# **Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)**

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

# **Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, October 22, 2024**

**1:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

**Meeting Locations and Attendance**

Service Center for Independent Life (SCIL), 107 South Spring Street, Claremont, CA 91711

* Attendance: Larry Grable, Chair; Gloria Cervantes
* DOR Staff: Elizabeth Wood, Assistive Technology Program Analyst, ILATS
* SCIL Staff: Patrick Tran, Assistive Technology Manager

By Zoom:

* Attendance: April Shin; NickoleRenee Mensch; Brent Jolley
* CFILC Staff: Kathrine Crowley, Deputy Director
* DOR Staff: Ana Acton, Deputy Director, Independent Living and Community Access Division (ILCAD); Regina Cademarti, Chief, Independent Living and Assistive Technology Section (ILATS)
* Members of the Public: Thomas Martin, Executive Director, CalABLE; Ava Hacopian

**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: Department of Rehabilitation Updates**

ILATS Chief Regina Cademarti provided general DOR updates.

* DOR is celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month to raise awareness and celebrate contributors to workplace accessibility and inclusivity.
* The updated Governor’s FY24-25 budget includes the anticipated budget deficit, but no cuts have been made to Independent Living or Assistive Technology.
* The current AT Program will be extended for an additional 6 months, through March 30, 2025, to allow additional time to solicit the next agreement.
* The Public Health Workforce grant, awarded to the AT Program implementing entity, was approved for a one year, no-cost extension to allow additional time to spend funds.
* The AT State Plan (SPAT) for FY24-26, required for all State AT Programs, was submitted to the Administration for Community Living.

**Agenda Item 6: 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 Voice Options Program has 28 providers, offers materials in 11 different languages, provides in-person services to 98 percent of California, and provide services virtually and by mail. Consumers range in age from 18 months old to over 80 years, span more than 50 disability types, and efforts are being made to reach more black, indigenous, and other people of color and rural communities.

Highlighted the new Voice Options employee, Urshella Starr, filling Tim Burkhart’s position, and noted DOR anticipates receiving Voice Options tablecloths and banners to distribute to Providers soon. The VO Provider call, hosted July 29, covered Short Term Loan processes, Provider roles and responsibilities, and current program successes and challenges. VOP also distributed updated invoice procedures to help streamline invoicing and ensure timely reimbursements. Monthly allocations were adjusted to quarterly allocations, and back logged invoices were on their way to getting caught up.

**Agenda Item 7: Ability Tools Report**

CFILC Ability Tools Deputy Director Crowley reviewed information from the third quarter AT activities 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.

* Ability Tools conducted 58 Public Awareness events reaching approximately 30,000 participants, including:
* Ability Tools published three blogs and is on track to meet deliverables:
  + Mastering Wheelchair Maintenance
  + Empowering Access with AT in Libraries
  + Empowering Access to AT Through Libraries
* Information and Assistance (I&A) activities
  + Served 307 individuals using I&A line and email address
* Eight Training workshops were performed, including:
  + Earth Day – Reinventing the Wheel
  + AT and Sexuality

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
  + 165 Device Demonstration Activities performed to 210 participants
  + 332 Device Loan Activities performed and 392 devices loaned
  + 601 Device Reutilization Activities performed with 845 devices reused
* Crowley continued to discuss plans for activities and collaborations with organizations like AbleGamers, and the notable challenges experienced with NATADS underreporting and staff vacancies.

**Agenda Item 8: AT Program Updates**

AT Analyst Wood provided updates for the AT Program. DOR submitted the AT State Plan, which delineates the anticipated activities for FY24-26 (more on this below). DOR finalized amendments with CFILC, extending the current AT grant through March 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 American Rescue Plan Act’s Public Health Workforce grant was approved for a no-cost extension, through September 30, 2025 to allow additional time to spend grant funds. The AT Request for Proposal is currently in progress and DOR expects to finalize the solicitation in the near future. Regarding advisory committee recruitment updates, DOR is still pursuing a committee members to fill positions required under the 21st Century AT Act (AT Act), noting special interest in Medicaid programs and the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, and some folks were invited to join the meeting.

**Agenda Item 9: Assistive Technology Program State Plan (SPAT)**

AT Analyst Wood provided details regarding the AT State Plan, which was submitted through NATADS on September 30, 2024. The SPAT is an application to the Administration for Community Living for an AT Act state formula grant, as required under Section 4 of the AT Act. This application includes details about the lead and implementing entity, the AT Advisory Council, budget allocations and expenditures, and anticipated state level activities. The State Plan is submitted every three years and includes annual updates. Analyst Wood reviewed the submitted SPAT with members and requested feedback for 2025 edits.

**Agenda Item 10: Committee and Respective Community Updates** Chair Grable asked ATAC members to discuss AT or community updates, or any information that should be shared. There were no updates provided.

**Agenda Item 11: CalABLE Presentation**

California Achieving a Better Life Experience (CalABLE) Executive Director, Thomas Martin, provided insight into the CalABLE program, which helps individuals save money for disability-related expenses while protecting their access to public benefits. Topics covered included eligibility, the application process, benefits, program efficacy, and personal impacts. Committee members and members of the public were able to ask questions and gain more information about the program.

**Agenda Item 12: Future Agenda Items**

Chair Grable opened the floor for suggestions on topics to be covered during the next ATAC meeting. Suggestions primarily involved demonstrating 3D printed, high tech, and other AT devices.

**Agenda Item 13: Public Comment**

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

**Agenda Item 14: Call for motion to adjourn**

Chair Grable called for a motion to adjourn. Member Mensch motioned to adjourn, and Member Shin seconded the motion. The meeting ended at 2:52 pm.