

**Provider Vendor Advisory Committee
Regional Center of the East Bay
Meeting Minutes Friday, March 14, 2025**

Call to Order:

At 9:35 AM, Dan Hogue welcomed attendees. A roll call was conducted to confirm the quorum.

Minutes Approval and Discussion:

Marcie Hodge moved to approve; Carlos Cienfuegos seconded the motion. No discussion or changes were suggested. A vote was held in the chat and the motion passed with the required number of votes.

Regional Center Update—Dr. Rebecca Nanyonjo

- Legislative and Regulatory Updates:
 - AB 1147 and PRA Requirements: As of Jan 1, 2026, all California regional centers must comply with Public Records Act (PRA) requests. This means emails and documents produced at work are now public records.
 - CA House Republicans proposed Medi-Cal cuts, potentially affecting services for individuals with developmental disabilities (IDD).
 - Federal Litigation: Attorney General Rob Bonta has sued over discriminatory federal practices and succeeded in temporarily halting funding freezes.
- Emergency Preparedness:
 - California was found unprepared during the pandemic, particularly in aiding vulnerable populations. Assemblymember Rhodessa Ransom is seeking feedback to improve emergency responses, especially for IDD communities.
- DDS Budget Proposal (FY 25–26): No new initiatives; focuses include:
 - Full implementation of service provider rate reform and Quality Incentive Payments (QIP)
 - Development of a DDS master plan
 - IT modernization, including possibly replacing SANDIS with a proposed database “Lois”
 - Ensuring regional centers are included in system assessments

Mason Tillman Report Discussion:

Becky presented findings from the Mason Tillman report (a 203-page document), focused on allegations of disparate treatment of African American providers.

- The report was found to have methodological flaws, including:
 - Lack of empirical validation
 - Inconsistent statistical analysis (e.g., problematic mean, median, and mode values)
 - Anecdotal claims not supported by verified data
- Example concerns:
 - Empty beds in African American homes due to lack of referrals
 - Incomplete consumer profiles
 - Payment disparities not substantiated by data
 - Corrective action plans perceived as unfairly targeted
- RCEB Response:
 - Becky emphasized transparency and acknowledged the report’s issues but stressed that the concerns raised are real and deserve attention.
 - Next actions include:
 - Developing a summary and comprehensive response for public post
 - Engaging Dr. Tracy Edwards Moore and Omar Rascon for training and implementation support
- Community Questions & Follow-Up:
 - Mike asked when the report would be available and if stakeholders could provide feedback.
 - Becky responded: Yes, it will be released after the board meeting, and there will be mechanisms (possibly an email) for submitting questions and feedback.

- Dan confirmed that only a preliminary version of the Mason Tillman report had previously been shared with the Board of Directors. It had not been shared with the PVAC group or any other external group.
- Kim asked for a list of African American vendors in the RCEB area for a disparity project.
 - Becky replied this may not be public but invited Kim to share her email to follow up.
- Wendell urged leadership to visit Black providers in person, noting visible referral disparities that don't require complex analytics to observe.
 - Becky affirmed his concerns, acknowledged the lived Black experience, and committed to community visits and deeper engagement beyond data and reports.
- Becky asked for grace as RCEB navigates and corrects historical issues, promising comprehensive responses and community inclusion going forward.

PRESENTATION: Cultural Competency Trainings: A Must-Have for Providers to Serve Every Client

Tiffany Wong of Circle Up Education, alongside Marianna Varela from the RCEB Diversity & Equity team.

Circle Up previously trained hundreds of RCEB staff and staff at nine other regional centers. The trainings have received 97% satisfaction ratings.

RCEB received Language Access and Cultural Competency (LACC) funding to extend training initiatives from internal staff to vendors and providers. Circle Up Education developed a four-part, self-paced training series available to RCEB vendors and providers for free.

The training content focused on accessible language, implicit bias, cultural competency, and DEI leadership. The trainings comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and promote meritocracy and equal opportunity.

- Courses are video-based and self-paced, hosted on an online learning platform.
- Each of the four modules runs approximately four hours and includes interactive elements.
- Registration opens with two slots per organization initially, with the potential to expand if space allows.
- Courses are designed to enhance relationships and understanding across cultures, both within staff teams and in service to diverse clients.
- Encourages integration of cultural awareness practices into daily provider work.

A flyer and registration link were shared during the meeting and sent afterward to attendees.

- Follow-Up Questions and Responses:
 - Question (Jessica): What if an organization has multiple programs/vendors serving RCEB? Can more than two people enroll in the training?
 - Answer (Marianna): For now, they're limiting to two people per organization, but will keep a waitlist and expand access if spots remain.
 - Question (Craig): How has provider buy-in been? He shared that while the training was enjoyable, some aspects didn't fully land.
 - Answer (Tiffany): She appreciated the feedback and mentioned they strive for continuous improvement. The trainings are designed with real scenarios, and the team is open to further input.
 - Question (Marcie): Does the trainings count for CEUs required for administrators?
 - Answer (Tiffany): Not yet, but Circle Up is in the process of applying for CEU accreditation. If approved, future courses may include tests or quizzes to meet licensing standards.
 - Question (Sylvia): Will the training qualify for CEUs through Community Care Licensing?
 - Answer (Tiffany): She hadn't looked into that yet but appreciated the suggestion and committed to researching it.
 - Comment (Michael): Offered to discuss further via email about CEUs and how they relate to arms and CEOs in their community.
 - Response (Tiffany): Grateful for the input and confirmed she would follow up.

- Participants also discussed course duration and certificate issuance. Tiffany said they were thinking about 1–2 months per module and that each module would come with its own certificate.

Regional Center Staff Report—Steve Robinson

Steve's Report:

- Rate Implementation Issues:
 - Acknowledged that some vendors were missing from RCEB's workbooks and apologized for the oversight.
 - Encouraged providers who haven't received acknowledgment forms or seen their rate increase to contact them.
- Disagreement with Rate Alignments:
 - For providers disputing their new rate/service code alignments, Steve pointed to a "Rate Review and Alignment Request Form."
- Self-Determination Program (SDP) Adjustments:
 - Approximately 500 clients in SDP may not have the updated rates in their spending plans.
 - The SDP team is still determining how to apply the new rates retroactively to January 1, 2025.
 - Steve promised to update PVAC as a process is finalized.
- DDS issued a directive on March 6, 2025, allowing remote services to continue through December 31, 2026 for:
 - Day programs
 - Independent Living Services (ILS)
 - Behavioral therapy
 - Clinical assessments for Lanterman Act eligibility.
- Update on the status of rate acknowledgments:
 - 1,200 forms sent; about 450 returned
 - Issues identified with specific service codes (113, 862, 111, etc.)
 - Retroactive payments and corrected benchmarks discussed
- Chelsea's Report:
 - Reinforced that she and Steve are reviewing new issues with rate workbooks and will follow up with impacted vendors.
 - She is one of the primary contacts for ongoing communication regarding rate updates and payment corrections.
 - Errors in DDS Workbooks:
 - Noted specific issues with service codes (e.g., 862, 062, and 111) that had incorrect benchmark rates or classifications.
 - For example, providers using service code 111 may be owed retroactive adjustments from July 1 to December 31, 2024, due to benchmarking errors.
 - Reminder that providers should submit acknowledgment forms by March 31, unless errors require correction.
 - DDS has confirmed that erroneous forms can be amended past that deadline.
 - Updates on QIP disbursements for ACRE and Early Start programs:
 - DDS sent updated payment lists
 - Expect disbursement timelines of 1–2 months for entry, then processing within another 1–2 months
 - Coordination with providers to address portal registrations and timing issues.
- Mike Minton reported that DDS completed a new, more rigorous Medicaid Waiver audit that included evaluation for HCBS Final Rule compliance—a first for RCEB.
 - The audit spotlighted areas such as semi-annual and quarterly reviews in residential settings.
 - Toolworks, via Donna Feingold, confirmed they are conducting HCBS evaluations, with enthusiastic responses from programs and tangible progress observed.📍
 - Sara Trail announced upcoming HCBS-funded employment training workshops for April 9 (job coaching skills) and April 30 (residential employment integration).

- Emphasis was placed on **residential providers** understanding their role in employment pathways, especially under HCBS guidelines.
- DDS is redefining residential home levels (now Levels 2-7). Major changes include consultation hours for Level 3 homes and staffing hours as well as awake staff requirements.
 - Trainings to support the transition are being scheduled, and providers are urged not to panic—implementation is expected through the end of 2025.
- Kim asked about RCEB contacts who can advise on Self-Determination Program (SDP) access for those in residential settings. Steve committed to connecting her with the appropriate STP specialist.

Regional Center Board Report—Dan Hogue

Dan reported that the Board of Directors approved several contracts during the February 24th meeting.

- He emphasized that all contracts were within the existing budget authority, meaning they did not require any special or extraordinary approvals.
- The approvals were processed through normal Board procedures, with nothing unusual about the items brought forward.
- CalPERS audit required retroactive Board approval of pay scales to FY21 for compliance with California regulations.
- The delegated conservatorship policy was updated and approved to ensure duty of loyalty is to the conserved individual.
- A routine financial report was provided.

State Council on Developmental Disabilities Report—Sheraden Nicholau

Sheraden was unable to attend the PVAC meeting, but sent a report that Dan shared on her behalf.

- Upcoming meetings: **Self-Advocates Advisory Committee** (March 17), **Council Meeting** (March 18).
- Encouraged the community to contact congressional reps about protecting Medicaid.
- Mentioned a March 27 community event (flyer details to follow).

Alameda County Developmental Disabilities Council – Ben Chen

No report.

Contra Costa County Developmental Disabilities Council – Vi Ibarra

Vi highlighted several key points:

- The transition conference is at DVC on March 15th (the day after PVAC) and is at full capacity.
- Congreso Familiar will be at Pittsburgh High School on Saturday, April 5th, and they are looking for bilingual service providers to have resource tables and volunteers.
- The next DD Council meeting will be on March 26th, with an in-person component at Las Trampas and a Zoom option for virtual attendance.
 - The meeting will include a presentation on the new person-centered IPP form and a presentation from a community member who attended the President's joint address to Congress.

East Bay Legislative Coalition Report – Will Sanford

Will Sanford noted the ongoing challenges and uncertainties in federal funding and legislative processes. provided a legislative update. Key points from his report included:

- Federal Government Funding:
 - A continuing resolution was expected to pass the U.S. Senate that day to fund the federal government through September 30, 2025.
 - While not yet official at the time of the meeting, the resolution would avert a shutdown and continue government operations through the end of the federal fiscal year.

- The resolution includes increased defense and immigration funding and potential reductions in social service funding
- Will noted concerns about what these cuts could mean for services at the state level.
- Emphasized the critical importance of Medicaid funding, which supports:
 - Regional center services
 - In-home support services
 - CalFresh, Medi-Cal, CalWORKs, and related programs
- Advocated for continued community pressure on Congress to protect Medicaid.
- EBLC will meet on Wednesday, April 2, to review and discuss proposed bills.
 - Two key bills of interest:
 - Employment Accessibility Bill: Aims to reduce administrative barriers by eliminating CARF requirements for some employment vendors.
 - Transportation Liability Bill: Would allow individuals transporting clients in personal vehicles to avoid being classified as commercial or delivery drivers, which would help ease insurance and operational burdens—particularly important for community-based service providers (CBS).

Service Provider Equity Subcommittee Report – Marcie Hodge

- Dan reported that he and Marcy met with Becky (RCEB Executive Director) to discuss the status of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for a new Equity Ombudsman role.
- Becky shared new ideas and a strategic direction to address equity more effectively across service delivery.
- Details of that discussion will be shared at the next Equity Subcommittee meeting.
- The Service Provider Equity Subcommittee will reconvene on Friday, March 28 at 1:00 PM.
- Dan encouraged attendees to join the email distribution list by contacting him directly.

Day Providers Subcommittee Report – Mike Pereira

- Mike shared that the subcommittee is back to weekly Friday meetings at 11 AM (when PVAC is not scheduled) and troubleshooting sessions on Wednesdays at 2 PM.
- Discussions have focused on the ongoing challenges and confusion around rate reform implementation.
- Mike expressed appreciation for RCEB's transparency, particularly Steve and Chelsea's efforts, and acknowledged the "bumpiness" of the process, which was expected.
- A recent update to the provider directory now reflects Quality Incentive Payment (QIP) eligibility status.
- Mike urged providers to review the directory to confirm their participation and recognition status.
- Highlighted issues with incomplete workbooks and the importance of being accurately listed to ensure correct rate application and acknowledgment.
- Providers who haven't completed the original survey or are new should use the Vendor Data System (VDS) to correct or establish their status.
- Emphasized due diligence to ensure eligibility for QIP and appropriate rate adjustments.

HireAble Subcommittee Report – Donna Feingold

- Donna explained that a recent SSA policy change overturned a positive reform allowing SSDI and CDB beneficiaries to repay overpayments in small installments (e.g., 10% of monthly benefits).
 - Under the new rules, full checks can now be withheld, putting many individuals at risk of housing instability and hardship.
 - She emphasized the importance of continuing to work and not letting fear of overpayment recovery deter employment.
- Donna reminded participants that HireAble is available to help individuals and families navigate these complex issues. Services include:
 - Explaining SSA rules
 - Providing support for waiver requests and appeals

- Educating families and providers on employment and benefits compatibility
- She encouraged anyone needing help to email her directly and confirmed that HireAble is supported by RCEB to serve the community.
- Donna added that employment-related QIPs go beyond just the standard “serve 4 people” metric.
 - Other QIPs include:
 - Transitions from internships or work activity programs
 - Staff development for employment services
 - Building employment capacity within organizations
- She highlighted the need to ensure these various categories are recognized in QIP tracking and reporting.

PVAC Membership Report – Dan Hogue

Dan reminded attendees that PVAC is actively seeking new members, especially from:

- Transportation providers
- Children’s services

Dan also requested help filling the secretary role for note-taking responsibilities.

Public Comment

Dan opened the floor, waited, and then moved to adjournment after no additional comments came in.

Meeting Adjournment

Dan closed the meeting with remarks recognizing St. Patrick’s Day and Women’s History Month, emphasizing appreciation for women’s contributions and encouraging a safe and celebratory weekend.

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