



Council Meeting Minutes July 18, 2023

Members Attending

Alex Reyes (S.A.)
Aubyn Stahmer (UCEDD)
Brian Winfield (DDS)
Cathay Liu (F.A.)
Eric Ybarra (S.A.)
Harold Ashe (F.A.)
Harold Fujita (F.A.)
Jessica Brown (F.A.)
Joseph Billingsley (DHCS)
Joyce McNair (F.A.)
Kara Ponton (S.A.)
Kilolo Brodie-Crumsey (F.A.)
Larry Yin (UCEDD)
Michael Ellis (F.A.)
Michael Thomas (DOR)
Nestor Nieves (S.A.)
Nicole Adler (S.A.)
Nick Wavrin (CDE)
Rosanna Ryan (S.A.)
Sonia Jones (S.A.)
Wesley Witherspoon (S.A.)
Yasmin Bolourian (UCEDD)

Members Absent

Mark Beckley (CDA)
Marko Mijic (CHHS)
Viviana Barnwell (F.A.)
Lee Bycel (F.A.)
Julie Gaona (S.A.)
Julie Neward (F.A.)
Julio Garnica (S.A.)

Others Attending

Aaron Carruthers
Andrea Lynch
Ananda W.
Anne De Medeiros
Beth Hurn
Brian Weisel
Bridget Kolakosky
Charles Ngyuen
Chris Arroyo
Daisy Barry
David Grady
Debra Adler
Debra Ponton
DeLois McGriff
Dena Hernandez

Others Attending

(cont.)

Elsa Casper
Holly Bins
Jazmin Oun
Julie Eby-McKenzie
Ken DaRosa
Kristie Allensworth
Lynn Villoria
Martha Liu
Mary Ellen Stives
Michelle Mahler
Nicole Patterson
Nikita W.
Renee Bauer
Riana Hardin
Rihana Ahmad
Robin Maitino-Erben
Rondale Holloway
Scarlett VonThenen
Sheraden Nicholau
Tania Morawiec
Tina Reszler
William Leiner
Yaritzza Sanchez
Yolanda Cruz

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Wesley Witherspoon called the meeting to order at 10:46 A.M.

2. **ESTABLISH QUORUM**

A quorum was established.

Legend:

SA = Self-Advocate
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3. **WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS**

Members and others in attendance introduced themselves.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

SCDD North Valley Hills Regional Office Manager Dena Hernandez provided a public comment. She thanked the State Council for the \$1,500 sponsorship for the CHOICES Institute Conference which took place in Stockton on April 14, 2023. The sponsorship enabled the hiring of keynote speakers and the offset of various costs, including a themed T-shirt contest. Funds were also utilized to hire Futures Explored for event coverage and The Advocates for lunchtime entertainment. The event marked their first in-person hybrid meeting, attended by 300 individuals in person and 220 via Zoom. A sizzle reel of the event can be accessed at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wkX5Ov4Mrr4wJlqEzIXJAjwI2nJ0JGdl/view?usp=sharing>.

5. **CHAIR REPORT AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The Chair announced various national observances for July, including American Artist Appreciation Month and Family Fun Month. He emphasized staying hydrated during the summer celebrations and highlighted the upcoming anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Additionally, he shared photos from his attendance at Summerfest in Illinois, one of the largest U.S. music festivals, which celebrated its 55th anniversary. He provided updates on official comments submitted by the Council in support of new HCBS rules and his upcoming participation at the Annual National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) Conference. Lastly, he reminded Councilmembers to fill out the Executive Director evaluation before turning it over to Councilmember Eric Ybarra.

Councilmember Ybarra provided a report on the Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference that he attended in person in May. The full report can be accessed at <https://scdd.ca.gov/councilmeetings/>.

SCDD committee reports were provided in the meeting packet. Chair Witherspoon asked that members read through these reports when they are able. The committee reports can be accessed online at <https://scdd.ca.gov/councilmeetings/>.

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6. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT AND STAFF REPORTS

Executive Director Carruthers emphasized the value of in-person interactions for a more holistic exchange of ideas and humanity. He moved on to discuss the State Plan, which is the State Council's agreement with the Administration for Community Living (ACL) for a \$8 million grant aimed at community betterment. Progress on the State Plan is ahead of schedule, with most 2023 goals already met and five-year goals nearly complete. Considering this, adjustments were made to the State Plan to align better with emerging community needs, including increasing objectives around Self-Advocacy and system change, refining metrics that were previously overstated, and incorporating new initiatives such as the Supported Decision-Making Technical Assistance Program.

Led by Legislative and Public Policy Committee (LPPC) Chair Harold Ashe and Deputy Director Bridget Kolakosky, the Council supported 18 legislative bills. One bill failed and did not meet its committee deadline, while three shifted to a two-year legislative cycle. The Council also extended support to two additional bills and rescinded support for a bill that transitioned into a tax measure. 15 bills are still progressing through the legislative process, with decisions by the governor expected to be finalized by mid-October.

The Executive Director discussed the Chair's comments to the federal government concerning Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). HCBS is a federal funding source for services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and it operates under certain rules that periodically undergo revisions. The Chair supported the latest proposed rules, which aim to allocate 80% of funding to direct healthcare worker compensation, require states to detail waitlist management, insist on person-centered service planning, mandate electronic systems for reporting critical incidents, and establish grievance processes for consumers. The Executive Director commended the Chair for amplifying California's supportive stance on these improved measures.

Additionally, Executive Director Carruthers relayed that an in-depth presentation on the Self-Determination Program (SDP) will be provided later in the day, including its evaluation and findings. He briefly explained that the Self-Determination Program (SDP) serves as both a philosophy and a specific program within California's regional centers. It was initiated in June 2018, and became available to all regional center consumers by

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June 2021. SDP is an alternative service delivery model that currently has about 2,600 participants, compared to the traditional system's 400,000. The federally supported program aims to promote principles like freedom, authority, and responsibility. A recently submitted report analyzed SDP's effectiveness and user satisfaction in comparison to traditional services. The Executive Director thanked the partners involved, including DRC, UCD, UCLA Tarjan Center, and Children's Hospital.

Lastly, the Executive Director addressed the challenges posed by climate change, particularly concerning the increased risks of aging utility systems to extreme weather events that could trigger wildfires. To lower this risk, Public Safety Power Shutoffs were implemented in 2018. SCDD has met with major utility providers like Pacific Gas & Electric, Edison, and San Diego Gas and Electric since 2018 to minimize the impact of these shutoffs on individuals with disabilities. Ongoing discussions aim to address the specific needs of Californians with disabilities during these shutoffs and educate communities on preparedness. The Executive Director acknowledged the collaborative work with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services and DRC in tackling these issues.

7. APPROVAL OF MAY 2023 MEETING MINUTES

Action 1

It was moved/seconded (Adler [S.A]/ Ybarra [S.A.]) and carried to approve the March 2023 meeting minutes as presented by unanimous acclimation. (See last page of minutes for a voting record of members present)

8. STATEWIDE SELF-ADVOCACY NETWORK (SSAN) REPORT

SCDD SSAN representative Alex Reyes provided Councilmembers with an update from the most recent SSAN meeting on June 7th and 8th, 2023. The next SSAN meeting will be held in person in September.

9. CYCLE 46 PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

The State Plan Committee convened in February and March to define focus areas, create scoring criteria, and finalize project descriptions. The Council approved these recommendations at the March Council meeting, leading to the release of the Cycle 46 Request for Proposals (RFP) on March 27. The deadline for submissions was May 22, with administrative review completed on May 26 and scoring in June. The Council's approval

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will trigger a protest period, with award notifications set for July 31 and project commencement on October 1.

Out of \$300,000 in available funds, the Council received 17 grant proposals across four focus areas: education, employment, health and safety, and self-advocacy. Contract Analyst Kristie Allensworth performed an initial review, resulting in the disqualification of five proposals due to incompleteness or technical errors. Eligible proposals required a minimum score of 75% of the available 150 points to be considered for an award. The scoring panel recommended three projects for funding, two under employment and one under self-advocacy.

This year marked the first use of the Grant Vantage electronic portal, which received positive feedback. A follow-up survey will be conducted to gather additional feedback and make improvements to the platform.

The full presentation and project descriptions can be accessed at <https://scdd.ca.gov/councilmeetings/>.

Action 2

It was moved/seconded (Ybarra [S.A]/ Reyes [S.A.]) and carried to approve the State Plan Committee's Cycle 46 Grant funding recommendations and direct the Executive Director to administer the contract process. (See last page of minutes for a voting record of members present).

10. EMPLOYMENT FIRST OFFICE

Deputy Director Kolakosky highlighted the Council's ongoing efforts to improve employment opportunities for the disability community, who face underemployment rates below 20%. She emphasized the positive impact of ending subminimum wages through SB 639 in 2021, and the need to better connect job seekers with suitable employment. A significant focus was on the Limited Exam Appointments Process State Internship Program (LEAP SIP), which transitioned from a temporary to a permanent program. Despite initial legislative resistance, making the program permanent allows for increased reliability and the potential for program expansion to benefit a greater number of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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In addition to making the LEAP SIP program permanent, the Council’s second priority for 2023 was the creation of an Employment First Office. While California has been an Employment First state since 2013, underemployment rates among those with intellectual and developmental disabilities have not substantially improved. This new office, officially approved in late stages of this year’s state budget process and launching in July 2024, is designed to work across state employment programs. It will focus on improving state-level programs to better interpret and implement Employment First policies, making job-seeking more equitable for all, regardless of disability.

The Executive Director provided further insights into the implications of establishing the Employment First Office through the budget process, via AB 121. He mentioned that AB 121 also dissolved the current Employment First Committee, merging its responsibilities under the new office to reduce policy fragmentation. A more streamlined committee will take its place. The office’s tasks will involve data collection, inter-departmental coordination, and actualizing the intended employment first policy. The success was a collaborative effort involving various stakeholders, including Disability Rights California and legislative members. Special recognition was given to Will Leiner from Disability Rights California and Councilmember Michael Ellis for their instrumental roles.

11. **SELF-DETERMINATION PROGRAM EVALUATION**

The Executive Director recognized the UCLA Tarjan Center, University of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities, Disability Rights California, UC Davis MIND Institute, Councilmember Aubyn Stahmer, and Councilmember Larry Yin for their contributions to the self-determination program evaluation.

Dr. Bolourian with the UCLA Tarjan Center elaborated on the methodology, stating that the self-determination program evaluation had three phases: a quantitative survey, focus groups, and a qualitative survey. They engaged with 604 stakeholders, most of which were current SDP enrollees, had a good representation of caregivers, and were self-reporting regional center consumers. She also presented demographic data of the participants in the Self-Determination Program (SDP) study. The largest participant groups were individuals with autism and young adults. In terms of racial and ethnic composition, 39% were white, 18%

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Black, 18% Hispanic, 10% Asian, and 15% identified as other. All regional centers were represented, with South Central Los Angeles, Frank D. Lanterman, and Alta California having the highest participation.

Key findings showed that the SDP received strong support for enabling participants to pursue individualized goals and better quality of life. However, participants consistently expressed administrative burdens as a drawback, including complexities in accessing information, inadequately trained service coordinators, and operational issues like high staff turnover, and poor customer service. The study also revealed existing inequalities within the Self-Determination Program, particularly racial disparities, and uneven implementation across regional centers. Participants noted that the program's complexity and administrative burdens significantly hindered accessibility for individuals with developmental disabilities, non-native English speakers, and those with educational or economic challenges. Statistical analyses supported these observations, with BIPOC individuals being less likely to meet with service coordinators and less likely to feel satisfied with the program compared to white participants. However, BIPOC participants reported higher successful outcomes. Younger participants and those with autism also faced greater challenges, leading to a lower likelihood of recommending the program. Overall, 70% of participants expressed positive agreement with their experience in SDP, while 20% disagreed, and 10% remained neutral. A significant 77% said they would recommend the program.

Focus groups identified key themes surrounding the Self-Determination Program (SDP) that revolved around the benefits of the program and its challenges. Positive themes included the program's support for self-determination principles, the freedom to choose services, and overall program satisfaction. Participants found valuable resources outside of regional centers through other families, social media, and advocacy groups like Disability Voices United. On the other hand, participants also mentioned several challenges, including administrative hurdles, a lack of program information, inequalities in access and service, and issues with staff capacity and training. Specific program flaws included restrictive Financial Management Services (FMS) policies concerning advanced payment, unclear enrollment processes, and delays in enrollment and payment. Additionally, some participants reported that regional centers discouraged enrollment in the SDP, either implicitly or explicitly.

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Will Leiner from DRC outlined a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at optimizing the Self-Determination Program. The main recommendations included enhancing public knowledge of the program, creating uniform guidelines for enrollment and budgeting, and recognizing the value of independent facilitators. Will emphasized that the responsibility of promoting the program should lie with the system and not solely on existing participants. He stressed the need for standardization across the program's various regional centers and called for stronger investment in the compensation and training of independent facilitators, particularly those from underserved areas. Executive Director Carruthers presented the two final recommendations. The first is using self-determination as a model to improve workforce diversity and retention by allowing participants to hire from their communities. The final recommendation is to create a more equitable system to mitigate disparities by applying an equity lens to all recommendations to address disparities in program benefits, particularly affecting Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

12. **NEXT MEETING DATE AND ADJOURNMENT**

The next Council meeting will be held on September 19, 2023. The meeting was adjourned at 3:27 P.M.

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Name	Action 1 Minutes	Action 2 Cycle 46
Adler, Nicole	For	For
Ashe, Harold	For	For
Billingsley, Joseph	For	Abstain
Bolourian, Yasmin	For	For
Brodie-Crumsey, Kilolo	For	For
Brown, Jessica	For	For
Ellis, Michael	For	For
Fujita, Harold	For	For
Imparato, Andy	For	For
Jones, Sonia	For	For
Liu, Cathay	For	For
McNair, Joyce	For	For
Nieves, Nestor	For	For
Ponton, Kara	For	For
Reyes, Alex	For	For
Ryan, Rosanna	For	For
Stahmer, Aubyn	For	For
Thomas, Michael	For	For
Wavrin, Nick	For	For
Winfield, Brian	For	NP
Witherspoon, Wesley	For	For
Ybarra, Eric	For	For
Yin, Larry	For	For

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