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OAH Advisory Sub-Committee
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Appeals & Fair Hearings: Practices and Perspectives Survey for Regional Centers

Audience:

*We encourage everyone in the appeals team to fill out the questionnaire including the RC Director if possible. All feedback and participants will be confidential and **not** shared.*

Name of Staff Completing Survey:

Title of Staff Completing Survey:

Name of Regional Center:

Section A: Structure & Authority

1. How is your regional center's appeals/fair hearings function currently organized?
(Please select the option that best reflects your structure.)

- Dedicated appeals unit
- Shared function across departments
- Primarily coordinated through legal counsel
- Other (please describe)

2. How many staff (including leadership) do you have dedicated to the appeals department?

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

3. At your regional center, who typically has everyday authority to recommend or approve resolution at each of the following stages?

- Informal meeting stage (Options: Executive Director, Executive Director Designee, Appeals Leadership, Appeals Staff, Other, or all the above)
- Mediation stage (Options: Executive Director, Executive Director Designee, Appeals Leadership, Appeals Staff, Other, or all the above)

- Prior to proceeding to a fair hearing (Options: Executive Director, Executive Director Designee, Appeals Leadership, Appeals Staff, Other or all the above)

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

**4. Which measures, indicators, or considerations help guide feedback processes for the appeals department?
(Select all that apply.)**

- Timeliness and compliance with required timelines
- Quality or clarity of resolutions reached
- Reduction in matters proceeding to hearing
- Fiscal considerations
- Appeals staff are not evaluated using specific metrics related to appeals outcomes
- Other measures (please specify)

Section B: Neutrality & Role Definition

5. How would you describe how your appeals team understands its role in the appeals process?

- Neutral facilitator supporting resolution
- Representative of regional center decisions
- A combination of both, depending on context
- Role expectations are not formally defined

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

6. Does your regional center have written guidance (e.g., policy, procedure, training materials) that describe expectations related to neutrality during appeals?

- Yes
- No

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

7. When reviewing appeals, how are person-centered outcomes considered in relation to budgetary or cost-containment factors?

- Always considered separately
- Sometimes considered separately
- Rarely considered separately
- Not typically distinguished

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

Section C: Informal Meetings & Mediation Practices

8. During informal meetings, how often does the regional center engage in the following practices?

(Please answer each item.)

Practice	Yes	Sometimes	No
Explaining the legal and factual basis of decisions in plain, accessible language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exploring alternative approaches that could meet the consumer's needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participating with flexibility to modify decisions when appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

9. In 2025, approximately how often were appeals resolved prior to mediation or fair hearing?

- Less than 25%
- 25–50%
- 51–75%
- Over 75%

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

10. In your experience, what are the most common factors that contribute to appeals proceeding to hearing?

(Select all that apply.)

- Disagreement about facts or assessments
- Differing interpretations of cost effectiveness
- Limited authority to settle at earlier stages
- Policy or directive requirements
- All the Above

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

Section D: Equity, Language Access & Cultural Responsiveness

11. What practices does your appeals team use to support effective communication for individuals with limited English proficiency?

(Select all that apply.)

- Use of certified interpreters
- Interpreter preparation or briefings prior to meetings
- Provision of written translated summaries or materials
- No formal or standardized process
- Other (please describe)

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

12. Are appeals staff offered training or professional development in the following areas?

(Answer each item.)

Topic	Yes	No
Cultural humility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working with multigenerational or family-based decision-making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Power dynamics and implicit bias	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

13. Does your regional center track appeal outcomes by any of the following characteristics?

(Select all that apply.)

- Language
- Geographic region
- Disability type
- Outcomes are not tracked by these characteristics

- Not Tracking characteristics

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

Section E: Accountability & Oversight

14. How does your regional center monitor implementation of fair hearing decisions once they are issued?

(Open-ended)

15. Are delays in implementing fair hearing decisions tracked or reported to external entities (e.g., DDS or OAH)?

- Yes
- No

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

16. Is there a process in place to review patterns or trends in appeals (for example, repeated appeals on similar issues)?

- Yes
- No

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

17. Which external factors most influence appeals team practices at your regional center?

(Select all that apply.)

- OAH decisions
- DDS directives or guidance

- Litigation risk considerations
- Community or stakeholder feedback
- None of the above

Add Open Section for any notes/comments

Section F: Appeals Process – Experience, Access, and Trust

- 18. How do families experience feeling heard, respected, and understood during the appeals process? (open)**
- 19. What supports are in place to make the appeals process feel clear, accessible, and safe for participants? (open)**
- 20. How is feedback collected from participants after an appeal or mediation, and how is it used to improve the process? (open)**

Section G: Practice and Training

- 21. What guidance or training is provided to staff to support respectful, balanced interactions during appeals? (open)**
- 22. How are appeals meetings structured to encourage open communication and collaborative problem-solving? (open)**
- 23. How are staff supported in maintaining respectful relationships with individuals and families after an appeal or dispute? (open)**

Section H: Communication, Access, and Equity

- 24. How does the Regional Center communicate that using the appeals process will not negatively affect future services? (open)**

25. What training or support is provided to interpreters regarding disability-related terminology and the appeals process? (open)

26. How does the Regional Center ensure culturally responsive communication during appeals, especially across differences in advocacy styles and expectations of authority? (open)

Section I: Decision-Making and Transparency

27. How are individuals' goals, preferences, and lived experiences incorporated into settlement discussions and decisions? (open)

28. What opportunities exist to explore options collaboratively before positions are finalized? (open)

29. How are rationales for decisions communicated in clear, accessible, and individualized language? (open)

30. Are families informed about flexibility or alternative options before appeals proceed? (open)

Section J: Systems Learning and Improvement

31. How does the Regional Center gather feedback on the accessibility and fairness of the appeals process? (open)

32. How are patterns related to barriers, trust, or participation identified and addressed? (open)

33. What practices are used to proactively reduce disputes before they escalate into formal appeals? (open)

Section K: Reflection & Continuous Improvement

34. In your view, what does the concept of “engaged neutrality” look like in day-to-day appeals practice?

(Open)

35. What structural, procedural, or policy changes do you believe could further strengthen trust in the appeals process?

(Open)

36. What recommendations would you offer to the OAH Advisory Committee as it considers statewide standards or guidance related to appeals team conduct?

(Open)

37. Anything else? (open)

Next Steps:

- Received feedback on survey during OAH Meeting on May 14, 2026
- Send Survey to Regional Centers: May 26, 2026 (tentative)
- Analyze responses June and July 2026
- Share with OAH Advisory Committee August 13, 2026