

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

In the Matter of:

CLAIMANT

and

ALTA CALIFORNIA REGIONAL CENTER, Service Agency

DDS No. CS0037583

OAH No. 2026060954

DECISION

Administrative Law Judge Sean Gavin, a Fair Hearing Officer employed by the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), State of California, heard this matter on August 4, 2026, by videoconference from Sacramento, California.

DJ Weersing, Legal Services Specialist, represented Alta California Regional Center (ACRC).

Claimant's mother and father represented claimant.

Evidence was received, the record closed, and the parties submitted the matter for decision on August 4, 2026.

ISSUE

Whether ACRC must reimburse claimant for funding of Camp Augusta, a summer camp.

FACTUAL FINDINGS

Background

1. Claimant is a six-year-old girl receiving services from ACRC through provisional eligibility under Welfare and Institutions Code section 4512, subdivision (a)(2). She lives at home with her parents. Based on her Individual Program Plan (IPP) Agreement dated August 22, 2025, she receives 10 monthly swimming lessons and one-hour weekly dance lessons, both of which are characterized as Community Participation services. She also receives one-hour weekly roller-skating lessons pursuant to an IPP amendment dated January 23, 2026. ACRC reimburses claimant's parents for the roller-skating lessons. In addition, claimant is approved to receive respite services for her family.

Claimant's Summer Camp Services at Leoni Meadows

2. In December 2025, claimant's mother emailed claimant's service coordinator, Ashley Jimenez, to ask, "do you have a list of camps that are reimbursable by Alta?" In response, Ms. Jimenez provided a list of day camps that ACRC funds. She also noted overnight camps must be part of the American Camp Association (ACA) and provided a link to an ACA website.

3. Claimant's mother used the ACA website and identified a family camp she wanted to use called Leoni Meadows. On December 30, 2025, she emailed Ms. Jimenez, "I found one family camp on that website. Should I go ahead and register/pay and you guys reimburse us later?" Over the next few days, Ms. Jimenez and claimant's mother continued to email one another about Leoni Meadows.

4. On January 9, 2026, claimant's mother booked an eight-day reservation at Leoni Meadows for July 2026. She forwarded the receipt and confirmation email to Ms. Jimenez, who replied, in relevant part: "Thank you for providing me with this receipt, it looks like you have chosen to move forward with the meal plan and lodging. I will send you an amendment for the fee for [claimant] and one parent. Once I have that signed, I can submit a purchase of service for parent reimbursement effective 15 days from signature."

5. Initially, ACRC agreed to reimburse claimant for the camp fees and tent site at Leoni Meadows. The parties disagreed whether ACRC should also reimburse claimant for the meals and lodging at Leoni Meadows. The parties ultimately resolved that dispute as part of a separate appeal.

Claimant's Request for Reimbursement for Camp Augusta

6. On April 14, 2026, claimant's mother registered claimant for a three-day camp at Camp Augusta, which she had found using the resources Ms. Jimenez previously provided. The camp will be August 28 through 30, 2026.

7. Later on April 14, 2026, claimant's mother emailed Ms. Jimenez to request funding for Camp Augusta. She described Camp Augusta and explained how it would support claimant in achieving the goals identified in her IPP. She also wrote, "Due to registration deadlines (Monday, April 20th), I will need to secure her spot

before Monday. I am therefore requesting that Alta consider funding this service and, if necessary, provide retroactive authorization."

8. On April 16, 2026, Amber Thompson, an Early Childhood Client Services Manager at ACRC, emailed claimant's mother about the request to fund Camp Augusta. Ms. Thompson wrote, in relevant part, "We would like to schedule an IPP meeting to further understand [claimant's] unmet need." She proposed meeting on May 4, 2026. Additionally, she noted, "I would also strongly encourage you not to register [claimant] without first having agreement from the planning team. I understand that there is a time crunch with registering, but ACRC cannot retro reimburse something the planning team has not agreed to fund."

9. Claimant's mother replied to confirm she could meet on May 4, 2026. She also shared her belief that "this request is not based on a new need, but rather an existing and ongoing need related to [claimant's] IPP goals, particularly in the areas of social interaction, communication, and community integration. This camp is simply another opportunity to support those same goals in a community-based setting." Claimant's mother again stressed the registration deadline, noting "I will need to secure [claimant's] spot before Monday in order for her to participate." Finally, she offered to provide additional information about Camp Augusta before the meeting.

10. On May 4, 2026, claimant's mother, Ms. Jimenez, and Ms. Thompson met by phone about claimant's request to fund Camp Augusta. Ms. Jimenez and Ms. Thompson informed claimant's mother that ACRC could not fund Camp Augusta because it duplicated services claimant was already scheduled to receive via Leoni Meadows. Additionally, they explained ACRC could not retroactively reimburse claimant because she incurred the charges before the planning team had an opportunity to evaluate and approve the request.

11. Later on May 4, 2026, claimant's mother emailed Ms. Jimenez and Ms. Thompson to ask them to reconsider the denial. She again noted claimant's service needs included this kind of activity, explaining, in relevant part:

From my perspective, this isn't a new need – it's the same ongoing need we've been discussing around her social interaction and communication. [Claimant] still has a hard time initiating and maintaining interactions with other kids, and that's something that really requires repeated practice in real-life settings. One camp or one activity just isn't enough for her to build and keep those skills.

One of the biggest challenges for her (and something I know is common for kids with autism) is generalizing skills. Even if she starts to get more comfortable in one setting, it doesn't automatically carry over somewhere else. Being in a different environment, with different kids and different social dynamics, gives her another chance to practice those same skills in a meaningful way.

12. In response to claimant's mother's email, Ms. Jimenez informed her ACRC's Associate Director would look into the request. ACRC then considered the request internally.

ACRC's Notice of Action and Claimant's Appeal

13. On May 20, 2026, ACRC sent claimant a Notice of Action (NOA) denying the request to fund Camp Augusta. Through the NOA, ACRC explained, in relevant part, "ACRC has already agreed to fund a family camp at Leoni Meadows in summer

2026. ACRC did not identify an assessed need to fund Camp Augusta in addition to the family camp already approved. Funding Camp Augusta would duplicate a camp service already approved.”

14. On June 15, 2026, claimant appealed the NOA. In the appeal, claimant’s mother argued Leoni Meadows, although helpful, would not by itself adequately and sufficiently address claimant’s needs as identified in the IPP. She further explained Leoni Meadows and Camp Augusta are “different in structure, duration, environment, and peer group.” Additionally, she noted the registration deadline was not her choice. She characterized ACRC’s stance as punitive based on circumstances beyond her control. Finally, she noted the denial did not identify any alternatives to meet claimant’s needs.

15. Following claimant’s appeal of the NOA, ACRC scheduled the matter for a fair hearing with OAH. This hearing followed.

Evidence at Hearing

16. Ms. Jimenez, Ms. Thompson, and claimant’s parents testified at hearing. Ms. Jimenez confirmed ACRC reimbursed claimant for Leoni Meadows and other Community Participation services such as swim and dance lessons. Additionally, in May 2025, claimant’s parents attempted to register for a different summer camp. ACRC initially agreed to reimburse claimant for the cost. Ultimately, ACRC declined to reimburse claimant for that camp, but only because the camp was not ACA accredited. ACRC never told claimant’s parents it could not fund the summer camp through reimbursement.

17. Claimant’s parents testified that based on ACRC’s history of approving reimbursements, they did not expect ACRC to deny funding Camp Augusta merely

because it required reimbursement. Camp Augusta notified them on April 14, 2026, that a spot had opened for claimant. Claimant's mother contacted Ms. Jimenez the same day. When she learned ACRC would require a meeting before approving the funding, claimant's mother urged ACRC to meet sooner than April 20, 2026, which was the registration deadline.

18. Ms. Thompson explained at hearing that when a consumer requests new services, ACRC's policy is to hold an IPP meeting within 30 days of the request. The purpose of the meeting is to determine, among other things, whether the services are consistent with the consumer's needs, why the specific requested services are appropriate, and whether alternatives exist through generic resources. ACRC does hold expedited meetings within seven days of a request, but only for circumstances that involve "health or safety." Ms. Thompson concluded claimant's request for summer camp was a non-emergency issue that did not jeopardize her health or safety. Therefore, Ms. Thompson scheduled the meeting on May 4, 2026, which was the earliest date available and consistent with ACRC's policy.

19. At hearing, Ms. Thompson explained that following the meeting on May 4, 2026, she and Ms. Jimenez discussed the request. They, along with other ACRC personnel, ultimately decided to issue the NOA to deny the reimbursement request. Ms. Thompson explained that ACRC's general policy is to fund one summer camp for up to two weeks to address a consumer's social recreational goals. ACRC will sometimes fund additional summer camps based on a review of the consumer's assessed needs. Here, claimant registered for Camp Augusta without first giving ACRC the opportunity to assess her needs. Therefore, Ms. Thompson believed it was appropriate to deny the request, because ACRC can only fund services based on a consumer's assessed needs.

20. The Fair Hearing Officer asked Ms. Thompson at hearing, "here, did the regional center make any sort of determination that Camp Augusta was not fundable for any reason other than the timing of the purchase versus the reimbursement request?" Ms. Thompson replied, "no." She further explained ACRC did not retroactively approve the reimbursement request because it "didn't have the IPP meeting to assess the need and to have the signed document, the signed signature page." The Fair Hearing Officer then asked, "apart from that, though, was there any reason not to have funded it?" Again, Ms. Thompson replied, "no."

21. Pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code section 4712, subdivision (d)(1), ACRC submitted a position statement at hearing in which it summarized the facts of the case and set forth the justification of its proposed action. As to its justification, Mr. Weersing included the heading, "Regional Centers is [*sic*] not allowed to purchase/Reimburse for service funded outside of the planning team," under which he wrote:

ACRC was informed the by [*sic*] the family to fund Camp Augusta on April 14, 2026. ACRC informed the family that we would need to assess the need and insure [*sic*] it was something that would be meet [claimant's] IPP goals. Thus ACRC service coordinator and Client Services Manager [*sic*] met coordinated [*sic*] with family scheduled [*sic*] an IPP meeting on May 4, 2026. During that meeting the family informed ACRC staff that they had already purchased Camp Augusta and requested funding/reimbursement.

22. The NOA stated that ACRC proposed to deny claimant's reimbursement request in part because, "[f]unding Camp Augusta would duplicate a camp service

already approved.” However, ACRC’s position statement did not include that as a basis for denial. Similarly, in response to the Fair Hearing Officer’s questions as hearing, Ms. Thompson explained the sole basis to deny claimant’s reimbursement request was because claimant registered and paid for Camp Augusta before ACRC had a chance to meet about it.

Analysis

23. ACRC contends it cannot reimburse for services purchased outside the IPP process. Generally, that is true. Regional centers must “secure services and supports that meet the needs of the consumer.” (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4648, subd. (a)(1).) To determine which services or supports to fund, the consumer’s planning team must communicate. Specifically:

[IPPs] shall be prepared jointly by the planning team.

Decisions concerning the consumer’s goals, objectives, and services and supports that will be included in the consumer’s [IPP] and purchased by the regional center or obtained from generic agencies shall be made by agreement between the regional center representative and the consumer or, if appropriate, the parents, legal guardian, conservator, or authorized representative at the program plan meeting.

(Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4646, subd. (d).)

24. Once the planning team decides which services and supports are appropriate, an authorized representative of the regional center and the consumer or her parents must “sign the individual program plan and the list of the agreed-upon

services and supports prior to its implementation.” (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4646, subd. (i).) ACRC argues these statutes, when read together, mean it cannot retroactively reimburse consumers for purchases made outside the IPP process.

25. Claimant’s parents argue they had to register for Camp Augusta first and then pursue reimbursement because ACRC declined to meet before the registration deadline on April 20, 2026. They also argued they had no way of knowing ACRC would claim it could not reimburse a service if claimant incurred the cost prior to a meeting. Although Ms. Thompson warned them of that possibility on April 16, 2026, they had already registered claimant on April 14, 2026. Moreover, ACRC had reimbursed claimant’s services in the past, including ongoing roller-skating lessons and Leoni Meadows just a few months earlier.

26. Claimant is correct. Nowhere in the statutes ACRC cited is reimbursement disallowed. It was prudent for Ms. Thompson to advise claimant’s parents not to register before the planning team had a chance to meet because there was a possibility ACRC might decline to fund Camp Augusta. Here, however, ACRC had no basis to decline funding Camp Augusta other than the fact that claimant incurred the cost before the planning team approved it. After the planning team met, ACRC had all the information it needed to evaluate the funding request on its merits. Apart from the timing of the request, ACRC advanced no basis to decline funding Camp Augusta on its merits. Although the NOA stated it is duplicative of Leoni Meadows, ACRC did not pursue that claim in its position statement or at hearing.

27. Furthermore, even had ACRC pursued that argument, it is rejected. As claimant’s parents persuasively explained, Leoni Meadows and Camp Augusta are different camps with different environments and participants. Moreover, ACRC’s policy is to fund up to two weeks of camp. Leoni Meadows was eight days and Camp

Augusta will be three days. Even combined, claimant will not receive excessive camp services.

LEGAL CONCLUSIONS

Burden and Standard of Proof

1. The party seeking government benefits or services has the burden of proof. (*Lindsay v. San Diego County Retirement Bd.* (1964) 231 Cal.App.2d 156, 161.) In this case, claimant bears the burden of proving, by a preponderance of the evidence, that ACRC is required to reimburse her for the cost of Camp Augusta. (Evid. Code, § 115.) The term preponderance of the evidence means “more likely than not.” (*Sandoval v. Bank of America* (2002) 94 Cal.App.4th 1378, 1388.)

Applicable Statutes

2. Under the Lanterman Act, the State of California accepts responsibility for persons with developmental disabilities and pays for the majority of 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).) “The purpose of the statutory scheme is twofold: to prevent or minimize the institutionalization of developmentally disabled persons and their dislocation from family and community [citations], and to enable them to approximate a pattern of everyday living of nondisabled persons of the same age and to lead more independent and productive lives in the community [citations].” (*Assoc. for Retarded Citizens v. Dept. of Developmental Services* (1985) 38 Cal.3d 384, 388.)

3. To determine how an individual consumer is to be served, 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; *Assoc. for Retarded Citizens v. Dept. of Developmental Services*, *supra*, 38 Cal.3d at p. 389.) The IPP is developed by an interdisciplinary team and must include participation by the consumer and/or her representatives.

4. Among other things, the IPP must set forth goals and objectives for the consumer, contain provisions for the acquisition of services (which must be based upon the consumer's developmental needs), 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, subds. (a) & (b), 4646.5, subd. (a), 4512, subd. (b), 4648, subd. (a)(6)(E).) The regional center must then "secure services and supports that meet the needs of the consumer" within the context of the IPP. (*Id.* at § 4648, subd. (a)(1).)

Resolution of Contested Issue

5. Claimant met her burden of proving ACRC must reimburse her for the cost of Camp Augusta. The planning team met on May 4, 2026, and had all information necessary to evaluate the request to include Camp Augusta in claimant's IPP. ACRC's position, that it cannot reimburse for services purchased outside the planning process, is rejected in this matter. To the extent ACRC contends Camp Augusta is duplicative of claimant's other services and supports, including Leoni Meadows, that argument is also rejected.

ORDER

Claimant's appeal from Alta California Regional Center's May 20, 2026, Notice of Action proposing to deny claimant's request for funding Camp Augusta is GRANTED. ACRC shall modify claimant's IPP to include funding for Camp Augusta from August 28 through 30, 2026. Claimant's parents shall cooperate with ACRC is signing an amended IPP Agreement, as necessary.

DATE: August 12, 2026

SEAN GAVIN

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 a 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.