Chief Deputy Director Report – September 2025

Rihana Ahmad

Overview:

The Chief Deputy Director (CDD) continues to oversee operational functions in collaboration with staff, while identifying tools and strategies to strengthen organizational effectiveness. Recent efforts have focused on engaging with staff, leadership, and external partners to support program development, policy implementation, and operational alignment.

Key initiatives include implementation and oversight of the Supported Decision-Making Technical Assistance Program (SDM-TAP), along with collaborative discussions with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) on the Quality Assurance (QA) program, Self-Determination Program (SDP) Orientations and Statewide Self-Determination Advisory Committee (SSDAC) projects.

Core administrative responsibilities are being prioritized, including executive oversight of the agency's budget development and monitoring processes, contract and procurement oversight, personnel management, interagency coordination, and day-to-day operational support across the organization.

The following sections highlight recent activities and accomplishments from some of the operational and program support units under the Chief Deputy Director's oversight.

Personnel:

✓ The State Personnel Board (SPB) Compliance Review Audit began at the end of May 2025. The audit covers a compliance from May 1, 2023 – June 2025. The SPB Compliance Review Audit has been completed with only 6 out of 15 areas not incompliance.

✓ Conducted 26 recruitments in FY 2025 (July 1, 2024 – present), with 10 active recruitments currently ongoing.

✓ CalHR Delegation Monitoring Report Card for SCDD score is 3.94 out of 4.00. Delegation has been renewed for 2025-2028.

✓ Hired 16 staff members in FY 2025, with 5 new hires since July

✓ New Hires include:

      o Deputy Director, Regional Office Operations- Sheraden Nicholau

      o Budget Officer- Kevin Rowell

      o San Diego Regional Officer Manager- Yolanda Cruz

Budget:

- ✓ Submitted a Budget Change Proposal to support CDSS IAA costs
- ✓ Reconciled the SCO Schedule 8 and submitted the Schedule of Salaries and Wages (7A)
- ✓ Submitted Control Section 3.60 Employer Retirement Rate Contribution Adjustments
- ✓ Conducted past year expenditure reporting
- ✓ Provided operational support for Chief Deputy Director

IT:

- ✓ Participated in DOR's Assistive Technology Advisory Committee to stay informed on emerging assistive technology needs and resources
- ✓ Collaborated with the State Plan team to finalize the development and launch of the State Plan Development webpage and online resources
- ✓ Currently developing Service Code Descriptions webpages to enhance accessibility and clarity of service information
- ✓ Met with CDSS to finalize the details of our Interagency IT agreement renewal
- ✓ Oversaw the IT Refresh Cycle, including upgrades to laptops and software licenses, ensuring staff have access to up-to-date technology
- ✓ Provided ongoing technical support to staff to resolve IT issues and maintain smooth operations

Business Supports:

- ✓ Processed invoices and purchase orders to ensure timely payments and compliance with procurement requirements
- ✓ Processed travel claims and reimbursements for Councilmembers and staff, ensuring accuracy and adherence to state travel policies
- ✓ Initiated the recruitment process for a new Business and Operations Logistics Analyst position to strengthen organizational capacity and improve operational support
- ✓ Continued to refine and expand the internal process and guidance documents to ensure consistency and best practices across operations

Committee Supports:

- ✓ The SSDAC held a virtual meeting on September 9th to hear updates from DSS and SCDD, to share their thoughts about the issues they would like DSS to discuss at future meetings, and to discuss their goals and priorities for the next two years.
- ✓ The SSDAC submitted a report to DSS along with a letter requesting guidance on the role of LVACs (Local SDACs) in the training of regional center Service

Coordinators. The Committee Made updates to its Best Practices Platform, created a database o track progression of the Committee's recommendations, and completed a new member Orientation Resource, which will be used to onboard new SSDAC members moving forward.

✓ The Legislative and Public Policy Committee met on August 26th to review the state budget and legislative updates, discuss the annual policy theme, and considered submissions from the There Should Be a Law contest.

✓ State Plan Development Committee met on August 26th to review and update Goal language for the 2027-2031 State Plan

State Plan:

✓ Launched our 2027-2031 State plan Development Survey on August 15th collecting over 1500 responses during the first month of the collection period.

✓ Collected 528 Activity Reports from regional staff covering the reporting period from July 1, 2025 – September 1, 2025

✓ Monitored progress on three grant projects: one from Cycle 46 and two from Cycle 47, ensuring alignment with State Plan goals and compliance with grant deliverables

Self-Advocacy:

✓ SSAN hosted "35 Years of Disability Rights and Pride" celebrating the ADA at the end of July reaching 72 people

✓ SSAN had 8 workgroup meetings between the Self-Advocacy Virtual Engagement (SAVE) and the Leadership team to debrief the July event, plan for the September SSAN meeting and the upcoming October NDEAM webinar on 10/27 that will focus on transitioning from workshop settings to paid employment

✓ SCDD hosted a Statewide Self-Advocacy Chat in July.

✓ Held SSAN on 9/3 and 9/4. A more detailed breakdown of the meeting can be found in the September SSAN Report (forthcoming)

Supported Decision-Making Technical Assistance Program (SDM-TAP):

✓ Implementation and grant management with the Supported Decision-Making Technical Assistance Program team and external partners

✓ Grantees have held over 1,200 activities statewide in 15 languages (English, Spanish, Tagalog, Traditional Chinese, Mam, Hindi, Punjabi, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Cantonese, Korean, Arabic, Vietnamese and ASL)

✓ Upcoming Grantee Conferences that are free to attend:

  o CSU East Bay Foundation is having an SDM Conference on Saturday, October 25, 2025 from 9am-5pm at Laney College in Oakland: https://www.csueastbay.edu/cdjr/supported-decision-making-conference.html

- CA Policy Center for Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities is hosting an SDM Symposium on October 29, 2025 from 9am-5pm at the North Natomas Community Center in Sacramento: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/supported-decision-making-sdm-symposium-tickets-1557390630299

✓ An evaluation survey has been released by UC Davis for participant feedback as part of SDM-TAP grantee activities throughout California. The survey will collect data on outcomes and persons reached through the program to inform a report of the program's accomplishments and identifying future needs and policy recommendations.

Self-Determination Program Orientation Project

The SCDD Statewide Self-Determination Program (SDP) Orientation Project is a long-term Interagency Agreement with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to conduct the required first step of the Self-Determination Program: the SDP Orientation. Since July 2022, these sessions have been offered statewide in multiple languages by SCDD. Participants who attend the full session and provide the required information receive an orientation certificate that is honored by all 21 regional centers. This certificate allows eligible individuals to enroll in the Self-Determination Program, if desired. The project is carried out by SCDD staff working alongside co-trainers who are family members of participants and SDP participants themselves—bringing lived experience to the training.

✓ Between May and July 2025, the SDP Orientation Project offered 24 sessions in five languages—English, Spanish, Arabic, ASL, and Tagalog—training 1,269 participants. In July, we reached an exciting milestone: more than 10,000 individuals have now attended an SDP Orientation since the project's inception!

✓ In June, we introduced an AI translation tool during our English sessions. Participants used the tool in Arabic, Chinese, French, Korean, Spanish, Turkish, and Vietnamese— helping us reach more of California's diverse language communities.

✓ Satisfaction rates for useful content, as reported through an optional survey, continue to trend around 99%. Participants appreciated the clarity in presenting complex information: "Thank you for the very clear information. It is a complex topic, but you do a great job stressing the important and practical points." Another participant appreciated the SDP resources covered, writing, "Thanks for a spirited two hours of Reg Ctr info! I had no idea how much stuff was available and am thrilled to help my daughter access everything from Uber to a PA, via self-determination—we need a break from each other." Another participant added, "I've attended three SDP seminars. Your presentation is the most clear and comprehensive, thank you very much."

✓ Looking ahead, our team is working closely with DDS on curriculum revisions to align with recent statutory updates and improve clarity around SDP processes. This fall, SCDD will also present at the San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center's October 2025 SDP Conference.