**State of California**

**Health and Human Services Agency**

**Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)**

## Blind Advisory Committee (BAC) Meeting

## Thursday, May 8, 2025

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.

**Meeting Minutes**

**In attendance**:

BAC members (in-person): Guillermo Robles

BAC members (by Zoom): Sandy Balani, Margaret Buchmann-Garcia, Vanna Rapeti

DOR staff (in-person): Sue Pelbath, Maria Turrubiartes, Sarah Harris, Megan Davis, Jay Harris, Melissa Harris, Anna Christina Mendonsa Garaventa, Laurie Russi, Jennifer Wilbon

DOR staff (by Zoom): Deyanire Villachica, Yukiko Long, Eric Mazariegos, Kelly Snow, Casey Cook

Members of the public (in-person): Silvana Rainey, Steve Clark, Leslie Gibbons, Joni Patche, John Taylor, Andrea Schulze

Members of the public (by Zoom): Margie Donovan, Patricia Leetz, Stella Woodall, Ishmael Herrera, Steven Sanith, Jeff Willis, Edward Crespin, Aaron Espinoza, Rebecca Deerr, Laura Miller

## 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: Special Elections**

Vacancies to fill the chair and vice-chair positions.

**Motion:** Margaret Buchmann-Garcia moved a motion to nominate Guillermo Robles for the chair position for the BAC committee. The motion was seconded by Sandy Balani.

**Vote:** Margaret, yes. Guillermo, yes. Sandy, yes. Vanna, yes. The motion passed.

**Motion:** Guillermo Robles moved a motion to nominate Sandy Balani for the vice-chair position for the BAC committee. The motion was seconded by Sandy Balani.

Sandy, yes. Guillermo, yes. Margaret, yes. Vanna, no. The motion passed.

## Item 4: Approval of the BAC Meeting Minutes and Review of Action ItemsThe chair and committee members approved the minutes from the February 2025 meeting.

## Motion: Margaret Buchmann-Garcia moved a motion to approve the BAC meeting minutes from the February 2025 meeting. The motion was seconded by Sandy Balani.

## Vote: Margaret, yes. Guillermo, yes. Vanna, yes. Sandy, yes. The motion passed.

**Item 5: BAC Committee Members Network Updates**

BAC members reported on matters of interest in their networks and

communities. Some highlights included the following:

Committee members comments and questions

* Updates for COVE: getting ready for their summer institute for young adults in June, received Merced County Foundation Grant, going to take a trip to Winchester Mystery House, provided program updates, Cove annual vision fair in July
* Shared BEP program updates, hired a new training officer, BLAST and NAMA conference happening now in Las Vegas
* CCB updates

Public comments and questions

* Provided software updates from Freedom Scientific

**Item 6: Directorate Report**

Kim Rutledge, DOR Director, and Victor Duron, Chief Deputy Director

Federal level updates

* Executive order from president to eliminate Federal Department of Education
* RSA has not been affected by staffing reductions
* Funding for VR continues to flow, the VR grant had a small increase for the upcoming year
* Discussed reallotment dollars
* CSAVR conference and NCSAB conference updates
* Discussed programs that fall under the Federal Department of Health and Human Services
* Administration for Community Living Department is going to be eliminated at the Department of Health and Human Services

State level updates

* HSA interested in a “cohesive across the agency effort” that serves tribal governments that reside within California
* Budget updates
* Discussed May revise
* Every state’s, state budget, is influenced by the federal budget
* Discussed continuing resolution for federal spending
* By July, there will need to be a final state budget
* Discussed California finances, revenue, and budget
* Explained unearned income tax

Department level updates

* DOR Director in process of going through senate confirmation process
* Announced new members of DOR leadership team
* Discussed DOR vacancies

Committee members comments and questions

* Cost of living questions
* Discussion of electronic fund transfers for payment

Public comments and questions

* Questions about AB 3193 to help make the procurement process more efficient at the department, asked where the department is at with this process

Department comments and questions

* Regarding AB 3193, the department has a workgroup, has begun to contact community partners, have identified internal processes, and see an opportunity to improve

**Item 7:** Update regarding the Cancellation Policy recommendations

Sue Pelbath, Deputy Director, Specialized Services Division, provided current information on cancellation policy

Department comments and questions

* Reviewed cancellation policy for contracts
* Consumer cancellations: the concern was brought to program deputies and is with the policy division, the language is being looked at
* Shared inbox idea

Public members comments and questions

* Inbox idea is a good idea if clients are informed, make sure rules and guidelines are clear if going to implement

Committee members comments and questions

* Shared opinion of inbox idea

**Item 8: BFS Success Stories**

Paula Balo was introduced by her counselor, Scott Levine. Paula shared her story. Paula was previously a DOR client and most recently returned in 2021.

Paula works at Amazon and has been employed with them for the past 3 years. Paula explained how DOR helped her. Paula uses glasses and hearing aids. Paula is 77 years old.

Committee members comments and questions

* Would like to know what kind of assistive technology Paula uses

**Item 9: CSUN Report, Adaptive Technology Services and Sterling Adaptives**

The BAC received a report on CSUN and the new products that are coming out for people who are blind or have low vision.

## Item 10: DOR Specialized Services Division (SSD) Report, some highlights include

Department comments and questions

* BFS updates, data from 01/01/25 – 3/31/25: reviewed BFS reports/highlights/statistics, staff updates, 352 applications, 4,283 individuals served this quarter, reviewed wage data
* OCB updates: new BEP Training Officer came to OCB for a 1-week training, OCB staffing updates, planning a kayaking trip, OCB works with the self-defense group, Full Power, the roof was repaired a couple of years ago and there is no mold, and is not in an area where students are trained
* BEP update: filled Training Officer position, 51 vendors in the program, talked about equipment purchases, there are more locations than vendors in the program, discussed state workers returning to work and how that may affect vendors in the BEP program
* OIB updates: discussed grants, reduce OIB grants this year due to varying factors

Public members comments and questions

* Would like to know how the department can enhance and improve job placement services for consumers
* Questions about the roof leak at OCB
* Questions about locations in the BEP program

**Item 11: Self-Employment**

Yuki Long, Acting District Administrator, DOR BFS District, and Megan Davis, Chief of Policy and Performance Section, provided an overview and shared a power point presentation of employment in a self-employment setting from regulatory and policy prospectives.

Committee members comments and questions

* Questions about assessments
* Would like to know what kind of guidance individuals get from the department, is there a business consultant

Public comments and questions

* Job retention questions after a successful closure when the individual comes back to the department for support

**Item 12: Identify future agenda items**

* Update on SB 105
* Would like an update from the department regarding the cancellation policy
* Update on Bill 3193

**Motion:** Margaret moved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:50pm. The motion was seconded by Vanna.

**Vote:** Margaret, yes. Vanna, yes. Guillermo, yes. The motion passed.

Adjournment (3:50 p.m.)