# **Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)**

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

# **Meeting Minutes**

## Wednesday, March 19, 2025

## 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

### Meeting Locations and Attendance

#### Department of Rehabilitation, 721 Capitol Mall, Room 407, Sacramento, CA 95814

* DOR Staff: Elizabeth Wood, Assistive Technology (AT) Program Administrator, Independent Living and Assistive Technology (ILATS)

#### By Zoom:

* Attendance: Larry Grable; NickoleRenee Mensch; Gloria Cervantes
* CFILC Staff: Kathrine Crowley, Deputy Director
* DOR Staff: Monica Handley, Acting Chief, ILATS; Sheeyee Ntuj, AT and Voice Options Program (VOP) Manager; Tanya Thee, Traumatic Brain Injury Program Administrator
* Members of the Public: Charles Nguyen

##### Agenda Item 1: Call to Order

Chair Grable called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm and welcomed all participants.

##### Agenda Item 2: Welcome and Introductions

Chair Grable introduced himself, followed by ATAC members, DOR staff, CFILC staff, and members of the public.

##### Agenda Item 3: Review and Approve April 3, 2024 Meeting Minutes

As quorum was not met, postponed review of April 3 Meeting Minutes until next meeting.

##### Agenda Item 4: Review and Approve July 16, 2024 Meeting Minutes

As quorum was not met, postponed review of July 16 Meeting Minutes until next meeting.

##### Agenda Item 5: Review and Approve October 22, 2024 Meeting Minutes

As quorum was not met, postponed review of October 22 Meeting Minutes until next meeting.

##### Agenda Item 6: Department of Rehabilitation Updates

AT and VOP Manager Sheeyee Ntuj provided general DOR updates.

* DOR Executive Director Joe Xavier retired from his position in December 2024.
* Independent Living and Community Access Division (ILCAD) Deputy Director, Ana Acton, left her position in December 2024.
* Independent Living and Assistive Technology Section (ILATS) Chief Regina Cademarti left her position in January 2025.
* Kim Rutledge was appointed as DOR’s new Executive Director in January 2025.
* Monica Handley and Jake Johnson appointed as acting ILATS Chief and ILCAD Deputy, respectively.
* The current AT Program was extended for an additional 6 months, through September 30, 2025, to allow additional time to solicit the next agreement.
* The Assistive Technology Annual Progress Report (APR), required for all State AT Programs, was submitted to the Administration for Community Living December 2024.

##### Agenda Item 7: 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’s Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program and provides demonstrations and short-term loans of six speech-generating applications on iPads to Californians who cannot speak or who have difficulty speaking.

The program has provided 740 iPads so far this state fiscal year, with a goal of 1,260 consumers. Three grant administrators have been assigned to specific providers since January to improve communication and customer service. Monthly office hours for providers will begin on April 1st, replacing the previous weekly sessions. The 4th quarter providers meeting will be combined with the stakeholder meeting in May. New grant agreements for providers are being prepared for the upcoming fiscal year. The program is on track to meet its goals within the next three months.

##### Agenda Item 8: Ability Tools Report

CFILC Ability Tools Deputy Director Crowley reviewed programmatic information and shared specific anecdotes from these programs, emphasizing the positive impact on individuals' lives, from the Annual Progress Report, which covers AT activities required under the AT Act:

State leadership activities include 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 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.

* Shared updates on the Ability Tools training schedule and the success of recent events/activities.
* Discussed the decrease in consumers receiving assistance and the impact of recent life events on the training schedule.

State level activities are activities 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 can participate in device loans to try out devices in their homes for 30 days. Consumers can get devices for free or low cost through reutilization activities or get support purchasing new devices, utilizing State financing activities.

* Crowley shared consumer success stories for device demonstrations, device loans, open-ended loans, and state financing activities
  + Highlighted the Voice Options program, which provided AAC devices to individuals, improving their communication skills.

##### Agenda Item 9: AT Program Updates

AT Analyst Wood provided updates for the AT Program, discussing the upcoming RFP for the AT program and the need for form 700 submissions from the advisory committee by March 28, 2025 (before April 1).

DOR is amending the grant with CFILC, extending the current AT grant through September 30, 2025, to allow for adequate time to complete the RFP process, including an additional $545,000 in AT Act funds and $105,000 in AB204 funds. The AT Request for Proposal, anticipated to be a five-year contract, is currently in progress and DOR expects to have the solicitation out within the next few weeks. Regarding advisory committee recruitment updates, DOR is still pursuing a Department of Education committee member to fill positions required under the 21st Century AT Act (AT Act), with potential participants/members being invited to join the meeting.

##### Agenda Item 10: Assistive Technology Program Annual Progress Report (APR)

AT Analyst Wood shared data from the AT Annual Progress Report, which was submitted through NATADS on December 14, 2024. The APR is a data report submitted to the Administration for Community Living, required for all AT Act state formula grants under Section 4 of the AT Act. This report details data for all state level activities and state leadership activities performed during federal fiscal year 2023-2024. The PowerPoint shared for the APR was included in the meeting packet. The full California Assistive Technology Annual Progress Report can also be found at the link <https://catada.info/apr_reports24/california_2024>.

##### Agenda Item 11: DOR’s Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Program

TBI Analyst Tanya Thee provided an overview of the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) program at the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). The program funds 12 sites statewide to provide TBI services, with funding recently increased to $300,000 per site annually. The program offers seven core services, including enhanced information and referral, community reintegration, and vocational services. An ACL grant has allowed for the development of a TBI Advisory Board with 16 members and four committees. The program faces challenges in reaching all those in need, as they can only serve about 1,500 of the estimated 225,000 new TBI cases per year in California. Tanya emphasizes the importance of education and outreach to connect with underserved populations and the need for additional funding to expand services.

##### Agenda Item 12: Committee and Respective Community Updates

Chair Grable asked ATAC members to discuss AT or community updates, or any information that should be shared. The group also discussed new assistive technology devices, including smart glasses that can translate languages and identify objects, which Larry demonstrates during the meeting.

##### Agenda Item 13: Future Agenda Items

Chair Grable opened the floor for suggestions on topics to be covered during the next ATAC meeting.

##### Agenda Item 14: Public Comment

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

##### Agenda Item 15: Call for motion to adjourn

Chair Grable called for a motion to adjourn. Member Cervantes motioned to adjourn, and Member Mensch seconded the motion.