

**BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

In the Matter of:

CLAIMANT

and

ALTA CALIFORNIA REGIONAL CENTER, Service Agency

DDS No. CS0030579

OAH No. 2025100289

DECISION

Hearing Officer Christopher W. Dietrich, Administrative Law Judge, Office of Administrative Hearings, State of California, heard this matter on December 15, 2025, by videoconference from Sacramento, California.

Robin M. Black, Legal Services Manager, represented Alta California Regional Center (ACRC).

Shushan Sadjadi represented Claimant, who was present.

Evidence was received, the record closed, and the matter submitted for decision on December 15, 2025.

ISSUE

Is ACRC required to fund travel, lodging, food, and admission ticket costs for Claimant to attend Disneyland as a social recreation activity?

FACTUAL FINDINGS

Background and Jurisdictional Matters

1. Claimant is a 26-year-old man who receives regional center services based upon his qualifying diagnoses of autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disability. He lives in Roseville, California with his mother and stepfather. His mother is his conservator. Per ACRC's records, Claimant's ethnicity is Spanish or Latin, and his preferred language is Spanish.

Claimant's 2025 Individual Program Plan

2. Juan Barriga, ACRC Service Coordinator, testified at hearing. An Individual Program Plan (IPP) meeting was held on January 27, 2025. Claimant, his mother, Mr. Barriga, and ACRC Service Coordinator Vanessa Moreno were present at the meeting. After the meeting, Ms. Moreno prepared a written IPP and sent it to Claimant's mother for signature. Claimant's mother initially declined to sign the IPP because she disagreed with the services and supports ACRC offered to Claimant.

The IPP states a goal for Claimant to "improve [his] socialization, recreation, and community integration skills." To support this goal, ACRC agreed to fund social recreation services for Claimant, for no more than two hours per week. Claimant's mother and ACRC's service coordinators agreed to explore and identify appropriate

social recreation activities for Claimant. The IPP further states that Claimant engaged in disruptive social behaviors, aggressive behaviors, self-injurious behaviors, and wandering or eloping. No goals were stated regarding these behaviors and no services or supports were offered to address them.

3. On February 24, 2025, Claimant's mother requested that ACRC fund the cost for Claimant to attend Camp Krem's Disneyland camp. Camp Krem is an accredited camp offering various trips for individuals with developmental disabilities. Camp Krem has both an on-site camp in Yosemite and various off-site camp experiences, one of which includes two days at Disneyland.

4. Mr. Barriga spoke to Camp Krem's staff. In his conversations, he learned that Camp Krem could not accommodate Claimant attending the Disneyland camp in 2025 due to his supervision needs. Claimant requires 1:1 supervision at all times. Camp Krem offers at least 1:3 supervision for all attendees, with limited availability for attendees who need 1:1 supervision. On February 28, 2025, Mr. Barriga shared what he learned regarding Camp Krem's availability with Claimant's mother. She then requested that ACRC provide funding for her to take Claimant to Disneyland herself in lieu of funding Camp Krem.

5. On March 10, 2025, Mr. Barriga and ACRC Client Services Manager Jessica Markov spoke with Claimant's mother. Claimant's mother indicated that she hoped to enroll Claimant in Camp Krem's Disneyland camp in future years. She again requested ACRC funding for her to take Claimant to Disneyland in 2025. Ms. Markov explained that ACRC could not fund this trip under the regional center's traditional services model, but additional options may exist to fund this trip under the Self-Determination Program (SDP). Claimant's mother requested an email summarizing the conversation so she could review the matter with an attorney.

6. On March 11, 2025, Mr. Barriga sent Claimant's mother an email as requested. In his email, Mr. Barriga sent Claimant's mother information about enrolling Claimant in the SDP. He summarized the information he learned about Camp Krem's capacity to handle clients who need 1:1 supervision. Further, he shared that Camp Krem encouraged Claimant's mother to complete the camp's intake process promptly so Claimant could attend camp in 2026.

7. On April 16, 2025, Mr. Barriga met with Claimant's mother at her home. Claimant's mother acknowledged that funding for the Disneyland trip would not be possible through the traditional services model. She expressed that it may be best for Claimant to move into the SDP. She agreed to sign the IPP after her requests for social recreation activities for Claimant were documented in the IPP. Specifically, she requested that ACRC fund passes for Golfland Sunsplash, a water and miniature golf amusement park in Roseville, California, and music therapy.

8. Mr. Barriga modified Claimant's IPP to state that the planning team would explore funding for the requested social recreation activities. The revised IPP further stated that Claimant's mother agreed with ACRC's decision to deny funding for Camp Krem's Disneyland camp because it did not meet the criteria to be funded through traditional services. The IPP did not address the request for funding for Claimant's mother to take Claimant to Disneyland. Claimant's mother signed the revised IPP on April 16, 2025. ACRC did not issue a Notice of Action (NOA) regarding the denial of funding for Camp Krem's Disneyland camp because Claimant's mother indicated she agreed with the decision.

Request for Disneyland Funding

9. On September 30, 2025, Claimant's mother requested a fair hearing seeking ACRC funding for the costs associated with a Disneyland trip for Claimant and one aide. In a document accompanying the fair hearing request, Claimant's mother estimated the cost of the trip at \$2,068.93, broken down as follows: \$830 for two two-day tickets to Disneyland, \$98.93 for gas to travel from Roseville to Disneyland, \$70 for parking, \$540 for food, and \$530 for lodging.

10. On October 2, 2025, Mr. Barriga spoke to Claimant's mother regarding her fair hearing request. Claimant's mother explained that the request to fund a Disneyland trip was intended to address Claimant's maladaptive behaviors, reduce his reliance on technology, and increase his verbal communication. She uses trips to Golfand Sunsplash as a short-term reward and Disneyland trips as a long-term reward to motivate Claimant and support his progress.

11. On October 7, 2025, Mr. Barriga spoke to Claimant's mother again regarding her request. He requested additional details regarding the proposed funding and associated costs. Claimant's mother explained that Camp Krem typically costs \$3,100 for attendees needing less than 1:3 supervision. Claimant's mother noted that her request is less costly than funding Camp Krem or another camp for Claimant.

Notice of Action

12. On October 28, 2025, ACRC issued an NOA denying Claimant's request to fund the costs associated with a Disneyland trip. In the NOA, ACRC stated its reasons for denying the request as follows:

There is no need for [Claimant] to visit Disneyland in order to have opportunities to engage in activities outside of electronics and to practice social, behavioral, and self-management skills. Nor is a one-time visit to an amusement park a cost-effective or appropriate method for [Claimant] to provide ongoing opportunities to engage in such activities and practice his skills. There are numerous activities in which [Claimant] could engage locally which would give him opportunities to practice social, behavioral, and self-management skills on an ongoing basis, without the requirement to accrue costs for lodging and transportation or other fees related to attending an amusement park that is not in the local area. Nor has ACRC identified any barrier to [Claimant] visiting Disneyland with his family; it would be the responsibility of the client to pay to participate in any single or multi-day amusement park vacation, just as any adult would regardless of disability. Moreover, food, lodging, and transportation are the responsibility of the adult client just as they would be for any adult who chose to go on a vacation, regardless of whether they have a disability.

(Grammar original.)

Regional Center's Additional Evidence

13. ACRC Adopted a Service Policy Manual regarding Social Recreation Activities, Camp, and Non-Medical Therapies (Social Recreation Policy) on January 25,

2024. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS), which oversees the operation of regional centers, approved the policy on March 7, 2024. The Social Recreation Policy provides in pertinent part:

Social Recreation/Camp and Non-Medical Therapies are services and supports for individuals served by the regional center that provide integrated participation within community settings. They are intended to develop an individual's social skills, create social connections, and enhance physical health while ameliorating the impact of the developmental disability.

[¶] . . . [¶]

The purpose of social recreation/camp and non-medical therapies is to meet the unique service needs of the individual served within the context of objectives and long-range goals described in the [IPP]. Goals in the IPP are person-centered and guided through the Planning Team assessment process. These services and supports are essential bridges for encouraging the inclusion of individuals served within all aspects of community living.

ACRC's funding decisions regarding social recreation/camp and non-medical therapies are guided through person-centered choice and decision making within the IPP process. ACRC will fund services and supports that ensure optimal participation within integrated community settings.

[¶] . . . [¶]

ACRC remains committed to increasing access to services, especially for clients who are children, individuals who are non-English speaking and communities of color.

[¶] . . . [¶]

Activities that are solely entertainment, such as musicals, concerts, movies, comedy shows and sporting events or events that are one-time admittance such as, amusement parks, are not considered social recreation.

[¶] . . . [¶]

The cost of providing services or supports of comparable quality by different providers, if available, shall be reviewed, and the least costly available provider of comparable service, including the cost of transportation, who is able to accomplish all or part of the consumer's individual program plan, consistent with the particular needs of the consumer and family as identified in the [IPP], shall be selected.

On August 1, 2025, DDS notified ACRC by letter that ACRC's Social Recreation Policy must be revised to conform with Welfare and Institutions Code section 4688.22, which requires that regional centers not generally prohibit or disfavor purchase of social recreation services. ACRC is developing, but has not yet adopted, a new policy in response to this letter. In the letter, DDS identified the following provisions of ACRC's Social Recreation Policy as non-compliant:

Social recreation activities may occur once or twice weekly for two hours total per week.

[¶] . . . [¶]

Activities that are solely entertainment, such as musicals, concerts, movies, comedy shows and sporting events or events that are one-time admittance such as, amusement parks, are not considered social recreation.

14. On July 21, 2025, ACRC denied the request for Golfland Sunsplash passes for Claimant, based upon ACRC's then-existing Social Recreation Policy. On December 15, 2025, based upon DDS's August 1, 2025 letter regarding the policy, ACRC agreed to fund Golfland Sunsplash passes for Claimant and three aides.

15. Jessica Markov testified at hearing. She explained that ACRC denied the request to fund a Disneyland trip because it is not the most cost-effective or appropriate method to address Claimant's social behaviors and self-management skills. Social recreation programs are intended to allow regional center consumers to integrate and socialize within their community. She explained that a trip to Disneyland would not fulfill these purposes because Disneyland is not local to Claimant. Further, she explained that a one-time trip to Disneyland would not support Claimant's community integration and socialization to the same degree that ongoing local activities would.

16. Ms. Markov confirmed that ACRC is committed to increasing access to services for individuals who are non-English speaking and belong to communities of color. Claimant's race and preferred language were not considered in making the decision to deny Claimant's request for Disneyland funding.

17. Ms. Markov further explained that Claimant's request is not cost-effective. She explained that there are various theme parks within the greater Sacramento area and in Northern California. These local alternatives would not require travel or lodging costs as Disneyland would.

18. Ms. Markov explained that ACRC generally will not fund lodging and food costs for a regional center consumer to attend social recreation activities. ACRC may fund the cost for regional center consumers to attend camps. This funding may include the cost of travel, lodging, and food. However, ACRC may only approve this funding for accredited camps, not for a consumer's individual travel. ACRC has provided funding for consumers to attend Camp Krem's on-site camp in Yosemite. Ms. Markov was not aware of whether ACRC has provided funding for its consumers to attend Camp Krem's Disneyland camp.

19. Ms. Markov explained that Claimant may be eligible to receive behavioral health services to address his maladaptive behaviors. Health insurance companies are generally obligated to fund these services for people with autism. If Claimant's health insurance company does not fund these services, ACRC may be able to fund the services for Claimant as a therapeutic support.

Claimant's Additional Evidence

CLAIMANT'S MOTHER'S TESTIMONY

20. Claimant's mother explained that she is seeking Disneyland funding to address Claimant's negative behaviors and to motivate Claimant to complete his activities of daily living. Claimant will swear when he is upset. If Claimant knows that he has a trip to Disneyland scheduled, he is more willing to do what he is told and avoid swearing when he gets angry. Claimant attends church with his family and sings in his

church's choir. Claimant will sit quietly during church services and participate in choir more willingly if he knows a Disneyland trip is scheduled.

21. Claimant has gone to Disneyland once per year since 2016. Claimant enjoys talking to and hugging characters at Disneyland and other theme parks. Claimant enjoys going on rides at theme parks as well. However, he is less engaged if a park does not have characters for him to interact with.

22. Claimant's mother argued it would be less costly for ACRC to fund a trip to Disneyland than it is to fund Camp Krem. At hearing, Claimant's mother provided copies of emails she exchanged with Camp Krem's staff. The email correspondence indicates that the cost to attend Camp Krem's Disneyland Camp in August 2025 was \$3,100 for six days. The price indicated is for 1:3 supervision and includes airfare, lodging, food, two-day Disneyland theme park admission, and costs associated with visiting other local attractions on the remaining days of camp. No information was received regarding the cost to attend Camp Krem's Disneyland camp with 1:1 supervision. Claimant's mother testified that the typical cost for Camp Krem's onsite camp with 1:1 supervision is \$7,000 for a one-week camp.

23. Claimant previously received Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy for six months in 2023. The ABA therapy was funded by Claimant's school district pursuant to a mediated settlement. The school district agreed to pay a fixed amount for Claimant's ABA therapy, which covered only six months of therapy. Claimant's mother stated that Claimant did not enjoy ABA therapy.

OTHER WITNESSES

24. Claimant's stepfather testified at hearing. He has known Claimant since 2019 and has lived with Claimant since 2020. He described Claimant as a funny

individual who loves to tell jokes. Much of Claimant's communication consists of him repeating quotes from Disney movies, video games, and shows. Claimant loves going to Disneyland and other theme parks that have characters in them. If Claimant knows a trip to Disneyland is planned, he is well behaved. If those plans are interrupted, Claimant becomes upset and will misbehave for weeks. When he is upset he screams, slams doors, stomps around the house, and will not do what he is asked.

25. Yasmin Herrera-Vilchez, an SDP Independent Facilitator, testified at hearing. Claimant is in the process of transitioning from the traditional services model to SDP. Claimant's mother hired Ms. Herrera-Vilchez for independent facilitation services. Ms. Herrera-Vilchez is working on developing a person-centered plan for Claimant.

26. Ms. Herrera-Vilchez testified regarding a report analyzing ACRC's funding of services based upon a consumer's race. A copy of the report was presented at hearing. Ms. Herrera-Vilchez testified that there is a disparity in ACRC's funding of social recreation activities and camps based upon a consumer's race. Specifically, Hispanic consumers are less likely to receive funding for social recreation and camps than white consumers. The report produced does show that Hispanic consumers receive less funding than white consumers across several categories. However, it does not discuss funding by race for social recreation activities or camps.

27. One of Claimant's caregivers testified at hearing. She has provided daily care for Claimant for the past six years. She explained that trips to Golfland Sunsplash and Disneyland are used as a reward and motivator for Claimant. She typically takes Claimant to Golfland Sunsplash daily as a reward for good behavior. Disneyland trips are used as a long-term reward for good behavior. If Claimant is upset he will use swear words. Claimant is aware of his schedule and if he knows that a trip to

Disneyland is scheduled he will do what he is asked and will not swear. Claimant loves characters from his favorite movies, shows, and games, specifically Pokémon, Toy Story, and the Super Mario Bros. He enjoys going to theme parks to interact with his favorite characters. He is not interested in attending theme parks that do not have characters.

28. Another caregiver testified at hearing. She explained that Disney is Claimant's "whole personality." Claimant is very excited about Disneyland and frequently repeats quotes from his favorite Disney movies.

Analysis

29. Claimant bears the burden of proving that ACRC is obligated to fund the costs associated with a Disneyland trip as a social recreation expense. He must establish that this trip is an appropriate social recreation activity and is a cost-effective use of public funds.

30. The evidence established that trips to Disneyland are useful incentives to address Claimant's maladaptive behaviors. Claimant enjoys trips to Disneyland and other theme parks. He especially enjoys interacting with characters at these parks. However, Claimant did not establish that a trip to Disneyland is an appropriate social recreation activity. Per ACRC's Social Recreation Policy, social recreation activities are intended to "... develop an individual's social skills, create social connections, and enhance physical health while ameliorating the impact of the developmental disability." The evidence established that Claimant's social interactions at Disneyland are limited to interactions with characters at the park. Interactions with characters are not the type of social interactions envisioned in ACRC's Social Recreation Policy. Claimant did not establish that Disneyland trips provide him with other social

interaction opportunities or facilitate the development of relationships within his community.

31. Further, Claimant did not establish that a single trip to Disneyland would be a cost-effective use of public funds. Local activities, including Golfland Sunsplash, provide recreation opportunities for Claimant and the opportunity for socialization within his community. Local activities do not require travel, lodging, or additional food expenses that come with traveling to Disneyland. Claimant enjoys Golfland Sunsplash, and these visits also help address Claimant's maladaptive behaviors. As ACRC is currently funding Golfland Sunsplash passes for Claimant, funding a trip to Disneyland would be duplicative and not cost-effective. Claimant's arguments regarding the comparative cost of attending Camp Krem and Disneyland were not persuasive as specialized camps are fundamentally different than an individual trip to Disneyland.

32. The evidence did not establish that ACRC should be required to fund a Disneyland trip based upon Claimant's preferred language or racial identity. By policy, ACRC is committed to increasing access to services for non-English speakers and people of color, which would include Claimant. However, this commitment to equity does not permit ACRC to fund services that are otherwise inconsistent with the purposes of social recreation programs or are not cost-effective.

33. As set forth above, the evidence did not establish that ACRC is required to fund a trip to Disneyland for Claimant. Therefore, Claimant's appeal must be denied.

LEGAL CONCLUSIONS

1. The Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act (Lanterman Act) governs this case. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4500 et seq.) An administrative fair hearing to

determine the rights and obligations of the parties is available under the Lanterman Act. (Welf. & Inst. Code, §§ 4700–4716.)

2. Claimant has the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that ACRC is required to fund the cost of a trip to Disneyland. (*Lindsay v. San Diego Retirement Bd.* (1964) 231 Cal.App.2d 156, 161 [the party seeking government benefits has the burden of proving entitlement to such benefits]; Evid. Code, § 115 [the standard of proof is preponderance of the evidence, unless otherwise provided by law].) Proof by a preponderance of the evidence means “more likely than not.” (*Sandoval v. Bank of America* (2002) 94 Cal.App.4th 1378, 1387.)

3. Under the Lanterman Act, the State of California is responsible for providing individuals with developmental disabilities with the “treatment and habilitation services and supports” to enable such persons to live “in the least restrictive environment.” (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4502, subd. (b)(1).) To comply with this mandate the Department of Developmental Services contracts with non-profit agencies called regional centers to provide services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4620.) To determine what services a regional center consumer needs, regional centers are directed to conduct a planning process that results in an IPP designed to promote as normal a lifestyle as possible. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4646; *Assn. for Retarded Citizens v. Dept. of Developmental Services* (1985) 38 Cal.3d 384, 389.) The planning process includes “gathering information and conducting assessments to determine the life goals, capabilities and strengths, preferences, barriers, and concerns or problems of the [consumer].” (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4646.5, subd. (a)(1).) The IPP must set forth goals and objectives for the consumer, provisions for acquiring services, contain a statement of time-limited objectives for improving the consumer’s situation, and reflect the consumer’s

particular desires and preferences. (Welf. & Inst. Code, §§ 4646, subd. (a)(1), (2), & (4), 4646.5, subd. (a)(2), 4512, subd. (b), & 4648, subd. (a)(6)(E).)

4. A regional center must “secure services and supports that meet the needs of the consumer” within the context of the IPP. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4648, subd. (a)(1).) The “highest preference [shall be given] to those services and supports that would allow . . . adult persons with developmental disabilities to live as independently as possible in the community . . .” (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4648, subd. (a)(1); see *id.* at § 4646.5, subd. (a)(3).) The services and supports a regional center provides must be secured in a cost-effective manner. (Welf. & Inst. Code, §§ 4640.7, subd. (b), & 4646, subd. (a).) Further, a regional center must adhere to its purchase of service policies, as approved by the Department. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4646.4, subd. (a)(1).)

5. Welfare and Institutions Code section 4688.22 provides in part:

(a) The Legislature finds and declares both of the following:

(1) The Legislature places a high priority on promoting the full inclusion and independence of individuals with developmental disabilities, including through opportunities for recreation, consistent with Section 4501 and paragraphs (6) and (7) of subdivision (b) of Section 4502.

(2) As such, it is the intent of the Legislature for social recreation services, camping services, and nonmedical therapies, including, but not limited to, specialized recreation, art, dance, and music, to be among the services and supports within the meaning of subdivision (b) of Section 4512 and be made widely available to consumers,

not only for socialization, but to lead the lives that they want in the community. It is further the intent of the Legislature that regional centers, when developing purchase-of-service policies and related procedures, and that the department, when reviewing regional center purchase-of-service policies and related procedures, reduce administrative barriers to the utilization of these services by consumers to the fullest possible extent.

[¶] . . . [¶]

(4) Regional center purchase-of-service policies and procedures related to services described in this section shall not do any of the following:

(A) Restrict funding of the services described in this section to only those that are specialized or directed toward the alleviation of a developmental disability within the meaning of subdivision (b) of Section 4512.

(B) Require the services described in this section to meet both a recreational and socialization need, or prohibit the purchase of one-on-one services, including private lessons.

(C) In order to further the legislative intent of making such services widely available to consumers, generally prohibit or disfavor purchase of these services.

Conclusion

6. As discussed above, Claimant did not prove that ACRC must fund a Disneyland trip for Claimant as a social recreation activity. ACRC properly denied Claimant's request as inconsistent with the purposes of social recreation activities, and not cost-effective. Therefore, Claimant's appeal must be denied.

ORDER

Claimant's appeal from Alta California Regional Center's October 28, 2025 Notice of Action, denying Claimant's request to fund a Disneyland trip, is DENIED.

DATE: December 22, 2025

CHRISTOPHER W. DIETRICH

Administrative Law Judge

Office of Administrative Hearings

NOTICE

This is the final administrative decision. Each party is bound by this decision. Either party may request reconsideration pursuant to subdivision (b) of Welfare and Institutions Code section 4713 within 15 days of receiving the decision, or appeal the decision to a court of competent jurisdiction within 180 days of receiving the final decision.