# **Analysis of Virtual Service Delivery Survey**

The California Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (CCEPD) State Coordination Subcommittee is developing a best practices document for virtual service delivery for people with disabilities. To enhance opportunities for people with disabilities, a survey was created for service providers to gain information on services provided, best practices, challenges, and more. While virtual services may have been available through many service providers for many years, the pandemic has grown the need for them exponentially.

The survey was sent to services providers by CCEPD partners. At the March 8 cutoff, 44 service providers had completed the survey. This document will provide an overview of the survey questions, service provider answers, and an analysis of trends in a narrative form.

**Survey Questions and Answers**

The following 21 questions were asked of service providers. The survey included both close-ended questions (9) and open-ended questions (12). Answers are provided in narrative form. While 44 service providers completed the survey, response totals will not necessarily total 44 for each question, as some questions were skipped, and others were formatted in a way that permitted multiple answers.

1. What type of services does your organization provide?

Among 44 service provider responses, there were a total of 87 answers (31 - Employment Services, 19 - Independent Living Services, 12 - Supported Employment, 25 - Other). Most of the “Other” responses expanded on employment related services. Additionally, the most reoccurring “Other” responses included Assistive Technology (7), Day Programs (5), and Advocacy (3).

1. How do you service clients who have disabilities? (Open-ended Question)

Among the 44 service provider responses, many interpreted this open-ended question as virtual, in-person, or hybrid (21). All 21 of these respondents stated they are either doing a hybrid approach or will be doing a hybrid approach shortly (following COVID protocol updates). Many others repeated their responses to the first question. There were no other noteworthy trends.

1. Prior to the pandemic, did your organization offer services virtually?

Among 44 service provider responses, there were a total of 46 answers (13 - Yes, 25 - No, 8 - Other). All 8 “Other” responses referenced limited virtual services were previously provided.

1. As the pandemic continues, how does your organization plan to offer services?

Among 44 service provider responses, there were a total of 60 answers (38 - Hybrid, 8 - All Virtual Services, 14 - Back to In-Person Services).

1. How will your organization provide choice of services (request for in-person or virtual services) for customers? (Open-ended Question)

Among 44 service provider responses, all 44 referenced it is up to the customer, or will be up to the customer, in compliance to COVID protocol updates.

1. In planning to continue virtual services, will your workforce continue teleworking?

Among 44 service provider responses, there were a total of 48 answers (21 - Yes, 7 - No, 20 - Other). All 20 “Other” responses referenced an openness to continue teleworking at least partially.

1. What types of accommodation have been requested from people with disabilities for virtual services?

Among 44 service provider responses, there were a total of 114 answers (18 - Request for ASL Interpreter, 18 - Captioner, 10 - Screen Readers not able to link to Virtual Platforms, 25 - Lack of Digital Skills to Access Virtual Platforms, 27 - Lack of Internet on Broadband, 16 - Other). Many “Other” responses expanded upon the need for more digital skills. The only other reoccurring “Other” response was the need for computers/devices (7).

1. What accessibility challenges have been encountered? (Open-ended Question)

Among 44 service providers, 37 responded to this question. The most reoccurring responses were lack of quality internet (15), lack of digital skills (14), and lack of computers/devices (10). It should also be noted that 6 respondents mentioned additional challenges of assisting people who are blind, deaf, or non-verbal with utilizing accessibility features (especially virtually).

1. What video platforms have been used?

Among 44 service provider responses, there were a total of 99 answers (2 - Adobe Connect, 3 - Canvass, 5 - Cisco WebEx, 18 - Google Meet, 27 - Microsoft Teams, 44 - Zoom).

1. How have you been engaging with partners in a virtual setting? (Open-ended Question)

Among 42 service provider responses, 27 repeated their responses to the prior question. A few additionally mentioned they are using virtual settings for trainings and webinars (which many of the other 27 could be as will). However, there were no noteworthy trends or details.

1. Please check the following if your organization has been using the following to engage with partners:

Among 44 service provider responses, there were a total of 121 answers (26 - Case managers from different organizations meet on same video call with client. 28 - Case managers meet on a regular basis to discuss client and partnership needs. 29 - Monthly video calls to discuss partnership needs, provide ongoing training. 8 - Developed MOU's to participate in strategic co-enrollment or no wrong door policies. 27 - Developed integrated service delivery teams to serve people with disabilities. 3 - Other). The 3 “Other” responses referenced case manager flexibility for engagement.

1. What are emerging gaps or barriers to building partnerships? (Open-ended Question)

Among 37 service provider responses, the most reoccurring responses were lack of staffing and/or staff time (8), challenges with technologies (5), being unable to create partnerships in-person (4), and funding (3).

1. What innovative strategies have you used in building partnerships? (Open-ended Question)

Among 33 service provider responses, the most reoccurring responses were related to utilizing new technologies and platforms (10), more frequent communication (9), and flexibility with partners (3).

1. What supports or policy changes are needed to continue offering virtual services and/or choice of services? (Open-ended Question)

Among 35 service provider responses, the most reoccurring responses were related to funding (8), more flexibility with virtual services (6), more training (3), and better e-sign technologies (3). It should also be noted the need for Brown Act updates for new technologies were raised (2).

1. How has your organization served underserved communities to ensure equity and diverse engagement in terms of disability, racial/ethnic and gender? (Open-ended Question)

Among 35 service provider responses, the most reoccurring responses were related to providing targeted programs (14), diversity of staff (6), trainings (4), and providing technology related resources (3). It should be noted that while only 14 referenced targeted programs, based on who we know these service providers are, the number is much higher.

1. During the pandemic, what were the three biggest challenges for clients?

Among 44 service provider responses, there were a total of 190 answers (21 - Affordable Housing, 10 - Assistance with Unemployment, 5 - Benefits Planning, 23 - Continued health concerns with pandemic, 5 - Lack of child-care, 27 - Lack of computer equipment, 12 - Lack of internships and work experiences, 18 - Lack of transportation, 16 - No internet or Broadband affordability, 26 - No digital skills, needed training, 14 - Job loss, 13 - Other). Other than expanded on the need for digital skills, the only reoccurring “Other” response was mental and emotional health.

1. In the post-pandemic recovery, what policies, tools or program changes are needed to address clients' challenges? (Open-ended Question)

Among 36 service provider responses, the most reoccurring responses were related to the need for more technology and virtual skills trainings (13), support for a continued hybrid model (7), access to technology (4), and other supportive service such as housing and transportation (3) and emotional/mental health (3).

1. The California Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities would like to develop a "best practices" document for virtual service delivery for clients with disabilities. What "best practice would you highlight from your organization? (Open-ended Question)

Among 34 service provider responses, most responses were short (one sentence) and vague. Best practice themes related to addressing individual/one-on-one needs (13), technical support – both device and training (11), partner collaboration (5), and support/wraparound services (3).

While the short responses to this question do not necessarily provide the most adequate representation of “best practices” throughout the state, there were a few responses that stood out. The below responses were the most comprehensive and worthy of highlighting:

* “Concentrate on providing wrap around services that start with their needs in mind. In other words, if they do not at the moment understand what they will need to work, then you as a service provider should be able to explore with them either through your agencies services or by helping them find other agencies that provide the supports, to discover what needs they might have in the workplace. Once this is done then the process of tailoring their employment development can take place.” (Silicon Valley Independent Living Center)
* “Structured program with curriculum and modules, training ‘boot camp’ for staff and for clients as an intro to virtual services, data collection to assess what is working and not working, client led choices in content and client led sessions, smaller breakout rooms, bilingual breakout rooms in Spanish and Vietnamese.” (Hope Services)
* “Appoint a key liaison to meet with other stakeholders. Participate in grants that reach special interest clients. Train stakeholders on how to work with clients who have special needs. Be open to new challenges and opportunities. We have one-to-one meetings run by empathetic and trained counselors.” (Rubicon Programs)
* “One of our strengths has been our model of providing one-on-one training which makes it possible for us to customize the training based on the abilities and specific needs of the individual being served. this model also allowed our organization to make a quick and smooth transition to providing remote training during the shutdown of the pandemic.” (Blindness Support Services)
* “Best practice from Life Management Employment Services is: we shall keep working with the CPUC to utilize their low cost internet program to people with disabilities and low income clients. We shall continue to get more money to get several virtual platforms to work with, so clients can make their own decisions on what virtual platforms they would like to work with. We shall continue to strengthen our partnerships with California Department of Rehabilitation, State Rehabilitation Council, California Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, California State Council on Developmental Disabilities, SCDD Regional Offices, SCDD Employment First Committee, California Statewide Self-Advocacy Network, Department of Developmental Services, Association of Regional Center Agencies, all seven regional centers in Los Angeles County, Disability Rights of California and all three of the California University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). As you can ascertain: our employment agency has a lot of partnerships to help us gain employment for people with disabilities.” (Life Management Employment Services)
1. Name of Your Organization (Open-ended Question)

Of the 43 services provider responses, 39 different organizations were represented.

1. County where you provide services. (Open-ended Question)

There were 43 service providers that provided responses. Many service providers serviced multiple counties. The most counties identified among service providers were Sacramento (9), Los Angeles (8), Santa Clara (6), Alameda (6), and Orange (5).

1. If you highlighted a best practice, can we contact you?

Among 39 service provider responses, 34 were willing to be contacted and 32 provided contact information (name and email).

**Survey Analysis**

Service provider survey responses will prove beneficial to the CCEPD’s work with the issue of virtual services for people with disabilities. While the overwhelming majority of responses confirmed previously discussed needs, the survey provides justification for addressing those needs with specific examples.

The ambiguity of some questions led to nearly identical responses across many questions. Additionally, the formatting of some close-ended questions to allow multiple answers led to less targeted and identifiable responses. However, many themes were still easily identified among service provider responses.

Prior to the pandemic, most service providers that responded did not offer virtual services. Following the pandemic, nearly all service providers will continue offering virtual services, most with a hybrid approach. These hybrid approaches will usually permit consumers the opportunity to receive services as they choose.

The overwhelming theme relating to consumer needs was the need for technology improvements and trainings. While there was a need for devices, the larger need was for adequate internet access and digital skills, especially with virtual platforms. These needs were raised in many areas throughout the survey responses. All respondents indicated they have used Zoom, and the majority have used Microsoft Teams. Since the CCEPD uses these platforms, they will prove beneficial with any best practices outreach.

The importance of collaboration between service providers was also a common theme. Respondents raised establishing and/or growing these relationships has been a challenge during the pandemic, as in-person communication is typically best for relationship building. However, as the pandemic clears, and more people get familiar with virtual platforms, more opportunities to grow relationships will be presented.

It should also be noted that in addition to employment services, other support services were raised as needs among service providers. For example, housing, transportation, and health concerns, typically all must be met before employment is explored.

While most responses came from large, densely populated metropolitan areas, many of these providers also serviced smaller, rural areas. Additionally, many different kinds of services providers responded. As a best practices document is developed, this diversity among service providers will prove beneficial.