**State of California**

**Health and Human Services Agency**

**Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)**

## Blind Advisory Committee (BAC) Meeting

## Thursday, May 11, 2023

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Hybrid meeting held in DOR Central Office, 721 Capitol Mall, Room 301

Sacramento, CA 95814, with virtual participation available via Zoom.

**In attendance**:

BAC members (in-person): Sarah Harris, Chris Fendrick, Joe Smith

BAC members (by Zoom): Bryan Bashin, Margaret Buchmann-Garcia, Sandy Balani, Julie Parrish, Cheryl Thurston

DOR staff (in-person): Joe Xavier, Victor Duron, Sue Pelbath, Michael Thomas, Laura Rassmussen, Jennifer Wilbon

DOR staff (by Zoom): Peter Dawson, Eric Mazariegos, Kelly Snow, Jay Harris,

Carmen Ramirez, Susanna Bishop, Marc Leyva, Joe Stansil, Ana Christina Mendonsa

Members of the public (in-person): Leslie Givens

Members of the public (by Zoom): Margie Donovan, Steve Clark

## Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

The Chair, welcomed attendees, conducted a roll call, introduced BAC committee members, and established a quorum.

**Item 2: Introductions of DOR staff and public**

The Chair introduced department staff and members of the public.

## Item 3: Approval of the BAC Meeting Minutes and Review of Action Items Motion: Joe Smith moved a motion to approve the BAC meeting minutes from the February 9, 2023, BAC meeting. The motion was seconded by Chris Fendrick.

**Vote**: Sandy, yes. Sarah, yes. Julie, yes. Joe, yes. Cheryl, yes. Chris, yes. Margaret, abstain. The motion passed.

**Item 4: BAC Committee Members Network Updates**

BAC members reported on matters of interest in their networks and

communities. Highlights included the following:

Committee members comments and questions

* Shared that the department hired new staff, a training officer and a location development officer.
* 3-day visits are now allowed at prisons, which is good for vendors as vendors will be able to make more money.
* The vendor annual training will occur November 2023.
* Micro-markets are being looked into and are accessible to the Blind/Visually Impaired.
* A member worked to help resolve BEP issues regarding supplies and purchases and helped work on a resolution with the California Council of the Blind.
* The National Federation of the Blind convention is this summer.
* Various members discussed what was going on in their programs and talked about a youth summer program.
* The 90th California Council of the Blind (CCB) anniversary is approaching. The American Council of the Blind (ACB) convention is July 1; reach out to the chair for more information.

Public members comments and questions

* Asked if the youth summer program will include braille.
* A public member shared a recent experience visiting the Seattle Lighthouse.
* Shared success stories about employment placement. Valley Center for the Blind received recognition from the president.

**Item 5: Procurement**

DOR staff explained the procurement process as it relates to purchasing goods and services for consumers. DOR staff also provided an update on the approved vendor list on the Cal-ATSD website.

Department comments and questions

* Discussed assistive technology and procurement systems.
* The department is making sure to get products and services into consumers hands quickly.
* Explained the Cal-ATSD website and the procurement process. Cal-ATSD is a tool to help buyers make assistive technology purchases.
* Explained how purchases from suppliers are made and what information is provided.
* The buyer is a DOR staff person involved in the procurement process.
* The Department of General Services has oversight regarding this process.
* Discussed mainstream purchases and the consumer payment card.
* Training is essential to learn how to use products.
* The justification for purchases is “person centered services”.
* Counselors have been trained and work closely with the consumer to help determine what is best (for consumers).

Committee members comment and questions

* Input was requested on how to make services better for consumers.
* Requested clarification regarding purchases and asked questions about when assistive technology is sold in the mainstream market.
* Questions were raised about how can purchases be expedited?
* Learning how to use assistive technology is not accessible and individuals need to be trained on how to use these devices. Make sure people have the product but also have the training.
* Who makes decisions on purchases? What if something can be found that is less expensive? How do you choose which device, expensive or least expensive?

Public members comments and questions

* Questions were asked regarding the procurement process and Bid process and asked if the department can work with the Department of General Services regarding flexibility.
* Expertise is important and you get that from consumers.

**Item 6: BEP Training update**

The new training officer, Marc Leyva, shared his experience at the OCB (immersion) training.

Department comments and questions

* Shared information regarding the upcoming BEP training.
* Would like all counselors to go through the OCB (immersion) training.
* The training officer now has insight and experience through OCB which will help when developing the training curriculum.

**Item 7: Updates on BAC Applicants and Appointments**

Department comments and questions

* The department received little response regarding the last recruitment announcement so it will be re-announced. Asked for suggestions as to where to circulate the announcement and documents.

Committee member comments and questions

* Requested the department reach out to attract more people to serve on the committee to fill the four open vacancies.
* Mentioned individuals need encouragement to participate and the department should reopen the announcement. Anyone may call the chair with questions if individuals want to serve and be active.

Public members comments and questions

* Spoke about the application process.

**Item 8: BFS Success Stories**

Former OCB student, Sara Tackett, Ph.D., shared her story and experiences.

**Item 9: Directorate Report**

Joe Xavier, DOR Director and Victor Duron, Chief Deputy Director.

Federal Level Updates

* No additional news on the RSA Commissioner appointment.
* The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, National Council of State Agencies for the Blind, The National and State Rehabilitation Council were held in April 2023, in DC, update provided.
* Discussed the spending of the grant for student services.
* RSA 17 report will now be generated semi-annually and not quarterly.
* Discussed technical assistance from RSA.

State level updates

* The Governors proposed budget for 2023-2024 has published. A May revise will be released.
* Discussed the Mental Health Services Act.
* There is a continued effort to align services provided under Medi-Cal and the behavior health system.

Department updates

* The department received a recent grant called the California Sub Minimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment Project, otherwise called, CSP. The funds will be used to study targeted interventions for people with the most significant disabilities who are or are in sub-minimum wage or are contemplating a sub minimum wage setting.
* Looking into phasing out subminimum wage in California by 2025.
* DOR will partner with DDS and develop a plan to see how to move forward with subminimum wage by 2025 (from sheltered workshops to a competitive integrated employment setting).
* Discussed AB 2480.

Committee members comments and questions

* Services should be increased all around and there needs to be more outreach.
* Discussed OIB program.

Public member comments and questions

* Questions were asked about AB 2480.
* Questions were asked about the ending of the subminimum wage.
* How does the department plan on getting more services to the elderly?
* Discussed the need for ongoing funding and asked if there will be more formal information coming out?

Department comments and questions

The department is working on a draft regarding funding.

## Item 10: DOR Specialized Services Division (SSD) Report

Department comments and questions

* The Office of Civil Rights is planning to present at a future BAC meeting regarding sexual harassment.
* Discussed CTEBVI, SB 105, and what is impacting students.
* BFS is getting involved in the lives of teenagers. DOR staff plan on visiting CRP’s around the state and getting them re-engaged.
* Shared what is going on in the BEP program and with vendors. Discussed opportunities for vendors to open micro-markets.
* Talked about the OCB program and about the immersion training. The maximum number of students that can be housed at OCB is 20.
* The OIB program was discussed and the request for application process is underway. A new analyst will be supporting OIB. Discussed the screening process.

Committee members comments and questions

* Looking forward to getting more parents and students involved.
* Would like to know the maximum number of students that can be housed at OCB.
* Why do individuals not qualify for the OIB program? Why do they get screened out?

Public members comments and questions

* Asked about the department’s response to the issues of misbehavior and

allegations of sexual misconduct. Is the department getting any complaints?

**Item 11: TaskForce Report: Service Standards**

The taskforce meeting was held on 04/28/23. Sarah and Julie will be working together to put documents in the Dropbox. They have separated the taskforce into three smaller groups with at least two back committee members on each. One group will address assessments, another group will address safety, and another group will address certification. Sarah will send updates for the next meeting to members.

## Item 12: Residential Program Data

Department comments and questions

* Discussed consumer outcomes following attending the residential training program.
* Data from BFFR will be requested; hoping to obtain data for the past 10 years. Some of the data comes from EDD. Hoping to have data by November.
* The department is working on OCB employment from 2019 - 2021 and making a spreadsheet. Once completed, it will be sent out.

**Item 13: Identify future Agenda items**

Committee members comments and questions

* Would like to receive information about Direct Service Rates.

**Motion:** Margaret Buchmann-Garcia moved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:29 PM. The motion was seconded by Chris Fendrick.

**Vote:** Sarah yes. Bryan, yes. Joe, yes. Chris, yes. Margaret, yes. The motion passed.

**Adjournment (3:29 p.m.)**