



**State Council on Developmental Disabilities
Sequoia Regional Office**



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Gavin Newsom, Governor

• website • www.scdd.ca.gov

• email • council@scdd.ca.gov

770 E. Shaw Ave., Suite 123
Fresno, CA 93710
(559) 222-2496
(559) 248-2886 fax

**Sequoia Regional Office of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities
Regional Advisory Committee Minutes**

September 9, 2026

– Zoom and In-Person at 770 E. Shaw Ave., Suite 123, Fresno, CA 93710

BOARD MEMBERS:

Jim Becker - Online
Ashley Bullis - Online
Rebecca Donabed - Online
Matt Gjerde – (E)
Sherry Huggins – In-Person
Carolyn Huffstutler - Online
Nicole Renee Mensch – (E)
Enoc Mendoza - Online
Julie Peeler - Online
Thao Tran - Online

STAFF PRESENT:

Nick Lutton, Regional Office Manager – Online
Veronica Magallanes, Analyst II – In Person
Heather Kroencke, Office Technician – In Person

GENERAL BUSINESS:

Heather Kroencke facilitated the online meeting. The meeting was called to order at 3:06 p.m. She welcomed everyone to the September 9, 2026, Regional Advisory Committee Meeting.

The official roll call was conducted by Heather Kroencke and there was a quorum.

Heather asked if there were any proposed additions/changes to the July 8, 2026, Minutes as e-mailed.

M/S/C to approve the July 8, 2026, Minutes as emailed.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Susan Graham of H.E.A.R.T.S Connection in Bakersfield shared the October 3rd Combo Walk of the Heros and Buddy walks. It is a great event that brings together individuals/families and vendors.

Enoc Mendoza shared concerns in Bakersfield around the fight for cameras in Special Education classrooms. It is something we should all follow and look for opportunities to voice our opinions.

"The Council advocates, promotes & implements policies and practices that achieve self-determination, independence, productivity & inclusion in all aspects of community life for Californians with developmental disabilities and their families."

NEW BUSINESS:

Heather Kroencke shared the proposed meeting dates for the 2027 RAC Meetings. Members were given the opportunity to discuss if the dates were agreeable. All members agreed on the Proposed Dates as follows: January 13, 2027, March 10, 2027, May 12, 2027, July 14, 2027, September 8, 2027, and November 10, 2027. The meetings will rotate by county for next year for those able to attend in person. RAC members are encouraged to reach out to facilitate scheduling a meeting in their county.

OLD BUSINESS:

Heather Kroencke facilitated the Voting for Chair and Vice Chair by reminding the committee of the two volunteers for the position, Enoc Mendoza for Chair and Rebecca Donabed for Vice-Chair. The committee voted to approve both. Enoc will serve a 2 year term and Rebecca will serve 1 year minimum, up to two years if her appointment goes beyond her term expiration date.

PRESENTATION – Bridging Horizons Event Presentation

Pamela Scarano, Executive Director, Community Vocational Services, Inc. introduced herself, she is the Executive Director of Community Vocational Services. She shared information on the Bridging Horizons Event including an overview of the event as well as a detailed agenda and run of program. She thanked Nick and Veronica for their participation in planning the event as well as for agreeing to several breakout sessions. The event is likely to be even bigger than last year, and everyone is greatly looking forward to the event.

STAFF UPDATES:

Nick Lutton shared the SCDD Council Meeting Summary which included topics covered at the July 21, 2026 State Council Meeting. Some highlights included the review of the California history of the Disability Rights Movement and the continued importance of self-advocate leadership. It was also announced that the SCDD received \$2.4 million in a one-time state funding to create a Special Education Parent Action Network. The Council also adopted the 2027-2031 Policy Platform and policy position supporting access to individualized communication systems and supports. The next Council meeting is scheduled for September 29, 2026, in person in Sacramento.

Nick Lutton shared that he has continued to work on outreach to local agencies and programs that we can partner with.

Veronica Magallanes shared her updates on the training and events she has been doing. These include her Healthy Relationship Series as well as this event she attended:

- **Special Needs Resource Fair (H.E.A.R.T.S Connection) 8/29/26**
 - Tehachapi
 - 30 attendees
 - 3rd year of event & attendance has grown
 - 30 vendors & Parent Advocacy Workshops

Her upcoming training courses and events, include the following, Flyers will be sent out as they are available for public events:

- Bridging Horizons Conference (October 1 & 2)
 - Fresno Convention Center
 - Sexual Health & Hygiene (Individuals Served)
 - Supporting your Child's Healthy Sexual Development (FA)
 - SCDD Resource Table-RAC members, we need your help!
- Reef-Sunset USD Family Engagement Center
 - Emergency Preparedness Training
 - Avenal (Oct 6th 10am) & Kettleman City (Oct 8th 10am)
- Taft College Transition to Independent Living (TIL)
 - Healthy Relationship Training
 - Oct 7th & 14th 10am
- KDSN DreamFest Event (Saturday Oct 17, 9am-3pm)
 - Stramler Park (Bakersfield)
 - Family Fun (petting zoo, rock wall, pony rides, face painting, and a foam party)
 - Entertainment (karaoke, inflatables, and community team celebrations)
 - Community Engagement (vendor booths, public agencies, and self-advocate entrepreneurs)
- JDT Consultants (Oct 28th)
 - Online Safety Training

REGIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS' REPORTS:

NicoleRenee Mensch was unable to attend but had sent her report. She wanted to share the Person-Centered Thinking Training being held at Kern Regional Center in September.

Rebecca Donabed shared the Disability Voter Workshop being held October 8th and 9th at the Fresno RICV Office. Also the Disability Pride in the Park is taking place November 7th from 10:00am-2:00pm. The First and Third Thursdays she facilitates the Disability Advisory Team Meetings at 1:30 on Zoom. The next meeting is October 1st, 2026.

Julie Peeler, a mother of two children with Autism and ADHD expressed frustration with the Regional Center Intake timelines. One of her sons is already a client and the other is in the intake process. She was quoted a 6-10 month delay as there are not enough psychologists to complete the reviews/assessments. This is very frustrating for them as a family as they know what services they could be receiving but just can't access them yet.

Carolyn Huffstutler is a teacher with the Fresno Transition Program and is again facing friction with trying to find Work Experience opportunities for the young adults in her program. If anyone has any leads please reach out to her.

Sherry Huggins was accompanied by her daughter Shawanda Armstrong-Huggins who has applied to participate in the RAC as a member. She wanted to share that it is Deaf Awareness Month and CVRC will be hosting an event on September 22 from 10:00am-12:00pm and everyone is welcome to attend. The flyer was shared in the chat.

Thao Tran shared in the chat concerns about the Fresno County Library not offering a quiet space/accessibility for those with Disabilities. Her suggestion is that Regional Center look at offering a small library for their clients.

PORTERVILLE DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER UPDATE:

PDC Staff were unable to attend but Heather Kroencke reported the population is currently 155 Individuals. They do anticipate that number to increase soon as there have been some delays in court placements. Nick Lutton also reported that SCDD Staff are coordinating a visit to PDC with Legislators in the future. Many do not understand what PDC is or how it operates so this is a great opportunity for our staff to engage with lawmakers and explain the program. Our own Chris Arroyo toured the facility with our RAP program employees in preparation for this.

REGIONAL CENTER UPDATE:

Nick Lutton welcomed and thanked all the attendees from both Central Valley Regional Center and Kern Regional Center.

Enrique Roman, ED of Kern Regional Center reported the good news that KRC now has an approved Budget! The SDLAC funds were lowered as expected but the budget does allow for staff increases as they are expecting a growth of 37,000 clients state-wide. As an agency they are focusing on “customer service” and training staff to lower the number of 4731 complaints, specifically for those “feeling dismissed”. The Rate Study is in it’s final stages, they are working on HCBS Activities including Community Services Maintaining Mandates and site visits.

Aaron Olsen reported for CVRC. They are also grateful to have their budget and diligently working on the Rate Reform. One issue that they have run into is having to manually enter POS at the different rates and retroactively entering authorizations. Moving forward, starting in January all vendors or families must have an Authorization in place prior to providing services or they will not be reimbursed. They are also working on their “On Call” system. Currently they are receiving too many calls that are not emergency and it’s causing a back log on the response time. They are hoping that training the Vendor Community will reduce the non-emergency after hours calls.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:59 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for November 4, 2026, in person at UCP+ as well as online for the first portion of the meeting.

GUESTS – Online – Marissa Saldate, Carmen Torres, Aason Olson, Belinda Boylan, Bryndahl Childers, Melissa Mills, Ethel Groger, Enrique Roman, Rosalinda Alexander, Pamela Scarano, Dawn Purdy, Beatriz Rivera, Jenna Welch, Elena Orozco, Rebecca Core, Stephany Picasso, Stephanie Foster, Megan Romero and Susan Graham.

In-Person – Shawanda Armstrong-Huggins and Summer Boesch