

**Provider Vendor Advisory Committee
Regional Center of the East Bay
Meeting Minutes Friday, September 13, 2024**

Members Present: Dan Hogue, Las Trampas; Ann Pringle, North Star Residential; Carlos Cienfuegos, Sentry Living Solutions; Geneva Carlos-Valentino, Toolworks; Jamie Renton, Pleasanton Adult and Career Center; Eddie Esquivel, Manos Home Care; Marcie Hodge, St. John's Boys Home; Anthony Rowe, Adaptive Learning Center

Guests Present: Jaynette Underhill-Levingston, Clausen House; Brandi Auble, CA Mentor; Chandra Jackson, Clausen House; Anna Willis, Emerging Horizons; Nicole Doubly, RES; Will Sanford, SC&CS; Emily Correia, Enjoy Life More; Heather Manes, HATCH; Jason Parks, Las Trampas; Carolanne Forge, Toolworks; Carin Hewitt, Alift, Ilc; Steve Robinson, RCEB; Jan Behr, Toolworks; Hayley Higgin, Amergis Healthcare; Siobhan Burgos, DDC; Jennifer Rocha, Castro Valley Adult and Career; Teresa Nold, Deaf Plus Adult Community; Michael Minton, RCEB; Erin Patch, Ability Now Bay Area; Aimee Vitug-Hom, VistAbility; Debbie G., Clausen House; Madison Mercado, Open House Center; Karen Lingenfelter, Mt. Diablo Adult Education; Shelby Tyler, Amergis Healthcare Staffing; Rafael Parada, RCEB; Anastasia DiFonzo, Toolworks; Gail Tsujimoto-Cho, REACH West Adult Program; Candice Elton, Thrive Support Services; Donna Feingold, HireAble and Finding Golden Solutions; Sylvia Yeh, Friends of Children with Special Needs; Antonio Navarro, Community Life Skills; Tomasa Duenas, RCEB; Stephanie Featherstone, Davis Street; Zachery Wheeler, All People of Color; Louise McClellan, Open House Center; Juan Ventura, Vistability; B.J. Cottrell, Jaqui' Foundation; Frank Par'e, RCEB Board Member; Shannon Avery, Amergis Healthcare Staffing Services; Juanita Hightower, Clausen House; Erica Horn, Futures Explored; Vi Ibarra, DD Council Contra Costa; Gwen Captain, Visions Adult Day Program; Mike Pereira, Ala Costa Centers; Jessica Woods-Torlowei, Family Support Services; Megan Larsen, Communication Works; James Mercado, Open House Center; Kulwinder Kaur, A Brighter View Day program; Sara Trail, Connected Living; Armando Lucchesi, Group Adult Residential; Danon Jenkins, Futures Explored; Ramsay Mashy, California Autism Foundation; Darice Tillery; Harambee Community Services; Amelia Whittlesey, Creative Growth; Adriana Cazares, Family Works; Jay Gamez, Mission Hope Day Program; Josh Sullivan, Full Circle of Choices; Craig Rose, Vistability;

108 Total Attendees

Call to Order:

At 9:35 AM, Geneva Carlos-Valentino welcomed attendees.

Minutes Approval and Discussion:

A meeting quorum was met. The committee reviewed the minutes from the June and July 2024 meetings. Geneva invited comments or changes; none were noted. Both sets of minutes were approved after receiving motions from Dan Hogue and Carlos Cienfuegos, and votes from the attendees.

Regional Center/State Report – Lisa Kleinbub, Executive Director

- Nancy Bargmann, the Director of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), retired in early September. She has been temporarily replaced by Pete Cervenka as Interim Director. Pete, who has four years of experience at DDS, has focused on strategic projects and data analysis, including updates to the fair hearing process. He previously worked in the Department of Social Services.
- Secretary Ghaly has also departed. The governor appointed Kim Johnson from the Department of Social Services as the new Secretary. Despite these leadership changes, Lisa noted that they are unlikely to immediately impact the department's current projects, as DDS continues its focus on rate implementation and the new provider directory.
- Ongoing workgroups continue to address the Master Plan for Developmental Services, focusing on lifelong stability, sustainability, and person-centered planning. These workgroups meet regularly, and the full Master Plan committee will hold a hybrid in-person/virtual meeting next week in Fresno.
 - A future Master Plan meeting is expected to be held in the Bay Area, which will provide a valuable opportunity for local stakeholders to participate and offer input on developmental service issues at the state level.
- Lisa highlighted the passage of AB 1147, which mandates increased transparency from regional centers. This bill has moved through both the Assembly and the Senate and is now awaiting the governor's signature.

- The bill would subject regional centers to the Public Records Act, making their records publicly accessible upon request. This includes quality assurance reports, program designs, and other documents related to service providers.
- The Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) has raised concerns regarding potential privacy implications, as regional centers currently lack the infrastructure to ensure full confidentiality under these transparency requirements. ARCA has sent a letter to the governor outlining these concerns, noting the broad scope of the Public Records Act and the challenges it may pose for the centers. Lisa emphasized that the details of the bill's implementation will be critical in determining how regional centers will handle these requests.

Action Item I: Membership Vote

The committee welcomed two new members: Teresa Nold of Deaf Plus and Jessica Woods-Torlowei of Family Support Services. Each introduced themselves, sharing their backgrounds and organizational roles. After brief introductions, a motion to approve their membership was carried.

Action Item II: Temporary Board Representation Vote

Due to Dan Hogue's upcoming leave, the committee voted on temporarily assigning Geneva Carlos-Valentino to represent PVAC on the board. The motion passed with no objections.

PRESENTATION: DSP Internship Program, Jessica Kyles, All's Well

Jessica Kyles from All's Well presented the new Direct Service Professional (DSP) Internship Program. Key points included:

- **Program Overview:** The paid internship offers entry-level candidates hands-on experience in DSP roles for three months.
- **Provider Expectations:** Providers can evaluate interns for potential permanent roles while interns shadow existing DSPs.
- **Onboarding and Training:** All's Well manages recruitment, compliance, and training, including a vetting process and virtual training modules on topics like safety and child abuse prevention. The program aims to address staffing shortages and provide career pathways within developmental services.

Regional Center Staff Reports – Steve Robinson

- The Direct Support Professional (DSP) training courses, which were extended until the end of August, allowed providers to offer additional training to DSPs with a stipend.
 - Providers have until the end of November 2024 to bill for this program and submit the necessary service provider agreement forms. Steve emphasized the importance of submitting these forms, as they enable DSPs to receive their stipends. The goal is to address the current workforce shortage by increasing training and retention incentives for DSPs.
- The Quality Incentive Program (QIP), designed to boost employment capacity and access, has been extended through June 2025. Providers who complete the requirements, like employment-related benchmarks and participation in the program, qualify for incentive payments.
 - Steve noted that DDS manages the approval process, and once providers complete program requirements, DDS sends the information to the Regional Center, allowing providers to be reimbursed for their efforts.
- Steve mentioned that DDS is providing additional training for Early Start providers to help them meet service timelines. These incentives are part of a larger DDS initiative to improve early intervention service delivery for children aged 0-3 with developmental delays.
- Steve presented the DDS Provider Directory, a new statewide portal for provider information management. He explained that the directory:
 - Enables Centralized Record-Keeping: Providers will update records directly in the portal, designed to streamline provider data management across all regional centers.
 - Enhances Transparency: Families and advocates can use the directory to locate providers based on specific needs, fostering better community access.
 - Facilitates Communication: The directory includes notifications and document uploads, simplifying communication between providers, DDS, and regional centers.

- All service providers will receive a one-time Quality Incentive Payment if they complete their directory submission on time. This payment is tied to the next phase of the rate-setting process and represents 10% of the final rate implementation for participating providers.
 - DDS has outlined several key dates, such as the September 16 system launch, with final provider record validation for rate setting by October 21.
- Steve emphasized the importance of ensuring that provider information aligns with existing records, as discrepancies could affect incentive eligibility. He noted that any significant changes in tax IDs or organization types would need regional center approval.
- Mike Minton updated the group on the HCBS (Home and Community-Based Services) Final Rule compliance efforts. RCEB has achieved full compliance by the required deadline, though a few corrective action plans remain. The focus is now on integrating HCBS standards into routine Quality Assurance (QA) visits.
 - Upcoming initiatives include DSP training on HCBS standards and peer-to-peer sessions where individuals receiving services can discuss the benefits of HCBS compliance. This outreach effort aims to enhance understanding of HCBS standards among service users and their families, which is essential for continued compliance and service improvement.
 - Donna Feingold mentioned the family training sessions scheduled to help families understand the implications of HCBS compliance. These sessions will cover key aspects of the Final Rule, including person-centered planning and community integration. She encouraged providers to share this opportunity with families, as increased awareness among family members supports the goals of the HCBS Final Rule.

Regional Center Board Report—Dan Hogue

- Since the last PVAC meeting, the RCEB Board has met twice, with one session focused on board training. In July, the board met primarily to engage with a CPA to gain a deeper understanding of the annual audit process, learning how to read and interpret the audit, as well as how to ask pertinent questions regarding the financial review. Additionally, the board consulted with legal counsel regarding potential changes to the bylaws, ensuring that any modifications align with legal requirements and best practices.
- In August, the board participated in a strategic planning workshop, held on a Saturday, to review and refine RCEB's mission statement and core values. This process is a critical part of the organization's strategic planning, as these foundational statements guide the board in aligning organizational priorities and decision-making. The board expects to release an updated mission statement and revised values soon, which Dan highlighted as an exciting development for RCEB's future direction.
- Dan also provided an update on the executive director search. The board has engaged the Lawrence Advisory, a firm noted for its equity-focused approach, to lead the recruitment process. Lawrence Advisory's team, including Tracy Lawrence, Tiffany Scott, and Kathy Johnson, is assisting the board with crafting a public-facing job description for the role. The job description is expected to be finalized shortly, with the recruitment process launching within the next week. The search firm will not only post the job on traditional and non-traditional job boards but will also actively recruit candidates to ensure a comprehensive and equitable search. Dan expressed confidence in the firm's expertise and their commitment to an inclusive recruitment strategy.
- Finally, Dan noted that as Geneva will be taking his place on the board temporarily, she will also join the executive director search committee during his absence.

State Council on Developmental Disabilities Report—Sheriden Nicholau

Sheraden was unable to attend the meeting, so Geneva provided an overview of upcoming events, resources, and opportunities for engagement that Sheraden had prepared by email:

- Statewide Trainings:
 - September features statewide trainings available in multiple languages, including English and Spanish. Other languages are available upon request.
 - The State Council is offering a "Back to School Special Education" training series in Spanish, focusing on understanding evaluations.
 - There's also an upcoming webinar on employer engagement, aimed at building meaningful relationships between employers and the developmental disabilities (IDD) community.
- Several upcoming meetings are accessible via Zoom, unless specified otherwise:
 - Self-Advocates Advisory Committee: September 23, 2024.
 - Full State Council Meeting: September 24, 2024.

- Bay Area RAC Meeting: September 25, 2024 (hybrid meeting) from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM. This meeting will include voting for the chairperson, updates on health equity practices, member and council updates, and community partner updates.
- The State Council provides year-round sponsorships of up to \$2,500 for events that promote self-advocacy, leadership, and education for the IDD community. Requests for sponsorships must be submitted at least 90 days before the event date.
- Statewide self-determination orientations are available in multiple languages this month, including English, Vietnamese, and Spanish, supporting a broad range of participants.
- PPE supplies remain available for organizations and community groups. Requests can be directed to Sheraden.
- The California State Council on Developmental Disabilities is holding its fourth annual contest, which invites individuals to propose ideas for legislation that would benefit people with IDD. The contest runs throughout September, with the winning idea announced on October 15, 2024.
- Cycle 47 Grant Opportunity RFP offers \$125,000 in funding for projects aimed at improving access to health resources for Native American communities. The project will run from March 1, 2025, to August 31, 2026. Proposals are due by October 8, 2024.
- The State Council's National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network is offering a webinar series on employer engagement, scheduled for Wednesdays from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM. Topics include:
 - Building relationships with employers
 - On-site retention support strategies
 - Optimizing natural supports for inclusion
- Reverse town halls with local legislators are scheduled for October 1 and 2, allowing the community to provide insights on developmental service issues.
- In-person candidate forums on October 11, after the next PVAC meeting, will feature candidates for Senate District 7 and Assembly District 15, moderated by self-advocates.
- Contact Sheraden directly for more information about these events and opportunities.

Alameda County Developmental Disabilities Council – Ben Chen

Siobahn Burgos gave the AC DDC report on behalf of Ben.

- Transition Conference Planning:
 - Planning for the annual transition conference is underway, and the council is seeking additional participants. The next planning meeting is scheduled for September 19 at 2:30 PM. Those interested can reach out to Siobahn Burgos, Ben Chen, or Vi Ibarra for more information.
- Alameda County VPC Board Recruitment:
 - The Alameda County Vendor Policy Committee (VPC) is looking for new board members, specifically from service providers interested in joining. Siobahn invited anyone interested to contact herself or Ben.
- Community Events and Resources:
 - HCBS Family Training: A training session on the HCBS Final Rule for families will take place on September 14 at 10 AM, with another session on September 24 at 4 PM.
 - Adaptive Recreation and Special Needs Resource Fair: This event is on September 21 at 4 PM at the Sorensdale Recreation Center in Hayward. It will include live adaptive recreation demonstrations and a fashion show.
 - Disability Resource Fair: Hosted by the City of Fremont, this fair is scheduled for September 22 at the Fremont Downtown Event Center. It will offer resources for individuals with disabilities and their families, plus entertainment and a complimentary lunch for those who register by September 16.
 - Workshop on Bullying Solutions for Spanish-Speaking Families: Co Ingresso will hold a bullying prevention workshop in Spanish on September 19, from 5 PM to 7 PM.
 - Virtual Reverse Town Halls: The East Bay Leadership Council (EBLC) will host two virtual town halls with local legislators on October 1 (6:30 PM - 7:30 PM) and October 2 (11:30 AM - 12:30 PM).
 - East Bay Innovations 30th Anniversary Celebration: Scheduled for October 6 at the Ed Roberts Campus, this event celebrates the organization's milestone with more details forthcoming.
 - Homebuyer Workshop: On September 25, Stephen Beard will host a workshop focused on living options for prospective homebuyers. Further details and a flyer will be provided soon.

Siobahn concluded by encouraging participants to attend these community events and reach out for additional information as needed.

Contra Costa County Developmental Disabilities Council – Vi Ibarra

- The council began its new annual cycle with an August planning meeting, where they brainstormed project ideas and presentations for the upcoming year. In the September meeting, they plan to establish working groups to explore these topics more thoroughly. This approach is a shift from past years, allowing for a more focused and collaborative exploration of key issues.
- The council has elected new leadership for the coming year. Will Sanford was chosen as Chair, while Seth Hendricks, a self-advocate with previous board experience, was selected as Vice Chair. Vi emphasized that including a self-advocate like Seth in the executive leadership team is a positive development for the council.
- The next board meeting will be held on September 25 in Martinez, continuing discussions from the planning meeting and moving forward with this year's agenda.
- This year's Transition Conference, which was previously the Alameda Transition Fair, has expanded to include both Alameda and Contra Costa counties. The event will alternate locations annually, with the spring 2025 conference set to take place in Contra Costa County.
- Vi extended an invitation to Contra Costa-focused providers to participate in planning the event, especially those interested in increasing their visibility within the county. Alameda County providers are also welcome to join. Vi offered to share her contact information with those who would like to get involved, noting that the planning kickoff meeting is next week, which is an ideal time to join.

East Bay Legislative Coalition Report – Will Sanford

- **AB 1147 – Regional Center Transparency:**
 - Will discussed AB 1147, a bill currently awaiting the governor's signature. This bill mandates increased transparency from regional centers by requiring them to adhere to the Public Records Act. If enacted, regional centers will be obligated to release records upon request, similar to other public entities.
 - He emphasized that this requirement would encompass a broad range of records, including quality assurance reports, program designs, and possibly sensitive information about service providers. Will expressed concerns over privacy and the operational impact this might have on regional centers, as they would need to ensure they meet confidentiality standards while still adhering to the transparency requirements.
- **Funding for DSP Wages:**
 - Will touched on legislative efforts focused on obtaining additional funding to support equitable wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). He noted that the shortage of DSPs is partly due to the wage gap in the developmental services sector, making it challenging to attract and retain qualified staff.
 - The ongoing advocacy includes pushing for incremental increases in DSP wages to ensure a living wage for these essential workers, which would align with inflation and cost-of-living adjustments in California. Will highlighted the importance of legislative support to provide sustainable funding solutions.
- **Service Rate Adjustments:**
 - Will also addressed the anticipated rate adjustments for service providers based on the state's rate study. He explained that these adjustments are tied to providers' participation in the new DDS Provider Directory, which would grant a one-time Quality Incentive Payment and offer an additional 10% rate for those who complete the directory registration.
 - He clarified that this incentive is crucial for ensuring that providers remain compliant with state standards and can achieve full funding under the updated rate model through June 2026. He urged all providers to register in the DDS Provider Directory to qualify for these incentives.
- **Provider Directory and Quality Incentive Program:**
 - Will reiterated that the DDS Provider Directory is a significant new resource and compliance tool. The directory will help families and advocates find service providers more easily, as well as streamline communication between DDS, regional centers, and providers.
 - He encouraged providers to complete their profiles, as doing so is directly linked to receiving a one-time incentive and ongoing funding adjustments. He acknowledged that the transition to the new system may involve some challenges but emphasized the long-term benefits for providers and clients alike.
- **Federal and State Advocacy:**
 - Will briefly mentioned broader advocacy efforts at the federal level, which include securing Medicaid funding for services provided through regional centers. He highlighted how federal funding and state

- budget allocations are essential for sustaining programs that support individuals with developmental disabilities.
- These advocacy efforts also focus on promoting policies that support integrated, community-based services. He noted that these initiatives align with the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) standards, which aim to improve service quality and foster greater inclusion for individuals with disabilities.
- **Future Legislative Priorities:**
 - Will concluded with a preview of potential legislative priorities for the next session, including further adjustments to the rate model and increased support for programs that enhance community integration. He stressed the importance of ongoing participation from providers in legislative advocacy, noting that input from the developmental services community plays a key role in shaping policy decisions.

Service Provider Equity Subcommittee Report – Dan Hogue

- Although the committee did not meet in the previous month, Dan shared updates from their last meeting, during which they reviewed a draft Request for Proposal (RFP). This RFP is being developed in collaboration with the regional center, with significant input and guidance from Lisa Kleinbub.
- The RFP aims to establish **an ombudsperson role** or a similar service to mediate between the regional center and service providers. The role would involve tracking complaints and concerns from providers, offering mediation, and providing detailed reports to both the regional center and the board. The goal is to enhance communication, accountability, and support for service providers within the regional center’s jurisdiction.
- Dan acknowledged a delay in providing updates and edits to the RFP, which he recently sent to Lisa for further review and integration. He anticipates these updates will be incorporated by the group’s next meeting on September 27 at 1 PM. The hope is to finalize the RFP soon, moving one step closer to implementing this ombudsperson service.
- Dan will be on leave for three months and expressed concern about the group potentially becoming inactive during his absence. He noted that there currently isn’t anyone designated to lead the group in his place.
- Dan encouraged members to step up and temporarily take on leadership duties to keep the group active. He mentioned that his HR director, who recently joined the group, might help facilitate meetings, including hosting the Zoom sessions. Dan invited any interested members to contact him if they are willing to assist during his absence.

Day Providers Subcommittee Report – Mike Pereira

Mike had to leave the meeting early, so Dan stepped in to provide the report on his behalf.

Provider Directory Compliance:

- Dan emphasized the importance of meeting the **October deadline** for completing the DDS Provider Directory. He reiterated that service providers who complete their registration are eligible for a 10% funding increase. This rate increase will apply through the 2025-2026 fiscal year, making it essential for providers to confirm their information by the end of October.
- He stressed that missing this deadline could result in a significant reduction in funding, as providers would forfeit the additional 10% rate adjustment through fiscal year 2026.
- Following updates that align with Will Sanford’s legislative report, Dan mentioned that candidate forums for Senate District 7 and Assembly District 15 are scheduled for October 11, 2024.
 - Senate District 7 Forum: Featuring candidates Jovanka Beckles and Terry Aragon. This forum will be held in person at the RCEB office in San Leandro.
 - Assembly District 15 Forum: Scheduled to take place at the RCEB Concord office, this forum includes candidate Elizabeth Ledo, with an invitation extended to Tim Grayson’s successor, although not yet confirmed.
- These forums are in-person events and will allow the community to engage with local candidates on issues affecting the developmental disabilities (IDD) sector. Dan encouraged participation to communicate concerns and priorities directly to potential legislators.
- The Day Services Subcommittee holds weekly provider meetings every Friday at 11 AM, except on PVAC meeting days. These meetings are open to all service providers, not just day services, and cover a range of relevant topics and updates.

- Additionally, Wednesday “Troubleshoot” Meetings at 2 PM offer a collaborative space where providers can discuss specific issues they face. These sessions are focused on peer support, with providers brainstorming solutions together. Dan highlighted the value of these meetings, noting that they demonstrate the strong sense of community and mutual support within the East Bay IDD provider network.

HireAble Subcommittee Report – Donna Feingold

Donna Feingold mentioned that she plans to provide a detailed presentation at next month’s PVAC meeting. She requested earlier placement on the agenda to allow more time to discuss new changes and services at HireAble.

Donna announced an upcoming free community training on CalABLE, a savings program that enables individuals with disabilities, especially those on Supplemental Security Income (SSI), to save more than the usual \$2,000 limit without risking their benefits. The training is scheduled for October 23 at 3:00 PM and will feature Ann Osborne, the Executive Director at CalABLE, as the presenter. The CalABLE program offers an important financial resource for individuals with disabilities, allowing them to save money while maintaining eligibility for public benefits. This training will provide valuable insights into how the program works, helping participants understand how they can use CalABLE to increase their financial security.

PVAC Membership Report – Jamie Renton

Jamie Renton oversaw the membership voting process earlier in the meeting and emphasized the importance of having a diverse committee that reflects the community served by PVAC. She encouraged members to suggest other potential candidates and noted that the committee continues to seek ways to engage members effectively.

Public Comment

- Marcie Hodge inquired about the status of a position formerly held by Armand Lee. Lisa Kleinbub confirmed that the position would indeed be filled.
- Lisa reminded ILS (Independent Living Services) and SLS (Supported Living Services) providers to complete a form regarding their service capacity and the areas they cover. This form is part of a pilot matching program that aims to connect clients with available ILS and SLS providers.
- Marcie asked for updates on the Mason-Tillman report. Lisa mentioned she expects the report on Monday and will share it with the community once available.
- It was announced that Carmen Sanchez received the inaugural DSP Empowerment Award from the California Disability Services Association. The announcement was made in honor of DSP Appreciation Week, with gratitude expressed for all Direct Support Professionals.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:39 AM.

Respectfully submitted for review by Geneva Carlos-Valentino, Co-Chair