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# **Assistive Technology Advisory Committee (ATAC)**

# **DRAFT Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, September 27, 2023**

**9:00am – 12:00pm**

**Virtual and telephone participation options offered via Zoom**

**Attendance**

Committee Members (present or joined remotely)

* Larry Grable, Chair
* April Shin
* Brent Jolley
* Kerry Chang
* Gloria Cervantes

Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) Staff (present or joined remotely)

* Ana Acton, Deputy Director, Independent Living Community Access Division (ILCAD)
* Regina Cademarti, Chief, Independent Living and Assistive Technology Section (ILATS)
* Elizabeth Wood, Assistive Technology Program Analyst, Independent Living and Assistive Technology Section

California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC) Staff (present or joined remotely)

* Brett Eisenburg, Executive Director
* Kathrine Crowley, Deputy Director, Ability Tools Program Manager

Members of the Public

* Penny Trieu, Service Center for Independent Life (SCIL)

**Agenda Item 1: Call to order**

Chair Grable called the meeting to order at 9:05am and welcomed all participants.

**Agenda Item 2: Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Grable introduced himself, followed by DOR staff, CFILC staff, ATAC members, and any members of the public. A quorum was established. Elizabeth provided housekeeping items for meeting attendees.

**Agenda Item 3: ATAC Members “About Me”**

AT Program Analyst Elizabeth Wood posed three questions to ATAC members, prior to the meeting, in effort to get to know committee members more thoroughly. Members were asked what brought them to join ATAC, what demographics they felt they represented, and an “interesting fact” about themselves. Members shared their responses as an ice breaker, offering personal and professional experience and anecdotes.

**Agenda Item 4: Review and approve meeting minutes from**

**June 29, 2023**

AT Analyst Wood shared meeting minutes for attendees (distributed prior to meeting) and reviewed topics covered. Chair Grable opened floor for approval, voted for approval by member Brent Jolley, seconded by Gloria Cervantes. Roll call voting results:

Larry Grable – Yes

April Shin – Yes

Brent Jolley – Yes

Kerry Chang – Yes

Gloria Cervantes – Yes

The approved meeting minutes will be posted on the ATAC webpage.

**Agenda Item 5: Department of Rehabilitation Report**

ILCAD Deputy Director (DD) Ana Acton provided general DOR updates.

National Updates

* DOR continues supporting employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, obtaining $45 million in Vocational Rehabilitation funding from the Department of Education.
* DOR applied for Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) grants to improve DOR’s delivery model serving youth with disabilities.
* DD Acton discussed the Association for Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) conference in Orange County in October and encouraged participants to attend. Acton also addressed disproportionate access to preventative healthcare services of individuals with disabilities due to various barriers, including lack of interpreters and accessible equipment.

State Updates

* DOR provided $19 million in funding to California’s Independent Living Centers (ILC), which provide Assistive Technology services.
* Through a grant from the Administration for Community Living, the Department of Aging will be developing a No Wrong Door state leadership council to support No Wrong Door initiatives and improve coordination across state departments and local level services.
* To combat discrimination against individuals with disabilities accessing healthcare, education, and preventative healthcare, the US Department of Health and Human Services updated Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Participants were invited to review the [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2023/09/07/hhs-issues-new-proposed-rule-to-strengthen-prohibitions-against-discrimination-on-basis-of-disability-in-health-care-and-human-services-programs.html?fbclid=IwAR0JjMhdOou4-Fn67u8hKhqZMc069CSd9KO_iXdLKxr9cFb092W0g5-E-U8#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWe%20celebrate%20the%20inclusion%20and,advocacy%20by%20the%20disability%20community.%E2%80%9D), which clarifies the application of Section 504.
* A brief summary of Bagley Keene laws was given noting budget trailer bill SB143, signed September 13, 2023 and permitting state advisory bodies to meet virtually without disclosing their location or requiring public access to their location through December 31, 2023. SB 544, is making its way through legislation, will further clarify Bagley Keene laws to begin January 1, 2024.
* DOR’s Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) is a week-long event in Sacramento dedicated to teaching vocational support, community reintegration, and community living to young adults with disabilities aged 15-18 years is currently accepting applications. At YLF, participants will learn about state policymakers, meet professionals with disabilities, develop advocacy and leadership skills, network, and develop personal and career goals. More information can be accessed at the [YLF website](https://www.dor.ca.gov/home/ylf).

**Agenda Item 6: Voice Options Program Report**

AT Analyst Wood provided an overview of the Voice Options Program (VOP). This program is a collaboration with the California Public Utilities Commission and provides demonstrations and short-term loans of six speech-generating applications on iPads to Californians who cannot speak or who have difficulty speaking. Following this loan period, the Consumer can identify their preferred application, and enter a long-term loan in which they receive their speech-application, a new iPad, a case, charger, and any ancillary devices needed to use the program.

The Voice Options Program has 29 Providers, offer materials in 11 different languages, provide in-person services to 98 percent of California, and also provide services virtually and by mail. Consumers range in age from 18 months old to over 80 years, span more than 50 disability types, and efforts are being made to reach more BIPOC and rural communities. Wood provided some VOP consumer related data from the Voice Option’s August monthly report:

* 2,172 individuals had completed Short-Term loans and moved to a Long-Term Loan
* 44% of consumers chose the TouchChat HD speech application
* 29% of consumers chose Proloquo2Go speech application

Also highlighted was the Voice Options stakeholder meeting from August 15, covering data updates, the VOP regional distribution plan, Request for Information (RFI) changes, and form edits. Regional distribution allocations were sent to Providers. Wood discussed the Speech Generating Device (SGD) program, an additional partnership with the California Public Utilities Commission’s (CPUC) working to provide last-resort alternatives for SGDs aside from Voice Options, which may not be suitable for some AT users. The SGD program will utilize the existing Voice Options network and resources but will ultimately remain under CPUC. Additional marketing and outreach for the SGD program is in progress.

**Agenda Item 7: Ability Tools Report, Kathrine Crowley**

CFILC Ability Tools Deputy Director Crowley reviewed information from the second quarter’s AT activities under the AT Act:

State leadership activities deal with the intangible information providing elements of AT Act requirements, including public awareness activities which have a wide scope and provide general information, information and assistance activities which have the narrowest of scopes providing information specific to individuals, needs trainings which are delivered to groups, and are designed to build on knowledge and skills, and finally, technical assistance, which are long term commitments to facilitate systemic changes to organizations that need improvements to be more inclusive to all members of the general population.

* Across the state, there have been 53 Public Awareness activities, reaching about 31,000 participants.
* Ability Tools published six blog posts, on track to complete the goal of 24 this Federal fiscal year. Ability Tools blogs received just under 5000 pageviews.
  + AT Spring Cleaning – Less Mess for Less Stress: <https://abilitytools.org/blog/__trashed/>
  + Accessible Music Advanced: <https://abilitytools.org/blog/accessible-music-advanced/>
  + Disability Pride – Highlighting Life Changing AT: <http://abilitytools.org/blog/disability-pride-highlighting-life-changing-at/>
* Information and Assistance (I&A) activities included serving approximately 407 individuals through 268 activities using I&A line and email.
* 224 individuals participated in seven training workshops.

State level activities are much more hands on. The deal with activities that work to get AT directly into the hands of consumers. It includes device demonstrations which provide consumers with the ability to attune themselves to a device alongside an AT specialist who can provide information about the device and answer any questions the consumer might have. Consumers are also able to participate in device loans so that they can try out devices in their homes for 30 days. Consumers are also able to get devices for free or low cost through reutilization activities or get support purchasing new devices, utilizing State financing activities.

* 274 device demonstration activities were performed to 314 participants
* 489 devices were loaned through 370 loan activities. These included things like demonstrations of blood pressure monitors, Bluetooth switches, and accessibility features of iPads.
* 1262 reutilization devices were distributed through 729 activities.

For Coordination, collaboration, and leveraged funding: Ability Tools continues working with the Disability Disaster Access & Resources (DDAR) and Voice Options Program (VOP) to provide reporting and inventory training and one on one support. Ability Tools facilitated ITAPS research to improve how demonstrations and short-term loans are performed in California. Ability Tools has also partnered with Bay Area Smart Homes to create a resource for smart device bundles, distributed to Device Lending and Demonstration Centers for community use. Trainings for use and installation will be provided to these centers. DD Crowley also discussed their Accessible Gaming Initiative with Able Gamers to promote and improve accessible gaming across California.

For notable challenges and next steps, DD Crowley noted the ongoing issue of underreporting AT activities in the National Assistive Technology Act Data System (NATADS), which impacts reporting to the Administration for Community Living. DD Crowley noted CFILC will continue to provide one on one support and additional trainings and assistance for these organizations. CFILC reported efforts to fill vacant positions internally, particularly Ability Tools related positions.

**Agenda Item 8: AT Program Updates**

AT Analyst Wood provided updates for the AT Program. DOR finalized the renewal of the annual Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP) membership. Wood reviewed and discussed proposed changes to the 2023 ATAC Bylaws document, which were sent to participants prior to the meeting. Alterations made to the bylaws were a result of changes to the Assistive Technology Act governing the committee in order to maintain compliance. Committee members provided suggestions regarding proxy members, proxy voting, and procedures for terminating ATAC memberships prior to term ends. Alterations to the bylaws will be distributed to members and voted on at the next ATAC meeting.

Wood reviewed Bagley Keene laws and summarized Chief Cademarti’s previous explanation and offered clarification on where and how the ATAC meetings will be hosted through December 31, 2023. Additional updates will be provided at the next ATAC meeting.

Wood discussed the mandatory Ethics and Harassment Prevention trainings that ATAC members are required to complete and submit. Reviewed purpose of the trainings, where to take them, and where to submit the certificates. DOR will follow up with members who still need to complete their training.

**Agenda Item 9: AT Advisory Committee Member Recruitment**

AT Analyst Wood reviewed needed changes to Committee membership with the implementation of the 21st Century AT Act, which requires one or more additional representatives from the following:

* + - Dept of Health Care Services
    - Dept of Developmental Services
    - Dept of Aging
    - organization representing disabled veterans
    - a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service
    - Disability Rights California and/or
    - State Council on Developmental Disabilities

Recruitment efforts for the Department of Education are ongoing. The ATAC application is accessible from the DOR Assistive Technology webpage.

Committee members offered their suggestions for representatives to pursue, specifically healthcare providers, Disability Rights California, and an organization for developmental disabilities. Updates to these efforts will be provided at the next ATAC meeting.

**Agenda Item 10: Future Meeting Dates**

AT Analyst Wood provided an overview of the proposed meeting dates for future ATAC meetings, sent out to committee members for their reference. Proposed meeting dates, though tentative, are as follows:

* Wednesday, December 13, 2023
* Tuesday, March 12, 2024
* Wednesday, June 19, 2024
* Wednesday, September 18, 2024
* Wednesday, December 11, 2024

**Agenda Item 11: Committee and respective community updates**

Chair Grable asked ATAC members to discuss AT updates, any information that should be shared, advice, community updates, etc.

Member April Shin informed participants that her place of work, Los Rios Community Colleges, was in the final phase of finalizing and posting an Assistive Technology related job, and asked that members please share this information and the application with their colleagues and cohorts.

**Agenda Item 12: Public comment**

Chair Grable opened the floor for public comment. There was no public comment.

**Agenda Item 13: Call for motion to adjourn**

Chair Grable called for a motion to adjourn. Member Jolley motioned to adjourn and Member Shin seconded the motion. The meeting ended at 11:42PM.