



DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPORT – NOVEMBER 2025 REPORT

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Policy Update

2025 Legislation

SCDD staff continued to track and advocate for the Council's package of prioritized legislation. Please see handout, "Table of Bills" for Item 6.B, LPPC Summary, for details.

2026 Legislative and Policy Ideas

At the September 2025 meeting, the Council approved legislative and policy ideas and authorized staff to work on:

- Clarify the authorized representative process
- Plain language materials from government agencies
- Protected, paid leave for sibling bonding
- Background checks for off-campus worksites and contractors
- Chronic absenteeism in schools
- Marriage penalty (SSI)

During the reporting period, staff conducted deeper research on these issues to create fact sheets and to begin seeking bill authors. Five of these ideas were from the 2025 There Should Be A Law Contest and one was given to SCDD through the Town Halls that were held to get input regarding the 2027-2031 State Plan.

Testimony Provided and Coalition Expansion

The Respiratory Care Board (RCB) recently issued regulations pertaining to the scope of work that licensed vocational nurses (LVNs) may perform. A parent and advocate contacted SCDD with concerns about the new regulations. They believed the changes could require individuals who now live in their own homes or in home-like settings to

relocate to larger congregate care facilities, including nursing homes. After looking into it, staff identified potential unintended consequences of the proposed regulations that could affect the civil rights of individuals requiring tracheostomy and ventilator care. For these reasons, the Deputy Director of Policy and Public Affairs provided testimony expressing these concerns. The RCB indicated they would hold a meeting soon to consider issuing emergency regulations to address SCDD and the community's concerns. SCDD has met with community partners in order to identify strategies and provide input to the RCB. SCDD supported the growth of the coalition by bringing a smaller group of advocates it organized into collaboration with a larger group convened independently.

Trainings

The Deputy Director of Policy and Public Affairs was the featured speaker for two of the four presentations in a systemic advocacy training series, which was provided in Spanish and interpreted into English. The topics were “Engaging with Lawmakers: Building Strong Relationships for Lasting Change” and “CA Legislative and Budget Process and Systemic Advocacy Opportunities” and these sessions reached 375 attendees. Additionally, a separate presentation, “How to Read and Understand Legislation”, was provided and recorded for the Leadership Investment Training program of Resources for Independence Central Valley.

Coalition Meetings

SCDD participates in monthly meetings with coalitions to build and support efforts that strengthen the systems that serve individuals with IDD and their families. Coalitions include ADHAC (Aging, Disability, and Homelessness Advocacy Coalition), Employment First, Inclusive College Association (ICA), DDS' Deaf Steering Committee, and the Fair Hearing Reform Coalition. SCDD recently joined a coalition organized by Health Access, “Fight for Our Health”, to work and advocate for issues associated with HR 1. Staff assist coalitions in various ways including but not limited to providing information and guidance, connecting partners to resources and individuals, and sharing coalition updates with others. Recent activities with coalitions include:

- Bringing in experts on housing and homelessness policy to create new policies and organize a legislative briefing
- An invitation to SCDD to present on Employment First
- Identifying barriers for inclusive college programs and promote best practices with the CA Center for Inclusive College

Communications Update

Outreach reaches 15,000-23,000 unique email addresses and frequently includes distribution through social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and occasionally other platforms).

In Memoriam

- In Memory of SCDD Council Member Eric Ybarra – Released a remembrance reflecting on Eric Ybarra’s courage, consistency, and advocacy, and acknowledging his lasting contributions as a Council Member, SAAC Chair, and long-time partner in advancing self-determination and inclusion.
- In Memory of SCDD Staff Ross Long – Published a tribute honoring former SCDD advocate Ross Long, reflecting on his decades of service at Sonoma Developmental Center and the compassion, knowledge, and humor he brought to supporting individuals and families throughout his career.

Monthly News & Events Email Blasts

Each month, SCDD highlights timely events, awareness campaigns, and Council activities in its statewide email newsletter.

- October: Featured National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), National Bullying Prevention Month, and Down Syndrome Awareness Month. Included information about the Statewide Special Election, the closing of the State Plan Survey input period, Self-Determination Program orientations, and the fifth edition of the There Should Be a Law Contest Report. Also promoted statewide self-advocacy meetings and legislative updates.
- November: Recognized California Sikh American Awareness & Appreciation Month and National Native American Heritage Month. Provided election reminders, updates on food benefits and healthcare premiums, and announcements for upcoming Council, committee, and self-advocacy meetings. Featured the forthcoming NCI Family Surveys.

Initiatives and Calls to Action (English/Spanish)

Initiatives and alerts provided opportunities for the community to take action, participate in trainings, and stay informed on urgent issues.

- IDEA Town Hall (November 2025): Promoted the virtual town hall “Cuts to Special Education Protections Are Happening Now!” to educate stakeholders about IDEA and the impact on the educational rights of children with disabilities. The event was co-hosted by The Arc, COPAA, and other national partners.
- Federal Voter Access Proposal (October 2025, English/Spanish): Alerted the community about a proposed rule from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission requiring proof of citizenship to register using the national mail form. Encouraged public comments before the October 20 deadline.
- Food Assistance and CalFresh Updates (October 2025, English/Spanish): Announced \$80 million in state funding to support food banks during the federal shutdown. Provided plain language instructions on how to access local food resources, CalFresh updates, and 2-1-1 services.
- State Plan Survey (October 2025, English/Spanish): Issued a final reminder for Californians to complete SCDD’s 2027-2031 State Plan Survey before the October 15 closing date. Encouraged statewide participation to ensure the plan reflects community needs.

Promotion of Council Initiatives

Council priorities and initiatives were promoted through targeted campaigns, resources, and creative design.

- News Release – Employment Milestone: During NDEAM, SCDD announced that 1,117 workers with I/DD transitioned from subminimum wage programs to earning minimum wage or higher, marking the end of subminimum wage in California. This accompanied an announcement of the newly released Second SB 639 Report.
- News Release – Legislative Wins: Highlighted new state laws the Council supported that improve access, education, health, and safety for people with disabilities. Key bills included those expanding teleconferencing under the Bagley-Keene Act, ensuring Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing education access, authorizing emergency seizure medication, and requiring accessible pedestrian signals.
- News Release – SCDD Autism Statement: Issued a clarifying statement supporting accurate, evidence-based medical information regarding autism and affirming that autism is a valued part of the human condition.

- Storytellers Blog: Published “Medi-Cal is More Than Health Care – It’s Independence”, featuring Damian’s story on how Medi-Cal supports independent living.
- NDEAM Statewide Events: Promoted statewide events honoring inclusive employment and workforce equity during October.

Recruitment and Partner Support

Communications supported staff recruitment efforts and provided design and messaging assistance to Council partners.

- Committee Engagement: Shared meeting information for the State Plan Committee, Self-Advocates Advisory Committee, and other leadership bodies through monthly blasts. Encouraged ongoing participation in public meetings and regional advocacy events.
- Partner Collaboration: Promoted partnerships with The Arc, COPAA, the Council for Exceptional Children, and other advocacy groups through the IDEA Town Hall and legislative initiatives.
- Provided creative design and messaging support to regional offices, Council HQ, committees, and partners for webinars, trainings, and live in-person events.