

**Provider Vendor Advisory Committee
Regional Center of the East Bay
Meeting Minutes Friday, January 10, 2025**

Call to Order:

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

Minutes Approval and Discussion:

The minutes from the November 2024 and December 2024 meetings were reviewed and approved. Marcie Hodge moved to approve both sets of minutes, seconded by Jessica Woods-Torlowei.

Regional Center State Update—Lisa Kleinbub

Lisa provided a detailed update on the state budget, leadership changes at RCEB, and key policy developments affecting the disability services community.

1. State Budget Update

- The state budget announcement was scheduled for that day, and Governor Newsom had previewed some elements earlier in the week. There were no major policy changes expected that would significantly affect RCEB or the services it funds. Some minor tweaks may occur, but overall, the budget would remain aligned with prior projections.
 - California’s general fund budget was projected to decrease by \$3 billion. However, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) was the only agency seeing an increase—by approximately \$7 billion. This increase was significant, as it directly impacted regional centers and disability services, ensuring continued funding growth.
 - The DDS budget was estimated to be \$19 billion, which was an increase from the previous year’s \$15 billion. This increase would fund the full implementation of the rate reform study and support an estimated 40,000 new individuals entering the system.
 - There was some uncertainty due to the impact of federal policy changes, particularly around Medicaid funding.
- Potential Fiscal Challenges:
 - Wildfires in Los Angeles: The disaster was expected to have a massive economic impact on the state, possibly leading to shifts in budget allocations.
 - Stock Market Volatility: The state had projected an additional \$16-18 billion in revenue, mostly from capital gains, but economic factors could still affect long-term funding stability.

2. RCEB Leadership Transition

- Lisa Kleinbub formally announced her successor, Rebecca Nanny Anjo, as the new Executive Director of RCEB. Rebecca would start the following week, while Lisa would remain in her role through February to assist with the transition. Lisa planned to orient Rebecca to RCEB operations and provide support as she settled into the role. Rebecca was expected to attend the next PVAC meeting and engage with various community groups over the coming months.

3. Policy and Program Updates

- A statewide tool for respite and daycare determinations was in development to ensure consistency across all regional centers.
- The Mason Tillman Report, which originated from PVAC discussions some time ago, was nearing completion. Lisa anticipated sharing the findings and recommendations at the next PVAC meeting.
- A major policy meeting for the Master Plan for Disability Services scheduled in Berkeley, though the exact location had not yet been announced. This meeting would gather stakeholders to discuss long-term goals for disability services in California.

4. DDS Medicaid Waiver Audit

- Lisa informed the committee that DDS would be conducting a Medicaid waiver audit in February. Some providers may be involved if their clients were selected for review. RCEB staff had already started reaching out to impacted providers to prepare for the audit.

Action Item I: Membership Vote

New Members Approved:

- Ember Avalos (NIAD, Community Programs Director)
- Brandy Aubel (California Mentor, Regional Director).

The motion to approve them was made by Lindsey Dyba and seconded by Anthony Rowe. The motion carried unanimously, and both members were officially welcomed to PVAC.

Regional Center Staff Report—Steve Robinson

Steve Robinson and other RCEB staff provided updates on emergency response efforts, rate reform progress, Medicaid audits, and community resource development initiatives.

1. Emergency Response to Southern California Wildfires

- Steve Robinson began by acknowledging the devastating wildfires in Southern California. RCEB planned to share vacancy information for community care facilities with regional centers in affected areas.
 - While it was unclear if individuals would need to relocate to the East Bay, RCEB wanted to ensure that providers were prepared to accept displaced individuals if necessary.

2. Rate Reform Updates

- Chelsea Kalbaugh discussed July 1st, 2024 and January 1st, 2025, rate increases.
 - July 1, 2024, rate changes:
 - Most adjustments had been processed, but some vendors noticed discrepancies between DDS-posted rates and actual payments.
 - This issue was caused by specific provider factors affecting rate calculations, leading to case-by-case variations.
 - Chelsea encouraged providers to reach out to her directly if they had concerns.
 - January 1, 2025, rate increases:
 - DDS had not provided all necessary materials for RCEB to process rate increases.
 - Some providers would see updated rates in January, while others would receive retroactive payments in February or March.
 - Chelsea emphasized that providers should check their remittance advice carefully to confirm payments.

3. Jeff Nagafuji shared updates on two new Requests for Proposals (RFPs) under the Community Resource Development Plan:

- Expansion of mobile crisis services: To support temporary relocation for individuals in crisis, particularly adults in family home settings who need brief removal from stressful environments.
- Integrated Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Treatment Center: RCEB sought proposals for wraparound services supporting individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) and substance use disorders.
- RCEB planned to hold a bidders' conference on January 14, 2025, at 11:00 AM for interested providers.

4. RCEB staff addressed concerns about delayed stipend payments for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who completed state-mandated training. The DSP incentive payments had been delayed due to DDS processing issues. Providers who had submitted agreements on time should submit their claims immediately, as payments were still being processed. Providers who failed to submit the required DSP agreement forms were no longer eligible for reimbursement.

Regional Center Board Report—Geneva Carlos-Valentino

Geneva Carlos-Valentino provided an update on the RCEB Board's activities, including leadership transition, strategic planning, upcoming meetings, and membership recruitment.

1. The RCEB Board did not hold a public meeting last month, but internal discussions took place regarding key matters. Two major decisions were made:

- The board formally extended an offer to Dr. Rebecca Nanyonjo, which was accepted. Dr. Nanyonjo would officially begin her role the following week, replacing Lisa Kleinbub.

- The board unanimously approved the RCEB Strategic Plan for the next three years. Some minor edits and corrections would still be made as needed.

2. Upcoming RCEB Board Meetings and Subcommittees

- Geneva encouraged attendance at the next RCEB Board Meeting, scheduled for January 27, 2025, at 7:00 PM.
- The Diversity and Equity Committee Meeting would take place immediately before the board meeting at 5:30 PM on the same day.

3. The Consumer Advisory Committee was actively seeking new members.

- Geneva urged providers to inform their participants about this opportunity, as the committee desperately needed members. The CAC offered assistance with transportation home but required members to arrange their arrival independently.
- The next CAC meeting was scheduled for January 13, 2025, at 4:00 PM.

State Council on Developmental Disabilities Report—Sheraden Nicholau

No report.

Alameda County Developmental Disabilities Council – Siobhan Burgess

Geneva gave the ACDDC report in place of Siobhan.

A. January 8, 2025 Board Meeting hosted a panel on Grief and Loss in collaboration with Alegria Community Living, RCEB, and Alameda County Behavioral Health Department. Focused on how the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) community experiences and processes grief and loss. The discussion was described as robust and insightful, with multiple perspectives shared.

B. The next Alameda County DD Council Board Meeting scheduled for February 12, 2025, at 9:30 AM will host a legislative advocacy training. Community members are encouraged to attend to learn how to engage policymakers effectively.

C. Community Events & Initiatives

- Access & Functional Needs Advisory Committee Meeting scheduled for January 21, 2025, from 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM.
 - Will be held in a hybrid format to accommodate both in-person and virtual attendees.
 - This committee works on disaster preparedness and accessibility initiatives for individuals with disabilities.
- Emergency Preparedness Train-the-Trainer Course hosted by Alameda County VOAD and Prepare U Scheduled for January 28, 2025, at 1:00 PM in Newark, CA. Aims to train community leaders in emergency preparedness strategies for people with disabilities.
- Free Dental Event – “Give Special Kids a Smile 2025” on February 22, 2025, from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM hosted by the Southern Alameda County Dental Society.
 - Provides free dental screenings, cleanings, oral health kits, and potential treatment of critical dental needs for both adults and children with disabilities. Optometry services will also be provided.

Contra Costa County Developmental Disabilities Council – Vi Ibarra

No report.

East Bay Legislative Coalition Report – Will Sanford

Will Sanford provided an in-depth update on legislative advocacy efforts, focusing on the upcoming Legislative Town Hall, state budget developments, rate reform issues, and anticipated policy changes at both the state and federal levels.

1. EBLC’s Legislative Town Hall will take place in person on January 31, 2025, from 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM at 500 Davis Street, San Leandro. The event will bring together state legislators, disability service providers, and advocates.

- Key Topics for Discussion:
 - Updating the Core Staffing Formula:

- The core staffing formula for regional centers has not been updated in decades and does not reflect current staffing needs.
 - Advocacy efforts will focus on modernizing this outdated model to align with 21st-century operational costs.
 - Rate Study Implementation & Challenges:
 - Ongoing rate reform issues will be highlighted.
 - Providers will share testimonials about funding shortfalls and service sustainability concerns.
- As part of the town hall, video testimonials are being recorded from DSPs and individuals receiving services.
- Additional testimonials are being sought to showcase real-life stories to legislators.

2. State Budget & Legislative Priorities

- California's Budget Outlook:
 - The DDS budget is projected at \$19 billion, which is a significant increase from last year's \$15 billion. The increase accounts for:
 - Full implementation of the rate study.
 - An estimated 40,000 new individuals entering the system.

3. Federal Policy Concerns

- There is growing concern over potential federal Medicaid changes, particularly proposals for block grants.
- A previous proposal from the Trump administration sought to limit Medicaid funding, which would have had a significant impact on California's disability services.
- Upcoming elections and changes in federal administration could bring similar policy proposals back into discussion.

4. Advocacy Strategy & Next Steps

- The EBLC legislative committee meets on the first Wednesday of every month from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM (via Zoom).
 - A new legislative cycle has begun, meaning that all bills from last year have either been passed or are no longer active.
 - The committee will begin reviewing newly introduced bills and tracking policies that impact disability services.
 - Will asked attendees to email him or Michael Pereira if they came across bills of interest.

Service Provider Equity Subcommittee Report – Marcie Hodge

Marcie informed the group that the December 2024 meeting was canceled due to the holiday season and scheduling conflicts.

The subcommittee had a pending question from the November 2024 meeting regarding updates on the Equity Ombudsman role. Lisa Kleinbub confirmed that the ombudsman information is ready for publication on the RCEB website, but the holiday period delayed its posting.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 24, 2025. A selection committee will be formed to review equity-focused proposals. The subcommittee plans to discuss membership, criteria, and selection process in the next meeting.

Day Providers Subcommittee Report – Mike Pereira

The Day Program Subcommittee is actively discussing service code transitions, potential hourly billing models, and provider concerns over rate adjustments.

Day programs are moving away from old service codes and adopting new standardized service codes (e.g., 531, 532, and 325). Steve Robinson emphasized that there will be no immediate changes to billing or rate structures during this transition.

- Some providers noted that certain service codes don't fit neatly within existing categories.
- Steve Robinson confirmed that DDS allows exemptions for special cases, and providers should submit requests before the March 31, 2025 deadline.
- DDS is reviewing exemption requests and may propose alternative service codes where needed.

A broader discussion is ongoing about potential conversion of day program services from existing billing models to hourly models. Any major hourly rate implementation will not occur for at least another year (2026 at the earliest).

- Providers expressed concerns over how this change would affect service delivery and funding.

The Day Program Subcommittee generally meets weekly:

- Fridays (when there is no PVAC meeting), at 11:00 AM for general discussions where directives and updates are reviewed
- Wednesdays for troubleshooting sessions.

All service providers (not just day programs) are welcome to attend the subcommittee meetings.

HireAble Subcommittee Report – Donna Feingold

Donna Feingold provided updates on HireAble’s training programs, job club activities, and employer engagement initiatives.

1. Free Community Training on Benefits Planning scheduled. The training covers how earnings impact benefits such as SSI and SSDI. The training is designed as a general overview to help job seekers and service providers understand key financial implications. Even before the official flyer was released, many people had already signed up.

2. HireAble hosted its first official job club for job seekers affiliated with member agencies. The initial session had 45 job seekers, a turnout Donna described as fantastic.

1. A representative from CVS attended to discuss how to apply for jobs at CVS and what it’s like to work at CVS.

3. Current & Upcoming Trainings:

- Reasonable Accommodations in the Workplace – Helping employers understand legal obligations and best practices.
- Working with Neurodiverse Employees – Focused on strategies to support employees with autism, ADHD, and other neurodivergent conditions.
- Employer Engagement Strategies – How to build inclusive hiring practices.
- Membership & Subscription Services:
 - HireAble offers a subscription service for member agencies, which includes access to specialized trainings and employment support services.
 - Donna encouraged those interested to contact her for more information.

PVAC Membership Report – Geneva Carlos-Valentino

Geneva Carlos-Valentino provided an update on the Membership Committee’s recruitment efforts, membership composition, voting process, and open leadership roles.

1. The Membership Committee is actively seeking new members to represent underrepresented service categories.

- Transportation Services
- Children & Infant Services
- Support Services (Respite, Behavioral, Extended Day, Tailored Day).

2. Basic Requirements for Membership:

- Must attend at least three PVAC meetings within the last year.
- Should participate in at least one subcommittee (not required by bylaws, but highly encouraged).
- Be actively engaged with legislative advocacy, equity efforts, day programs, or developmental disability councils.
- Interested individuals can self-nominate or nominate others using a Google nomination form.
 - Once eligibility is confirmed, nominees are brought before the committee for a vote.
- Geneva shared the nomination form link in the chat and encouraged interested participants to apply before the next meeting.

3. Open Leadership Positions within PVAC

- Three key positions remain unfilled:
 1. Secretary – Responsible for recording meeting minutes and maintaining official records.
 2. Programs Chair – Coordinates presentations and speaker schedules for PVAC meetings.

3. Membership Chair – Leads recruitment efforts and ensures new members integrate smoothly.
- Geneva urged voting members to consider stepping up and asked interested individuals to contact her or Dan Hogue.

Public Comment

At the conclusion of the PVAC meeting, several community members shared announcements, resources, and concerns. These included new residential home openings, membership interest, DDS budget updates, service provider networking, and outreach efforts.

1. Announcements & Resources

- Speaker: Lu (Service Provider) announced the opening of a new Level 4I home in Antioch, which is ambulatory and ready to accept new consumers. Expressed interest in joining PVAC as a representative from Contra Costa County to enhance provider involvement.
- Speaker: Clyde (Service Provider) shared that his organization has a three-person Level 4I home in Antioch, which is already operational. Additionally, they are in the process of securing a second location in Richmond for a supported living program. Stated that he plans to attend future PVAC meetings regularly and is interested in joining committees once he meets the three-meeting minimum participation requirement.
- Speaker: Nathan (Child Development Specialist, Wayfinder Family Services) introduced himself as a new attendee at PVAC and expressed interest in expanding his caseload.
- Geneva Carlos-Valentino announced that the California budget summary had been posted. Mike Pereira provided a link to DDS budget pages 51-52, which outline funding allocations for the upcoming fiscal year.
- Geneva encouraged all attendees to review the budget to understand how funding may impact regional center services.
- Geneva highlighted a comment from Donna Feingold in the chat regarding upcoming family training sessions. These trainings focus on navigating regional center services and preparing for the HCBS compliance review process. Donna had sent out a flyer the previous day and encouraged providers to inform families about these opportunities.

2. Question raised by Sara Trail: She inquired if there were plans to fill the vacant African American Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Specialist position.

- Response from Lisa Kleibub with RCEB: There are two DEIB-related positions currently posted:
 1. African American DEIB Specialist
 2. Director of Access and Equity
- Both positions are actively being recruited.

Meeting adjourned at 11:06 AM.

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