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STATEWIDE SELF ADVOCACY NETWORK MEETING INFORMATION



DATE: Thursday, March 6, 2025



TIME: 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

MEETING DETAILS:

This meeting is being held using the Zoom meeting platform.

ZOOM LINK:

<https://bit.ly/SSAN-March-2025>

Call-in Information:

CALL IN NUMBER: (669) 900 9128

MEETING ID: 837 9721 8756

PASSCODE: 489642

Accessibility

SSAN is a project of SCDD and values people's access needs. If you would like SSAN materials in different formats and/or languages, please contact Riana Hardin at (916) 263-8196 or Riana.Hardin@scdd.ca.gov. We ask that you give at least 5 business days' notice before the meeting to allow enough time to respond to all requests.



AGENDA

**March 6, 2025
10:00 AM – 3:00 PM**

1. Welcome and Introductions

Presented by:

- Rebecca Donabed, Chairperson
- Eric Aguilar, Vice-Chairperson
- Ellen Sweigert, Secretary



2. Review and Approval of December 2024 Minutes

Presented by: Rebecca Donabed, Chairperson

ACTION



3. Leadership and Advocacy

Presented by: Barbara Imle, SCDD Manager State Plan and
Self-Advocacy

Information



4. SCDD Legislative Update

Presented by: Veronica Bravo, SCDD Policy Analyst
Information



5. Emergency Preparation: Tools and Strategies

Presented by: Eric Aguilar, San Bernardino Regional
SSAN Representative



6. AUCD Conference Recap

Presented by: Robert Levy and Wesley Witherspoon
Information



Lunch Break

(12:15 pm – 1:00 pm)



7. SCDD Update

Presented by: Aaron Carruthers, SCDD Executive Director



8. SSAN Workgroups and Projects Update

Presented by: SSAN Leadership Team



9. **Introduction to the Hand in Hand Network**
Presented by: Brittanie Hernandez-Wilson,
California Homecare Organizer,
Hand in Hand: The Domestic
Employers Network



HAND IN HAND
THE DOMESTIC
EMPLOYERS NETWORK

10. **Voices of SSAN Newsletter**
Presented by: Robert Levy, UC Davis MIND Institute
UCEDD SSAN Representative



11. **Meeting Reflections and Closing**



MARCH 6, 2025

SSAN MEETING AGENDA ITEM 2

ACTION ITEM

Statewide Self-Advocacy Network

Approval of December 2024 Minutes



Attachments

- December 2024 Minutes

Recommended Action

Approve the December 2024 SSAN Meeting Minutes

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Statewide Self-Advocacy Network Meeting Minutes

December 10 & 12, 2024 (Hybrid)

SCDD Regional Members Present

Lisa Cooley – Sacramento
Ellen Sweigert – North Bay
Sara Desumala – Bay Area
Rebecca Donabed – Sequoia
Julie Gaona – Los Angeles
Eric Aguilar – San Bernardino
Viri Salgado – San Diego

Agency Members Present

Alex Reyes – SCDD
Scott Barron – DRC
Desiree Boykin – ARCA
Russell Dawson - Rawlings – CFILC
Robert Levy – UCD MIND Institute
Nicole Patterson – DDS
Kecia Weller – UCLA Tarjan Center
Wesley Witherspoon – USC CHLA

Members Not Present

Sonya Force – North Coast
Charles Nutt – North State
Robert Balderama – North Valley Hills
Sean Sullivan – Orange County
Russell Dawsons-Rawlings – CFILC
YO Disabled and Proud

SCDD Staff in Attendance

Rihana Ahmad – SCDD HQ
Chris Arroyo – SCDD HQ
Aaron Carruthers – SCDD HQ
Michelle Cave – SCDD HQ
Riana Hardin – SCDD HQ
Dena Hernandez – SCDD N. Valley Hills
Brian Hoag – SCDD HQ
Barbara Imle – SCDD HQ
Robin Maitino-Erben – SCDD HQ
Ibrahim Muttaqi – SCDD HQ
Gabriela Solval – SCDD Bay Area

Others Present

Jadolphus Fraser
Joy L
Jemel Williams
QA Training &
Advocacy Hill



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December 2024 Day 1: SSAN Minutes

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

SSAN Vice-Chairperson and Department of Developmental Services Representative, Nicole Patterson, called the meeting to order at 10:20 AM. Vice-Chair Patterson shared that she would be acting as Chair for the meeting. Members were asked to introduce themselves by sharing their name, the region and/or agency they represent. They were also asked to tell the group about an advocacy activity they had participated in since the last meeting, and a favorite Holiday tradition. Some of the holiday traditions shared included: spending time with family and friends, enjoying meals with others, exchanging gifts with others, and wearing warm cloths.

2. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

3. Review and Approval of September 2024 Minutes

The members reviewed the minutes from the meeting on September 4-5, 2024. Materials for this agenda item can be found on pages 5-12 of the June 2024 SSAN meeting packet.

ACTION: Motion #1, to approve the June 2024 minutes, was made by David Forderer and seconded by Lisa Cooley. A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed. See Vote Log on page 5.



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4. SSAN Annual Report

Riana Hardin, SCDD Self-Advocacy Coordinator reviewed the 2023-2024 SSAN Annual Report with members. Key highlights from the report include members' work on the Master Plan on Developmental Services, hosting a virtual 2023 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) event and a 2024 Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month webinar. They also worked on local projects to improve transportation and voting access, created four editions of Voices of SSAN Newsletter, produced the 2022-2023 Annual Report, and developed employment-focused tipsheets. Materials for this agenda item were included separately as a handout with the meeting packet materials.

5. SSAN Review of SCDD State Plan Development Questions

Barbara Imle, SCDD Manager of State Plan and Self-Advocacy presented the 2027-2031 State Plan Development Survey and requested SSAN member feedback. Feedback members provided included: prioritizing plain language, bolding the titles of survey sections, avoiding acronyms, adding information on how and where people can get help filling out the survey, including domestic violence on the list of issues important to self-advocates, and explaining what informal and formal community supports are.

6. SCDD Update

State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) Executive Director, Aaron Carruthers, provided updates on SCDD activities held since the September 2024 SSAN meeting. During this agenda item Executive Director Carruthers updated members on results of SCDD's legislative efforts, and efforts to end subminimum wage practices. Members shared concerns about the incoming administration and how it will affect supports for people with disabilities.



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7. SSAN Leadership Nominations

The first day of SSAN ended with members nominating people for leadership positions. Nominated members had the opportunity to accept or decline their nomination. Members who accepted their nomination are:

Chair Nominations

- Rebecca Donabed, nominated by Wesley Witherspoon.
- Robert Levy, nominated by Wesley Witherspoon.
- Eric Aguilar, nominated by Viri Salgado.

Vice-Chair Nominations

- Eric Aguilar, nominated by Kecia Weller
- Ellen Sweigert, nominated by Wesley Witherspoon.
- Rebecca Donabed, nominated by Viri Salgado
- Robert Levy, nominated by Wesley Witherspoon.

Secretary

- Sarah Desumala, nominated by Viri Salgado.
- Robert Levy, nominated by Wesley Witherspoon.
- Ellen Sweigert, nominated by Wesley Witherspoon.

8. Reflections for the Day

Members shared their takeaways for the day. Meeting went into recess at 2:45 PM.



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December 2024 Day 2: SSAN Minutes

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

SSAN Vice-Chairperson and Department of Developmental Services Representative, Nicole Patterson, called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM. Members were welcomed and were asked to introduce themselves by sharing their name, the region and/or agency they represent, and a quality that makes a good leader. Some qualities shared included listening to others, determination, mentoring others, and sharing information with others.

2. Public Comment

Dena Hernandez, SCDD North Valley Hills Regional Office Manager, would like a representative from SSAN as part of the SA DEAP.

3. SSAN Workgroups and Projects

Riana Hardin, SCDD Self-Advocacy Coordinator led a discussion with members about the current SSAN Workgroups and projects. Several members are involved in efforts to develop the Master Plan on Developmental Services, along with other projects that limit their participation in workgroup related activities.

Members agreed to table the tipsheet workgroup and the disability awareness training workgroup. The SSAN leadership team will discuss different options and reach out to members about which workgroup they would like to be in.



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4. September 2024 Voices of SSAN Newsletter

Riana Hardin, SCDD Self-Advocacy Coordinator, reviewed the December Voices of SSAN Newsletter with members.

The theme for the next edition of the newsletter is Developmental Disability Awareness Month. Some topics for articles to possibly include in the next edition are: an update on the development of the Master Plan on Developmental Services; a recap of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) conference, a recap on the Employment Webinar, and a message from the recently elected leaders.

Members are also welcome to write articles on other topics such as: the history of a program, policy, or service; or recapping events like the Special Olympics/Paralympics. Members interested in writing articles for the next newsletter should email their articles to Robert Levy and Riana Hardin by February 7, 2025.

5. SSAN Leadership Speeches

Candidates for the SSAN leadership positions had the chance to tell members why they deserved their vote for the position of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary.

6. SSAN Election

Riana Hardin, SCDD Self-Advocacy Coordinator and Charles Nguyen, SCDD Information Technology Analyst explained the process of using an online survey to manage the SSAN Leadership Elections.

The 2024 – 2026 SSAN Leadership team is:

- Rebecca Donabed, Sequoia Regional Representative as SSAN Chair
- Eric Aguilar, San Bernardino Regional Representative as SSAN Vice-Chair
- Ellen Sweigert, North Bay Regional Representative as SSAN Secretary



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7. Meeting Takeaways

Members had chance to reflect on parts of this meeting that were valuable. Some key takeaways included:

- Members enjoyed being updated on Council activities.
- Members congratulated the newly elected SSAN Leadership.

Members took the opportunity to make suggestions for future meeting topics. Suggestions included:

- Healthcare
- HCBS
- Food safety
- Technology and Self-Advocacy
- Disaster preparedness
- Businesses and owning your business
- Life transition from family support to ILS or SLS support
- How to get the most out of my IPP meeting
- Self-determination vs. traditional services
- Progressive Employment Concepts (PEC) grant for student services

8. Adjournment

The December 2024 SSAN meeting was adjourned at 2:27 PM.



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SSAN VOTE LOG: DECEMBER 2024

Name	Region	Motion 1	Chair	Vice-Chair	Secretary
Rosie Ryan	State Council on Developmental Disabilities	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present
Sonya Force	North Coast	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present
Charles Nutt	North State	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present
Lisa Cooley	Sacramento	For	Rebecca Donabed	Ellen Sweigert	Robert Levy
Ellen Sweigert	North Bay	No Vote Recorded	Eric Aguilar	Ellen Sweigert	Ellen Sweigert
Sara Desumala	Bay Area	For	Rebecca Donabed	Ellen Sweigert	Ellen Sweigert
Robert Balderama	North Valley Hills	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present
David Forderer	Central Coast	For	Rebecca Donabed	Eric Aguilar	Robert Levy
Rebecca Donabed	Sequoia	For	Eric Aguilar	Eric Aguilar	Ellen Sweigert
Julie Gaona	Los Angeles	For	Rebecca Donabed	Eric Aguilar	Ellen Sweigert
Sean Sullivan	Orange County	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present
Eric Aguilar	San Bernardino	For	Rebecca Donabed	Eric Aguilar	Ellen Sweigert
Viri Salgado	San Diego	For	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present
Desiree Boykin	ARCA	For	Eric Aguilar	Eric Aguilar	Ellen Sweigert
Russell Dawson–Rawlings	CFILC	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present
Vacant	YO! Disabled & Proud	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant
Nicole Patterson	DDS	Abstain	Rebecca Donabed	Robert Levy	Robert Levy
Scott Barron	DRC	Abstain	Eric Aguilar	Eric Aguilar	Robert Levy
Wesley Witherspoon	USC – CHLA	For	Rebecca Donabed	Ellen Sweigert	Ellen Sweigert
Kecia Weller	UCLA Tarjan Center	Not Present	Eric Aguilar	Eric Aguilar	Ellen Sweigert
Robert Levy	UCD MIND Institute	For	Rebecca Donabed	Eric Aguilar	Ellen Sweigert

MARCH 6, 2025

**SSAN MEETING AGENDA ITEM 3
INFORMATION ITEM**

Statewide Self-Advocacy Network

Leadership and Advocacy

Systemic Advocacy & Leadership Academy (SALA for short) is a statewide training program that was developed by the Los Angeles Regional Office. SALA had its first statewide cohort in 2024. Throughout 2025, a different part of the SALA training will be shared with members to build and strengthen advocacy skills.

To start off this series, Barbara Imle, SCDD Manager of State Plan and Self-Advocacy will talk about the connection between self-advocacy and leadership.

This item may have additional handouts provided at the meeting.

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MARCH 6, 2025

**SSAN MEETING ITEM 4
INFORMATION ITEM**

Statewide Self-Advocacy Network



SCDD Legislative Update

SCDD Policy Analyst, Veronica Bravo will provide members with an overview of the legislative process, SCDD's legislative priorities for the legislative cycle, and ideas on how SSAN members engage with legislative efforts.

This item may have additional handouts provided at the meeting.

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MARCH 6, 2025

**SSAN MEETING ITEM 5
INFORMATION ITEM**

Statewide Self-Advocacy Network



Emergency Preparation Tools and Strategies

Eric Aguilar, San Bernardino Regional SSAN Representative and SSAN Vice-Chair will share tools and strategies to help you prepare in case of an emergency.

This item may have additional handouts provided at the meeting.

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MARCH 6, 2025

**SSAN MEETING ITEM 6
INFORMATION ITEM**

Statewide Self-Advocacy Network



AUCD Conference Recap

Robert Levy, UC Davis MIND Institute UCEDD SSAN Representative and Wesley Witherspoon, USC Childrens' Hospital UCEDD SSAN Representative will provide members with a recap of the 2024 AUCD Conference.

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MARCH 6, 2025

**SSAN MEETING AGENDA ITEM 7
INFORMATION ITEM**

Statewide Self-Advocacy Network



SCDD Update

SCDD Executive Director Aaron Carruthers, will update SSAN members on Council activities related to meeting the needs of Californians with I/DD during these challenging and unique times.

This item may have additional handouts provided at the meeting.

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MARCH 6, 2025

**SSAN MEETING DAY 1 AGENDA ITEM 8
INFORMATION ITEM**



Statewide Self-Advocacy Network

SSAN Workgroups and Projects Update

At the December 2024 SSAN meeting, SSAN decided to table two workgroups. SSAN members asked the SSAN Leadership Team to provide an update on the SSAN workgroup choices at the March 2025 meeting. The two workgroups are:

- Self-Advocacy Virtual Engagement (SAVE) Workgroup
 - **Description:** Reaching out to and connecting with the Californians through virtual media (webinars, podcasts, and social media platforms). This workgroup educates the community on disability culture and raises awareness on the lived experiences of people with disabilities.
 - **Current Projects:** SSAN Webinars.
 - **Meeting Dates and Times:** Every other Tuesday at 3 over Zoom.
- Promotional Outreach and Organizing Materials (POOMs) Workgroup
 - **Description:** Create and share written outreach and organizing materials related to SSAN.
 - **Current Projects:** SSAN Newsletter.
 - **Meeting Dates and Times:** Not yet determined, preferably on Mondays or Fridays.

Please take the time to consider which workgroup you would like to participate in. Be ready to share how you would like to contribute to the workgroup's efforts.

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MARCH 6, 2025

**SSAN MEETING AGENDA ITEM 9
INFORMATION ITEM**



Statewide Self-Advocacy Network

Introduction to Hand in Hand: the Domestic Employers Network

SSAN Chair, Rebecca Donabed invited Brittanie Hernandez-Wilson, California Lead Homecare Organizer, at Hand and Hand to SSAN to provide a brief overview of the organization.

Hand in Hand: the Domestic Employers Network supports domestic workers' rights to fair wages and safe working conditions. The network organizes people to demand better working conditions and win public support. Their core values include workers' rights and dignity, social justice and intersectionality, interdependence, and collective power.

This agenda item will give members a chance to learn more about the network and think about if it should be a part of SSAN.

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MARCH 6, 2025

**SSAN MEETING AGENDA ITEM 10
INFORMATION ITEM**

Statewide Self-Advocacy Network



March 2025 Edition of Voices of SSAN Newsletter

Robert Levy, Project Lead for the Voices of SSAN Newsletter, will present SSAN members with a DRAFT version of the March 2025 Newsletter and ask members for any changes or additions. Robert will lead a discussion about ideas for the June 2025 Newsletter, so please come prepared with your ideas of the types of articles you would like to write for the next edition.

Attachments

- March 2025 Voices of SSAN Newsletter
- Voices of SSAN Newsletter Article Tips

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IN THIS EDITION:

This Edition of the Voices of SSAN Newsletter celebrates Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, which has been nationally recognized since 1987.

[Front Page:](#) Inside Edition Theme

[Page 3:](#) Master Plan for Developmental Services

[Page 4:](#) 2024 AUCD Conference

[Page 5:](#) 2024 Supported Life Conference Recap

[Page 6:](#) 2024 SSAN Employment Webinar

[Page 7:](#) How to do a Podcast

[Page 10:](#) Voter's Choice Act

[Page 11:](#) Turning Concern into Action

[Page 12:](#) Kudos Corner

[Page 13:](#) Disability Reads and Listens

[Page 14:](#) Community Resources

Editor: Robert Levy

Contributors:

- Lisa
- Wesley Witherspoon
- Eric Aguilar
- Robert Levy
- Scott Barron

History of Developmental Disabilities (DD) Awareness Month

President Ronald Reagan proclaimed March as 'Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month' in 1987. In recent years, the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) has partnered with the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) and the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) to create a social media campaign for the month. The social media campaign highlights the many ways in which people with and without developmental disabilities come together to form strong, diverse communities.

In California, the term "developmental disabilities" means the disability began before a person is 18 years old, and severely limits someone's ability to carry out activities related to self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, and/or self-direction.

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month shines a spotlight on the disability community and demonstrates how people with developmental disabilities lead normal lives. In turn, the public can learn how they can help people with developmental disabilities achieve their dreams.

Continue on Page 2: "Inside Edition Theme"



Continued from Page 1: “Inside Edition Theme”

Themes and Awareness:

Each year, the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) selects a unique theme for the month to guide social media posts and outreach events. Previous themes have focused on areas such as accessibility, employment, education, and empowerment. This month encourages actions at both the national and international levels, fostering initiatives to remove barriers and promote equal opportunities. The theme for 2025 has not been announced yet but be on the lookout for an announcement from NACDD in the coming weeks.

During March, people are encouraged to use the hashtag **#DDAwareness2025** on social media when sharing stories about developmental disabilities.

Here are some ideas on how to celebrate Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month:

1. **Share your story:** Share your interests, skills, the services, and supports that are important to you.
2. **Advocate for access:** If you notice language or physical access barriers in places you frequent, encourage the shop owner, manager and/or elected officials to work toward addressing those barriers.
3. **Lend a hand:** Volunteer your time at a disability nonprofit, senior center, nursing home, or outpatient clinic. Something as simple as delivering needed supplies can make a big difference to someone who is struggling.
4. **Show compassion:** Make an effort to understand the perspective and challenges others are going through.

This issue features stories of advocates working together to create positive change in their communities. At the end of this issue, you'll find a list of ways you can turn your concerns into action. Hopefully our list will inspire your own ideas of thing you can do to make positive change in your community and raise awareness of disability issues.



SSAN Mission Statement

The Statewide Self-Advocacy Network (SSAN) promotes leadership and builds bridges that strengthen advocacy among disability communities by focusing on policy change.

Visit the [SSAN Page](#) on the SCDD website to check out past newsletters, annual reports, and meeting info. You can also navigate to the SSAN page by clicking on the “Self-Advocacy” tab at www.scdd.ca.gov.

Let us know if you want to see anything specific in future newsletters!

How do you contact the SSAN Newsletter Editor, Robert Levy? Leave a message for him by contacting the SCDD Self-Advocacy Coordinator **Riana Hardin** at **(916) 263-8196**

Check out the [SCDD YouTube Page](#) for stories from self-advocates, past meetings, and more!

Update on the Master Plan for Developmental Services

By Lisa Cooley, Sacramento SSAN Representative

I am currently serving on the Master Plan for Developmental Services Committee. Being a part of this committee gives me a chance to make recommendations on how to improve the developmental services system. Members of the Committee responsible for developing the Master Plan were appointed by the Secretary of the California Health and Human Services (CalHHS) to serve a one-year term and develop a plan to move California’s developmental services system move forward into the twenty-first century. The plan aims to create and strengthen bridges that connect the developmental services system to other critical systems across California Health and Human Services. The Committee includes self-advocates and representatives of California agencies.

To divide the work of developing a master plan, five workgroups were created. During workgroup and committee meetings, members discuss how to improve services delivered through our regional centers. Topics discussed have included: how to improve the self-determination program and the IPP process; how to support each regional centers board of directors; and what a perfect service system for developmental and intellectual disabilities could look like.

To learn more about the Master Plan on Developmental Services check out: [CalHHS Master Plan for Developmental Services Landing Page](#). Advocates who want to share their thoughts on what needs to be included in the Master Plan on Developmental Services should consider providing public comments during the next committee meeting. Members of the public can also share their thoughts by sending an email to: DSMasterPlan@chhs.ca.gov.

2024 AUCD Conference Recap

By **Robert Levy**, UC Davis MIND Institute UCEDD SSAN Representative

Wesley Witherspoon, USC Childrens Hospital UCEDD SSAN Representative



The 2024 AUCD Conference was held November 3-6 in Washington, D.C., at the Westin Hotel. The theme of the conference was "Stronger Together: Creating a more Inclusive World." Robert Levy and I (Wesley Witherspoon) attended the conference and were able to do some sightseeing between sessions. On Sunday November 3, Robert and I went to the Ford Theatre, where President Lincoln was shot, and The Petersen House, where he died after receiving treatment in 1865. Imani Barbarin opened the conference on Sunday by discussing how to use the strength of our network to build a more inclusive world. This was a very powerful opener for the conference.

On Monday November 4, Robert and I attended the Networking Breakfast for professionals with disabilities. Robert presented with two coworkers at a session titled: Promoting Accessibility to Healthcare for Neurodiverse Individuals (PATH), a project of the MIND Institute. Robert and I later presented on different types of healthy relationships to professionals and self-advocates. Healthy relationships are important in all areas, including romantic, friendship, professional, family, etc. I also spoke about Self-Determination in the State of California. Robert attended this session as a member of the audience.

On November 5, 2024, I had the chance to visit the White House, while Robert attended a workshop at the conference. Visiting the White House was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and a real privilege.

The 2025 AUCD Conference will be on November 16-19 at the Westin Hotel in-person in Washington D.C. Kecia, Robert, and I hope to attend.



2024 Supported Life Conference Recap

By Wesley Witherspoon, USC Childrens Hospital UCEDD SSAN Representative



I attended the 38th Annual Supported Life Conference on October 17 and 18 at The Wyndham Sacramento Hotel in Sacramento. The theme of the conference this year was “Empowering Independence: Innovation is at the Heart.” Many of the conference speakers discussed the importance of empowering all people with developmental disabilities to be fully included in the community.

Willy Duncan, President of Sierra College; Cody Clark, an autistic magician; Joe Xavier, Director of Department of Rehabilitation from 2014-2024; and Diva Johnson provided keynotes addressing topics such as access to education, rehabilitation services, artistic expression, and Home Community Based Services (HCBS).

I attended the following sessions: Social and Recreation Service, Camping Services, Autistic Cultural Competency Training, the Autistic Empowerment Guild, Health and Wellness, and “Twist & Turns on the Road to Independence” presented by Brandon Gruber, a Self-Advocate and his parents Teresa and Tim Gruber.

There were also vendors at the conference, and I received information about the Self-Determination Program. Overall, it was a good conference.

SSAN Members

- Sonya Force – North Coast
- Charles Nutt – North State
- Lisa Cooley – Sacramento
- Ellen Sweigert – North Bay
- Sara Desumala – Bay Area
- Robert Balderama – North Valley Hills
- David Forderer – Central Coast
- Rebecca Donabed – Sequoia
- Julie Gaona – Los Angeles
- Sean Sullivan – Orange County
- Eric Aguilar – San Bernardino
- Viri Salgado – San Diego Imperial
- Desiree Boykin – ARCA
- Russell Rawlings – CFILC
- Nicole Patterson – DDS
- Scott Barron – DRC
- Robert Levy – UC Davis MIND Institute
- Kecia Weller – UCLA Tarjan Center
- Wesley Witherspoon – SCDD and USC Children’s Hospital
- Rosie Ryan – SCDD



2024 SSAN Employment Webinar Recap

By Robert Levy, SSAN Representative UCD MIND Institute UCEDD

The SSAN Employment webinar was held on Wednesday, October 29, 2024, on Zoom. The theme for the event was called “Access to Good Jobs for People with Disabilities: Resources and Supports for the Future.” Over 100 people registered. Lisa, Rebecca, Viri, and I introduced the different presenters who spoke during the event. Progressive Employment Concepts, the Department of Rehabilitation, and Resource for Independence Central Valley discussed how they support people with disabilities in finding jobs. After the presentations, we discussed the SSAN Tip sheets that were created last year. The tip sheets covered topics including: 1) Dressing for a Job Interview; 2) Reasonable Accommodations; 3) Preparing for a Job Interview; 4) Creating a Resume; and 5) Telling Your Story.

Here's the breakdown of our roles for the event: I introduced Jackie and Amanda from Progressive Employment Concepts, who talked about their jobs and what Progressive Employment Concepts does. Rebecca introduced Victoria and Charlotte from Resource for Independence Central Valley and discussed their jobs and how Resource for Independence Central Valley can help people manage work while receiving social benefits. Viri introduced Spencer from the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) who spoke about how DOR partners with businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies to support people with disabilities in finding jobs. Lisa and I shared the responsibility of presenting on the SSAN Tip Sheets. Lisa was the moderator for this event, which was her second time acting as a moderator for SSAN events. Overall, Spencer, Charlotte, Amanda, Jackie, and Victoria all did a great a job on their presentations, and Lisa, Rebecca, Viri, and I also did well in our parts.

This was the 3rd webinar for SSAN in nearly 13 years, and we are currently in the process of planning the fourth SSAN to celebrate DD Awareness month! This Webinar is titled “Making Choices Together: Limited Conservatorships and Less Restrictive Alternatives” and topics will include: supported decision making, special needs trusts, power of attorneys, advanced health directives, and more. It is scheduled for Thursday, March 27, 2025, from 3PM-5PM, so mark your calendars because we would love to see you there!



How to do a Podcast

By Eric Aguilar, San Bernardino Regional SSAN Representative

Creating a podcast for people with disabilities is a powerful way to amplify voices, share information, and create a community that is inclusive and accessible. Here are some steps to consider when making a podcast for this audience:

1. Define Your Purpose and Audience

- **Purpose:** Are you providing educational content, raising awareness, sharing stories, or offering entertainment? Define your mission to guide the overall tone and structure of your podcast.
- **Target Audience:** Consider the types of disabilities you aim to include. Will your podcast cover physical, sensory, cognitive, or neurodivergent experiences? Knowing this helps create relevant content and ensure accessibility.

2. Ensure Accessibility in All Aspects

- **Audio Quality:** High-quality, clear audio is essential for all listeners, but especially for those with hearing impairments or auditory processing challenges. Use good microphones and avoid background noise. Offer a transcript for each episode to ensure it's accessible to deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences.
- **Subtitles & Transcripts:** Provide written transcripts and closed captions. This helps not only for those with hearing impairments but also people who prefer reading or those with cognitive disabilities.
- **Accessible Website:** Ensure the website where your podcast is hosted is screen reader friendly and follows web accessibility standards.
- **Sign Language Interpreters:** If possible, consider providing a video version with sign language interpretation for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- **Inclusive Language:** Use inclusive, person-first language (e.g., "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person") and avoid using harmful language, such as stupid or dumb.

Continue on Page 10: "How to Podcast"



Continued from Page 9: “How to Podcast”

3. Engage Your Audience

- **Guest Speakers:** Consider featuring guests with disabilities or those working in disability advocacy. Their insights and experiences will resonate with the community.
- **Audience Interaction:** Use social media or email to gather feedback from listeners. Incorporate their suggestions and make them feel heard. Ask questions like: What topics are most helpful? What kind of format works best for them?
- **Community Building:** Create a safe space for listeners to share their experiences, advice, and stories. This can help build a sense of belonging among your audience.

4. Consider the Format

- **Interviews:** Feature experts, advocates, or individuals with disabilities to discuss relevant topics.
- **Storytelling:** Share personal stories from those in the disability community. This helps listeners connect on an emotional level and can raise awareness.
- **Q&A:** Have episodes where you answer questions from your audience. This can be helpful in addressing specific needs and concerns.
- **News and Resources:** Share updates, policies, and resources that may affect people with disabilities.

5. Promote Diversity Within Disabilities

- **Variety of Experiences:** Disability is a broad spectrum, and each person’s experience is different. Ensure your content represents various disabilities, from physical to cognitive to mental health issues.
- **Intersectionality:** Consider how other factors such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status intersect with disability. This will broaden the reach and relevance of your content.

6. Provide Useful Resources

- **Assistive Technology:** Educate listeners about the latest assistive devices and technologies that can help people with disabilities.
- **Support Networks:** Highlight organizations, services, or communities that can offer support.
- **Employment & Education:** Share tips, stories, and resources for people with disabilities seeking jobs, education, or independent living.

Continue on Page 11: “How to Podcast”



Continued from Page 10: “How to Podcast”

7. Host and Produce Your Podcast

- **Equipment:** Basic equipment includes a microphone, headphones, and a recording setup. For remote recording, use platforms that provide good audio quality and accessibility features.
- **Editing Software:** Use user-friendly editing tools like Audacity or Adobe Audition to ensure the audio is clear, well-paced, and without unnecessary distractions.
- **Platform:** Host your podcast on a platform that supports audio file distribution to major podcast apps (e.g., Apple Podcasts, Spotify, etc.).

8. Ensure Ongoing Accessibility

- **Regular Feedback:** Regularly ask for feedback from listeners to ensure you're meeting their needs. Make sure they can easily reach you through accessible communication methods (e.g., email, social media, website forms).
- **Consistent Updates:** Keep your podcast up to date with new resources, information, and relevant content that reflects current issues in the disability community.

Ideas for Podcast:

- **Disability and Mental Health:** Have conversations on the connections between mental health and disability, discussing personal experiences, coping strategies, and therapies.
- **Inclusive Design & Technology:** Talk about technology and design that cater to people with disabilities, including accessibility tools, apps, and services.
- **Disability Advocacy & Policy:** Keep the community informed about legal and policy changes that affect the rights and services available to people with disabilities.
- **Success Stories:** Share inspiring stories of people overcoming challenges, excelling in their careers, or making a positive impact in society.

By focusing on accessibility, inclusivity, and providing relevant content, your podcast can help build a stronger, more connected community for people with disabilities.



Changes Brought by the Voters Choice Act

By Scott Barron, Disability Rights California SSAN Representative

The 2018 election was the first election under the 2016 Voter's Choice Act (VCA). Initially, five counties choose to adopt the VCA model of holding elections. The hope was that the VCA would improve voter turnout and voting options for people with disabilities. Seven years later, counties have seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of early voters participating in the election process.

The VCA has improved both the accessibility and flexibility of the voting process for both voters with and without disabilities. Unlike traditional polling place counties, in VCA counties, voters have a total of 11 days to vote in person. A voter can also go to any one of the County's numerous vote centers, instead of having to go to one assigned polling place. All vote centers must be accessible and offer different ways for people to mark their ballots. In addition to in-person voting locations, voters with disabilities have the option of using curbside voting or remote accessible vote-by-mail voting to cast their ballot. To learn more about the VCA and your voting options, visit Disability Rights California (DRC), your county's elections office, or the California Secretary of State's websites.

Since the passage of the VCA, the number of counties choosing to switch from traditional voting model to a VCA model continues to increase. During the November 2024 election, there were 29 VCA counties in California. Even though VCA improves access to the voting process, it does not necessarily mean that more people will participate in the voting process or eliminate all issues with the voting process.

DRC operates a voter hotline to provide technical assistance to voters on the voting process. During this election cycle, we received fewer calls than the last presidential election in 2020 and it looks like voter turnout was lower than the 2020 cycle. Calls received from the hotline ranged from needing help with signing ballots, to understanding how to complete and return ballots, to accessing accessible formats, and emergency medical ballot options.

One way to improve voter turnout and participation is through education. Counties, schools, and government agencies need to educate voters about their voting options, and the value of their voice in the voting process if we want to improve voter participation in every election. Your vote is your voice, and your voice is your choice!



Tips for Turning Concern into Action

It can be hard to know what you can do to help advocate for change. SSAN members have shared some ideas on how you can turn your concerns and worries into action:



- Share your thoughts with family members and friends.
- Consider mentoring another advocate.
- Write down the issue or problem that you are having, then think about and make a list of your ideas about what would make the situation better. Is there anything on that list that you can do to make the situation better?
- Write a social media or blog post.
- Listen to, host, and/or be a guest on a podcast.
- Write a letter to the editor or an opinion piece for your local newspaper or organization's newsletter.
- Contact to your local representatives about important issues.
- Get involved in your community by joining a club or board.
- Attend a city council meeting to share your concerns.
- Connect with your local regional center, independent living center, and/or State Council on Developmental Disabilities regional office and ask about their self-advocacy groups and trainings.
- Donate your time by volunteering for an organization.
- Join a board or commission like the [Department of Developmental Services Consumer Advisory Committee \(DDS CAC\)](#).
- Learn about the issues important to candidates running in upcoming local, state, and national elections. Let your voice and your choice be heard by voting.



Kudos Corner



In this issue we want to give kudos to the CFILC SSAN Representative Russell Dawson-Rawlings. Russell has over 20 years of experience in disability advocacy. He served as President of Disability Organizing Group for Initiating Total Equality (DOGFITE), a Sacramento-area group established by Resources for Independent Living (RIL) in the early 2000s. Russell is passionate about promoting and developing disability leaders who are willing to influence power to create spaces for everyone's lived experiences and perspectives are recognized and valued.

SSAN is grateful to Russell for his work to not only improve the accessibility of the voting process in California but his efforts to educate and engage with others in community on the importance of their vote and their voice. As the CFILC Community Organizing Manager, Russell has played an important role in connecting and engaging with advocates across the state on issues and legislation. SSAN appreciates your valuable contributions to the team and gives a big kudos to you!



Disability-Related Reads

Here are a few Self-Advocacy and Disability-related publications to check out:



[Disability Scoop](#) is an online resource with disability-related news.



[Social Security Administration Blog](#) has SSI information.



[World Institute on Disability News](#) has updates on what is happening around the world.



respect
ability

[Disability Belongs | Respectability](#) has updates on national efforts to engage people with disabilities in the political process.

Disability-Related Listens

Click on the logos to check out some creative content on disability related topics.



Learn About SSAN Member Organizations

- [Association of Regional Center Agencies \(ARCA\)](#)
- [California Foundation for Independent Living Centers \(CFILC\)](#)
- [Department of Developmental Services \(DSS\)](#)
- [Disability Rights California \(DRC\)](#)
- [University of California, Davis \(UCD\) MIND Institute](#)
- [University of California, Los Angeles \(UCLA\), Tarjan Center](#)
- [University of Southern California \(USC\), Children's Hospital](#)

Self-Determination Update

Self-Determination is LIVE in California. Check out the [DDS Self-Determination Newsletter](#) for the latest on California's Self-Determination Program (SDP). Talk to your regional center service coordinator to learn more.



VOICES of SSAN

March 2025

Volume 40

Community Resources



[SARTAC Zoom Meetings](#)

[ARCA Public Policy Resources Library](#)



[DRC's Resource Library](#)



[CalABLE](#)



National Council on Disability

An independent federal agency committed to disability policy leadership since 1978

[National Council on Disability](#)

[Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work Program](#)



The State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) has a tool for advocates to share their story and wants to hear yours! [Storytellers](#), is a [blog](#) where people with disabilities, their family members, professionals who work in the field disability services can share their stories of successes and struggles. Recent posts including [Lisa's Story](#) or [Vincent's Story](#) consider giving them a read.

You can find the Storytellers blog under the "News and Events" tab on the top of the [SCDD website](#) as "SCDD Blog". We look forward to reading the next story, it might be yours!

SAVE THE DATES

Disability Rights California



[Events and Trainings](#)

CalABLE



[News and Trainings](#)



[DO Network Training Library](#)

Plain Language Resources

Available on:

[SCDD Website](#)

Register for the Monthly
[California Statewide Self-Advocacy Chats](#) on Zoom!



[Current Issues and Resources](#)

[Voting Resources](#)

DRC Hotline: 888-569-7955

[Disability Vote California](#)

Questions about the Self-Determination Program? [The Self-Determination Advocates Leadership Group](#) meets monthly on Zoom.



Voices of SSAN Newsletter Article Tips

Audience: Keep in mind that “Voices of SSAN” is shared with people across California. Try to write articles that would interest the statewide disability community.

Purpose: Is the article a human-interest story or an issues story? If it is a human-interest story, can you tie it back to an issue or larger regional or statewide problem?

Helpful Tips:

- Tie your article back to the Mission/Vision/Purpose of SSAN
- Articles should be about systemic (city/county/regional/statewide) problems
- Limit individual advocacy articles and too much personal details people
- Include image descriptions of images you want included in the article

Types of Articles: Articles in “Voices of SSAN” should be related to the SCDD State Plan. The SCDD State covers topics of Self-Determination, Employment, Housing, Health and Safety, Transportation and other Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS). Article types can include:

- Informational and Resource Sharing (you want the reader to learn something)
- Call-to-Action (you want the reader to do something)
- Event Recaps
- Bios and interviews help SSAN and learn about people
- “Kudos Corner” articles are recognize the advocacy efforts of others
- Announcements and Save the Dates

Key Parts of Articles:

- Title
- Author (Your Name)
- Introduction: Tie the article back to SSAN
- Evidence or Support: 1-3 paragraphs
- Closing: Tie it back to SSAN



Voices of SSAN Interview Article Tips

Audience: Keep in mind that “Voices of SSAN” is shared with people across California.

Choosing a Person to Interview:

- Is the person a regional/statewide/national/international leader?
- Does the person have the ability to affect change?
- Does the person have a story or experience people with disabilities from across California can relate to?
- Is the person making positive impact/or change that can be shared with other regions/organizations to improve their practices?

Choosing a Message

- What do you want the reader to learn from reading the article? Make sure you have a clear purpose in mind when writing
- Do you want to inspire others to do something like get involved in a project or campaign?

Choosing Your Interview Questions

- Ask questions that relate to SSAN, self-advocacy or the focus areas in SCDD’s State Plan
- Choose questions that relate to your message
- Ask open ended questions that will allow the person to respond in detail.
- Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”

Writing Your Interview Article

- Add your own thoughts in response to what the interviewee has said
- Use the interview’s responses to shape your article instead of having a question/answer format
- Remember your audience and purpose when writing your interview article



Voices of SSAN Kudos Corner Article Tips

When someone does a good job or achieves a goal, people sometimes say “Kudos to you”. SSAN started the Kudos Corner in June 2019 as a way to recognize SSAN members for their local and statewide advocacy work.

This tip sheet is designed to help members write future Kudos Corner Articles. Here are some important things to include in articles of recognition:

1. Name of person receiving kudos
2. Region/Organization they are with
3. How long they have been on SSAN
4. Their Advocacy/SSAN Achievements
5. Examples of how they have helped other SSAN members and/or other advocates (mentorship)
6. Their hopes and dreams for SSAN and the Self-Advocacy Movement in CA, US, and Globally



Voices of SSAN Member Highlight Article Tips

A member highlight or sometimes called a “bio” is a way for SSAN and readers of the Voices of SSAN Newsletter to learn more about a new member of SSAN. Here are some tips for what kind of information should be included in a Member Highlight Article.

1. Name
2. Region/Organization
3. How long they have been on SSAN
4. How did you learn about SSAN
5. What made you want to join SSAN
6. Any advocacy accomplishments
7. Why the joined SSAN
8. What they hope to learn or gain from being a member of SSAN

MARCH 6, 2025

**SSAN MEETING AGENDA ITEM 11
INFORMATION ITEM**

Statewide Self-Advocacy Network



Meeting Reflections and Closing

This agenda item is meant to give members a chance to reflect on the day's discussions and agenda items. Members will have a chance to share ideas for agenda items to include in June's meeting.

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