**State of California**

**Health and Human Services Agency**

**Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)**

## Blind Advisory Committee (BAC) Meeting

## Thursday, August 10, 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. Public locations listed on agenda.

**In attendance**:

BAC members (in-person): Sarah Harris, Guillermo Robles, Sandy Balani

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

DOR staff (in-person): Joe Xavier, Sue Pelbath, Michael Thomas, Laura Rassmussen, Jay Harris, Ana Cristina Mendonsa-Garaventa, Melissa Drake, Jennifer Wilbon

DOR staff (by Zoom): Eric Mazariegos, Kelly Snow, Joe Stansil, Sky Ntxwj,

Members of the public (in-person): Max Duarte, Dave Little

Members of the public (by Zoom): Leslie, Gibbons, Steve Clark, Patricia Leetz, Sheila Woodall

## 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: Bryan Bashin moved a motion to approve the BAC meeting minutes from the May 10, 2023, BAC meeting. The motion was seconded by Chris Fendrick.

**Vote**: Sandy, yes. Sarah, yes. Cheryl, yes. Bryan, yes. Chris, yes. Guillermo, abstain. Margaret, yes. 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

* Discussed the upcoming November 2023, BEP annual training conference.
* Gave national updates in-regard to happenings in the BEP program.
* 3-day visits are now allowed at prisons, which is good for vendors as vendors will be able to make more money.
* Micro-markets are being looked into and are accessible to the blind and visually impaired.
* Various members discussed what was going on in their programs.
* 90th anniversary for California Council of the Blind (CCB).
* Discussed TBI programs.
* The National Federation of the Blind convention took place this summer.

**Item 5: Procurement**

DOR staff explained the procurement process.

Department comments and questions

* Counselors have been trained and work closely with consumers to help determine what is best (for consumers).
* The justification for purchases is “person centered services”.
* The department is making sure to get products and services into consumers hands quickly.
* Explained how purchases from suppliers are made and what information is provided.
* Training is essential to learn how to use products.
* The department reaches out to CRP’s and work with vendors.
* It is helpful to have extra equipment/computers in stock in case one is needed right away.

Public members comments and questions

* Questions were asked about the assessment process.
* Shared concerns regarding equipment and what is going to meet consumer needs.
* Need to have good adaptive technology.
* 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.

**Item 6: update on Service Standards Task force**

Next meeting scheduled for September 1, 2023.

**Item 7: Bagley-Keene update**

**DOR attorney Elizabeth Colegrove** gave an overview of the Bagley Keene Act. Bagley-Keene is a state law requiring open meetings so the public can participate in state business. BAC is covered under the Bagley-Keene Act.

Committee member comments and questions

* Questions were asked regarding the use of technology during meetings.
* Suggested some of the language in the act be changed.

Department comments and questions

* Members do not have to attend in-person as long as there is a public noticed location.

Public members comments and questions

* Questions were asked regarding how Bagley-Keene applies to subcommittees.

**Item 8: BEP: Accessibility of Micro-Markets**

Dave Little and Chris Ingram from Three Square Markets discussed the future of micromarkets, and discussed accessible kiosks, and market setups and costs. Three Square Markets working on a national program for BEP vendors.

Committee members comments and questions

* How would an individual who is fully blind, complete a transaction?

**Item 9: Client owned vehicle use regulation package**

Daisy Hughes, DOR office of legal affairs and Jessica Grove, VR Policy and Resource Division presented on the proposal to amend the California code of regulations section 7162 pertaining to client owned vehicles and the mileage rates for DOR clients.

Committee members comments and questions

* What if an individual takes Uber?
* Questions arose regarding reimbursement rates.

**Item 10: Updates on BAC applicants and appointments**

Applications continue to be evaluated. Guillermo Robles is the newly appointed BAC member by Joe Xavier. Guillermo has been a member of CCB since the 1990’s and is also a consumer of DOR. Guillermo shared his background with members.

**Item 11: BFS Success Stories**

John shared his story with members. John was diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy in 2018. He became involved with DOR in April 2022 and began services. He participated in adult work experience. John said the hardest adjustment he had to make was dealing with transportation.

Committee members comments and questions

* Would like to know what the hardest thing John had to learn to adapt to with his vision loss.
* Asked John to share his experience at the Earle Baum Center of the Blind.

**Item 12: Directorate Report**

Joe Xavier, DOR Director

Federal Level Updates

* No additional news on the RSA Commissioner appointment.
* Discussed reallotment dollars.
* Discussed funding and the impact it has on unemployment outcomes.
* Discussed RSA.
* Discussed individuals with the most significant disabilities returning to work.

State level updates

* The Governors proposed budget for 2023-2024 has been signed. Do not yet have a full scope of what the revenue looks like in California.
* Discussed when the budget is developed and published.

Department updates

* The department did not face reductions even though the state faced under a $32 billion dollar shortfall.
* Talked about areas of interest including the community living fund, TBI community-based services, and employment.
* Discussed individuals with intellectual disabilities qualifying for state jobs.
* End subminimum wage in California; phase out subminimum wage by 2025; a statewide effort.
* Discussed re-allotment for the 2023 fiscal year and redistribution of funds.
* Discussed independent living services network and funding.
* New chief of HR of Policy Resources Development.
* How do we engage school systems?
* Efforts to address the younger, getting involved, building partnerships.
* OIB received funding.

Committee members comments and questions

* Services should be increased all around and there needs to be more outreach, can we do more marketing?

Public member comments and questions

* Questions were asked regarding student services, what is the effort moving forward?

## Item 13: DOR Specialized Services Division (SSD) Report

* Discussed positions and new hires.
* Discussed the events of SB 105 and SB 105 training.
* How to best serve those under 55.
* Discussed Zero Dollar Grant.
* OIB to begin visiting programs again.
* Wayfinder is a new provider and will be serving LA County.
* Overview of BEP program. 3 staff vacancies. Awarded 6 satellites, 1 primary and, and 2 interim locations. There are 2 pending Coast Guard locations. Training conference in November for vendors and in January, will start taking applications for the training program.
* October is National Disability month.
* Discussed promoting the iWork because DOR works program.
* Looking at new programs for Blind Field Services to get people employed. Bring comments, ideas, or suggestions regarding the program to Laura.
* BFS is getting involved in the lives of teenagers.
* DOR staff plan on visiting CRP’s around the state and getting them re-engaged.
* Talked about the OCB program.

**Item 14: Presentation Clusiv Inc.**

Presentation cancelled.

**Item 15: Identify future Agenda items**

* Certification for CRP’s
* Monica Hadley, DOR Chief, Disability Access Services to present at November meeting
* Shannon Clement will discuss sexual harassment complaints
* Rate changes
* Residential program outcomes

**Motion:** Guillermo Robles moved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:19 PM. The motion was seconded by Sandy Balani.

**Vote:** Sarah, yes. Sandy, yes. Guillermo, yes. Bryan, yes. Chris, yes. Margaret, yes. Cheryl, yes. The motion passed.

**Adjournment (2:19 p.m.)**