



SELF-ADVOCATES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES September 18, 2023

Members Present

Nicole Adler (SA)
Julie Gaona (SA)
Julio Garnica (SA)
Sonia Jones (SA)
Nester Nieves (SA)
Kara Ponton (SA)
Alex Reyes (SA)
Rosanna Ryan (SA)
Wesley Witherspoon (SA)
Eric Ybarra (SA)

Others Attending

Rihana Ahmad
Aaron Carruthers
Rebecca Donabed
Riana Hardin
Beth Hurn
George Lewis
Marianne Iversen
Sarah May
Charles Nguyen
Charles Nutt
Tina Rezler
Alesha Thomas

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Committee Chair Nicole Adler called the meeting to order at 1:33 P.M.

2. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Committee members and others in attendance introduced themselves.

3. **ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM**

A quorum was established.

Legend:

SA = Self-Advocate

FA = Family Advocate

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Nicole Patterson, Advocacy & Self-Advocate Liaison Specialist, within the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS), requested that SAAC appoint a member to serve on the DDS Regional Center Performance Workgroup.

George Lewis, Community Program Specialist with the North Valley Hills Regional Office of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, talked about the Regional Office's partnership with Disability Rights California to organize the 21st Annual California Memorial Project to commemorate the lives lost at the Stockton Developmental Center. This year's event had a great turnout, with people sharing their thoughts, poems, and flowers. Mr. Lewis closed his remarks with the moving statement: "Let no person ever be removed from the community by reason of disability. Let us honor their memory by reclaiming and healing our past. Let no person ever be laid to rest without recognition."

Alesha Thomas, from the Adaptive Parent Project, shared that she is finishing up a project, funded by a grant from the California State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD), to educate healthcare providers about communicating with people with disabilities in healthcare settings. Ms. Thomas would like to set up one-on-one Zoom sessions with members interested in providing feedback on the accessibility of their materials. To learn more about the Adaptive Parent Project, you can email: Adaptiveparentproject@gmail.com.

5. APPROVAL OF JULY 17, 2023 MINUTES

Members reviewed the minutes from the July 17th, 2023 meeting. The minutes can be found starting on page 7 of the September 2023 SAAC packet.

ACTION 1

It was moved/seconded (Ryan [SA]/ Reyes [SA]) and carried to approve the July 17th minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

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6. MEMBER UPDATES

Members shared their concerns about the ongoing need to promote inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community living. Areas of concern included: reliable and accessible public transportation, building and maintaining healthy relationships, access to disability inclusive healthcare, competitive integrated employment (CIE) and its impact on disability benefits, and the marriage penalty for disability benefits. Members continue to be concerned about the need to promote inclusive language, barriers to participation in the Self-Determination Program, and general access to supports and services for people with disabilities.

7. REVIEW OF COUNCIL BUSINESS

SCDD Executive Director Aaron Carruthers provided members with an update on the status of the agency and an overview of the September Council meeting agenda. Executive Director Carruthers asked members to share their top issue of concern about people with I/DD that he should share with the federal government and other decision makers.

Members mentioned several topics, including access to employment opportunities, SSDI and IHSS benefit cuts due to employment, access to healthcare services and medication, the ability to marry without losing benefits, and affordable housing. Overall, members stressed the need to include people with disabilities in the planning and development of all parts of community living.

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8. STATEWIDE SELF-ADVOCACY NETWORK (SSAN)

SSAN Chair, Charles Nutt and the SSAN Secretary Rebecca Donabed, joined SCDD's SSAN Representative Alex Reyes in providing a summary of the September SSAN meeting.

In addition to participating in several leadership development activities, members of SSAN reviewed and approved the June minutes, reviewed and approved updates to the SSAN bylaws, dissolved the current workgroups and created 4 new workgroups focused on employment, and approved the September 2023 Edition of the "Voices of SSAN" Newsletter. A full report of the September SSAN meeting is posted on the Committee page of the SCDD website.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:37 P.M.

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