communicate and understand others through his passions.

Andres is now more present and available for interactions at his family events, and even when he goes through challenging moments, he knows everyone works hard to help him grow and develop to his maximal potential.

Andres is grateful that everyone who supported his transition to Self-determination took the time to truly understand his personality, strengths, weaknesses, life circumstances, family dynamics, passions, etc. and work collaboratively to create an

amazing program that truly works specifically for him. The SDP has opened doors for him. Now that he is a teenager, it is especially important that this program focuses on his strengths in order to increase his confidence and self esteem. His needs are constantly evolving as he enters adolescence.

When asked, Andres said that he feels so fortunate to be a part of this program. Self-determination has had a huge impact in his life, and he knows that his future looks promising because each day Andres can practice freedom, authority, support, responsibility, and confirmation.

## The Self-Determination Implementation Team



*Veronica Valenzuela  
Supervisor*



*Stephanie Gonzalez  
Self Determination Service Coordinator*



*Karena Perez  
Self Determination Service Coordinator*



*Elizabeth Ornelas  
Supervisor*



*David Castaneda  
Self Determination Service Coordinator*



*Judy Perez  
Supervisor*



*Lilia Ortega  
Supervisor*



*Andrea Macias  
Self Determination Service Coordinator*



*NOT PICTURED Lizette Villa  
Home & Community Based Services Evaluator*



*Elizabeth Harrell  
Manager of the Community Services Department*



*Edith Hernandez-Daniels  
Chief of Consumer Services*



*Roxy Ortiz  
Supervisor for Information & Training*



*Lonetta Johns Yarleque  
Associate Chief of Consumer Services*



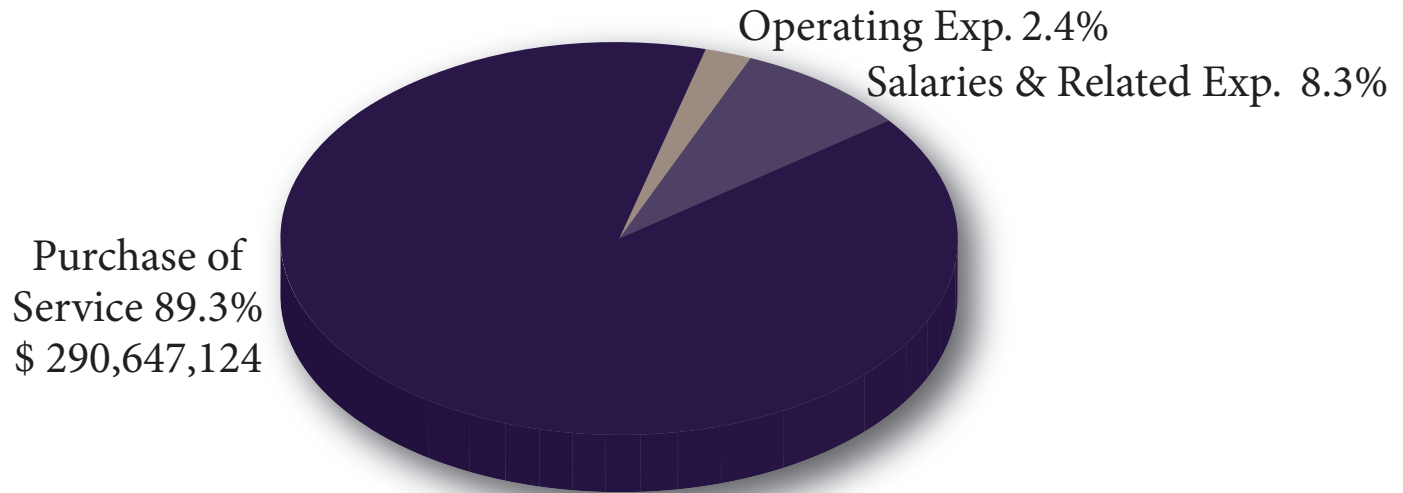
*Brendali Maldonado  
Information & Training Specialist*



*Liz Rodgers  
Certified Person Center Thinking Mentor Trainer*

ELARC recognizes that guidance, training, and support is essential to families and staff when it comes to the SDP. To meet these needs, an Implementation Team has been created comprised of ELARC personnel who are experienced and ready to assist families through the transition process. The SDP Implementation Team provides support and development of key practices and technical assistance. The team also assesses key aspects of the overall program. All SD cases are transitioned into a specialized SD caseload overseen by an experienced Service Coordinator and Supervisor. The Implementation Team's role is to implement the strategic vision of the self-determination program at all organizational levels at ELARC.

## Overall Expenditures

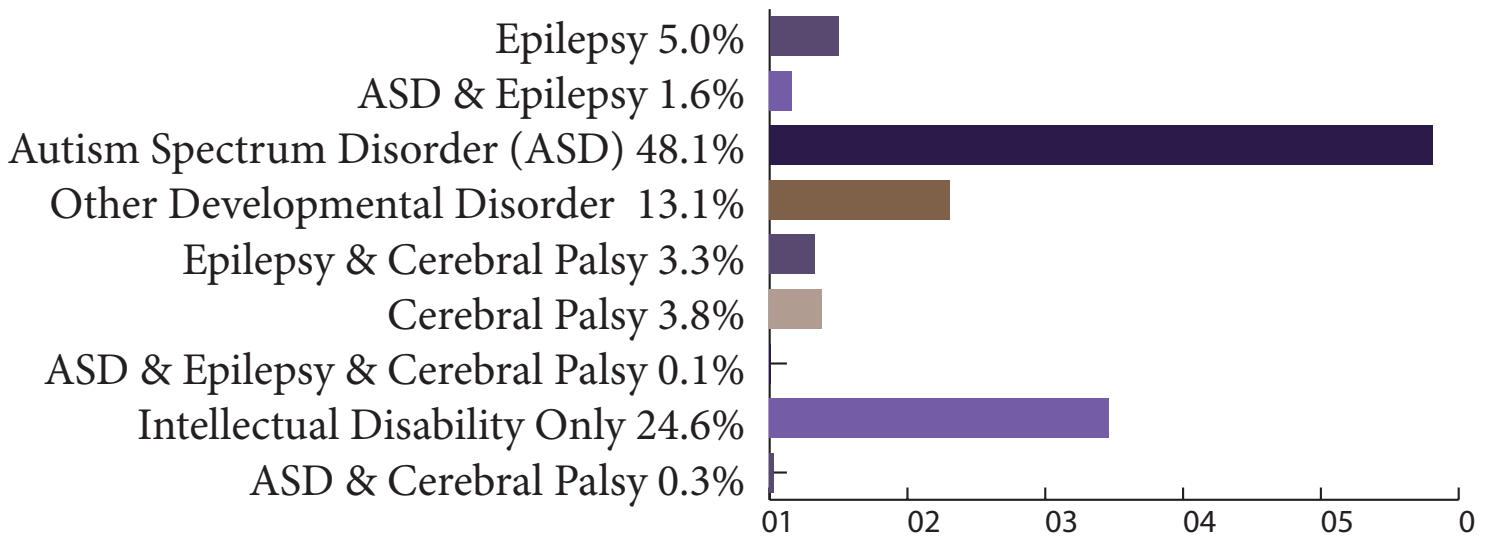


## Purchase of Service (POS) Expenditures

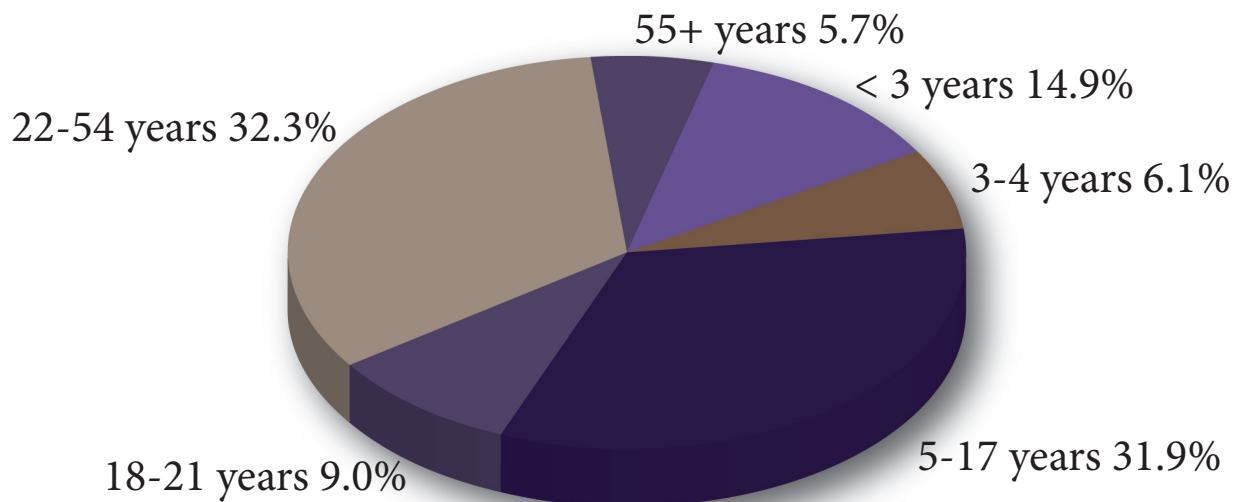
Category	Dec 2021 Budget
CCF & ICF	62,157,549
Adult Day Programs	45,483,280
Other Services	39,772,032
Supported Living Services	31,361,903
In-Home Respite Services (agency)	28,815,386
Prevention	12,698,035
Community Integration Services	12,421,776
Adaptive Skills Trainer	9,701,427
Transportation	4,351,483
Habilitation Programs	3,673,897
Medical Care	2,556,511
Self Determination	2,329,268
Community Placement Plan	2,159,036
Behavior Management Consultant	1,597,314
In-Home Respite Services (parents)	496,333



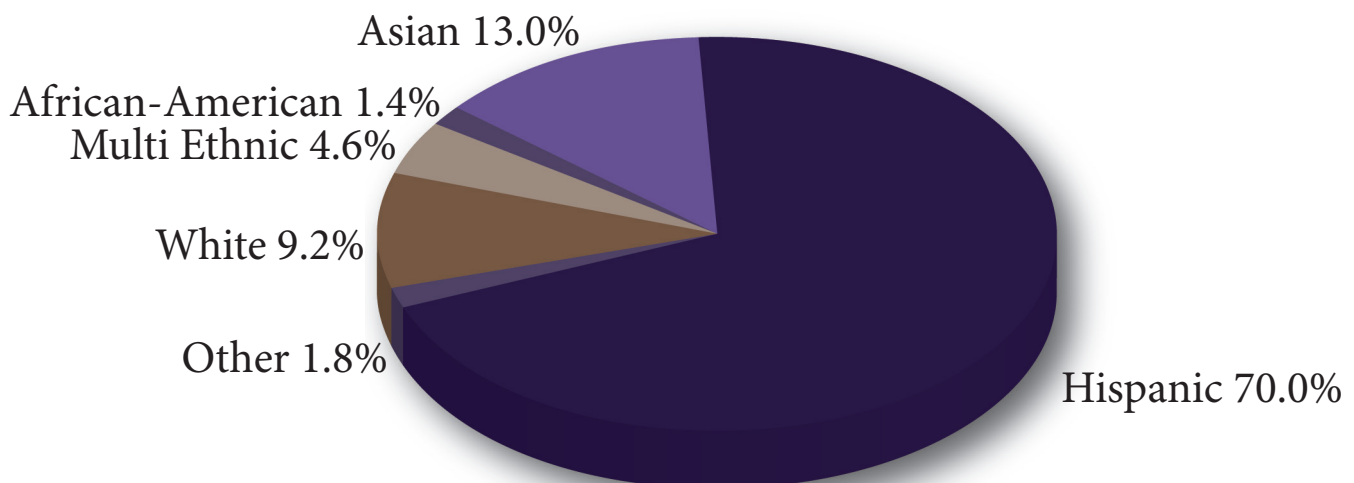
## Diagnosis



## Age



## Ethnicity





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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

**Carmen Vasquez**  
Manager of Early Start Services

**Elin Nozaki**  
Manager of Assessment & Special Services

**Elizabeth Harrell**  
Community Services Manager

**Jesse Valdez**  
Manager of Federal Programs

**Alina Alvarez**  
Manager of Human Resources



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2021