**State of California**

**Health and Human Services Agency**

**Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)**

**Disability Advisory Committee (DAC)**

Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2024

Department of Rehabilitation, Public Zoom Meeting

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

**In-person location**:

Department of Rehabilitation, 721 Capitol Mall, Room 301

Sacramento, CA 95814

# DAC Members in Attendance:

* Anthony Houston, At-Large
* Bonita Wahl; Traumatic Brain Injury
* Chelle Ellis; Heart/Circulatory Disorders
* Emily Alexander; Deaf/Hard of Hearing
* Jennilee Ruggirello; Blind/Visual Impairment
* Jonathan (Jona) Deguzman; Other Disability
* Lisa Cushman; Mental/Behavioral Disability
* Michelle Zavala-Pizano; Learning Disability
* Miguel Castaneda; Physical Disability

# DAC Members Not Present:

* Jonathan De Jesus; Cognitive Impairment

## DOR Leadership Liaison in Attendance:

* Rosa Gomez
* Shannon Coleman

## DOR Staff in Attendance:

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| Jasdeep Brown | Matt Baker | Tara Celli |
| Kate Bjerke | Peter Blanco |  |

## Members of the Public in Attendance:

* none

# 1) Welcome and Introductions

Chelle Ellis, DAC Chair, reviewed the purpose of the DAC, conducted a roll call, and established a quorum.

# 2) Approval of DAC Meeting Minutes and Review of Action Items

* November 2023 brought forward/approved and Chair requested that the December meeting minutes will be brought forward again at 2.12.24 meeting
* Action Items: none

Public Comment: none

**3) Statewide Disability Advisory Council (SDAC)** Report out by Lisa Cushman, DAC Vice Chair

Lisa provided a summary of the various speakers who presented at the October 19, 2023, SDAC meeting as follows:

* Presentation by Steve Gordon, Director, California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
* DMV has performed data analysis to increase the efficiency of its transactions and eliminate tasks that do not add value and frustrate the customer.
* DMV wants to compete with retail in efficiency and customer service, one example: switching from snail mail to email notices to the customer.
* DOR/DAC representative, Lisa Cushman, requested a review of the mobile verification system which is not accessible to blind/visually impaired individuals. The Director agreed to perform user testing for accessibility of the wallet verification system.
* Presentation by Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil, California Senate, District 4
	+ Senator Alvarado-Gil is a person with a disability and has children with disabilities. She was also a part of the foster-care system.
	+ As a state senator, she works on policy to protect the rights of her constituents.
		- One issue concerning the hiring of people with disabilities into state service is that state agencies have fallen short of the 16.6% parity rate that AB1179 mandates.
		- This legislative year, the state Senate Human Service Committee saw four bills that affected people with disabilities
		- A member of the audience brought up the issue of the AWOL statute as it applies to state workers and advocated for a short amendment to the AWOL statute to follow protections offered under California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA). Senator Alvarado-Gil agreed that the AWOL statute covering leave may not have worked well for individuals with disabilities.
* Presentation by Tom Welsh, Chief Legal and Compliance Officer, California Earthquake Authority (CEA)
	+ CEA is a publicly managed, privately funded, nonprofit agency, not a state agency.
	+ Staff is made up of civil servants and at-will employees in equal parts
	+ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion group was founded in 2020 and is sponsored by CEA employees.
	+ CEA now has a Disability Advisory Committee (DAC).
	+ The agency will be moving to a more accessible building next year.
	+ CEA continues to track equity data from CalHR and is doing recruitment to increase the diversity of its workforce.
* Presentation by Vernon Steiner, President and CEO, State Fund of California
	+ State Fund is one of the Workers’ Compensation insurers for California.
	+ People with either a temporary or a permanent disability can apply for Worker’s Compensation benefits.
	+ Potential State Fund leaders learn about diversity and unconscious bias.
	+ 21.1% of State Fund employees are people with disabilities.
	+ State Fund holds optional regular town hall meetings. Now that these meetings are held virtually, over half the employees participate.
	+ State Fund conducts an annual employee engagement survey with an 81% participation rate.

The State Fund Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) has built trust among employees with outreach to people with disabilities in all aspects of the business process.

* + A questioner commented that State Fund was denying people with mental health disabilities worker’s compensation benefits at a higher rate in comparison with those people with physical disabilities. Mr. Steiner said that the law puts many limits on mental health claims, and that the State Fund cannot create a legal benefit that does not exist.
* Presentation by Eli Medrano, Manager, Equal Opportunity Employment Programs, California Department of Human Resources
* There are 62 state civil services classifications now open with LEAP exams and more are in development.
* As of December 21, 2023, there have been 88 LEAP appointments since July 1, 2023.
* Anyone interested in seeing more state classifications become eligible through LEAP should work with their state agency/department’s EEO Officer who is your contact to work with CalHR in developing LEAP exams.
* CalHR Office of Civil Rights has surveyed the EEO officers across the state and is incorporating their responses into planning the Reasonable Accommodations Round Table for 2024.
* In October, CALHR and the State Personnel Board published the statewide LEAP policy. Each agency’s EEO officer is mandated to work closely with the agency’s DAC.
* Presentation by Scott Richmond, Immediate Past President and Current Board Member of the Association of State Employees with Disabilities (ACSED)
	+ To order a LEAP only employment list, you can look in the CALHR resource manual under section 1107.
	+ ACSED is having its annual membership meeting on January 25. Voting will be available electronically for those who join ACSED by January 21.

Public Comment: none

**4) ­­DOR Affinity Group Development**

Matt Baker and Peter Blanco, LGBTQIA+ Affinity Group Co-Chairs, presented on how the LGBTQIA+ Affinity Group was established and how this affinity group supports the multiple LGBTQIA+ communities.

* The affinity group started when the DOR Chief Deputy Director sent an email letting DOR employees know that there was an affinity group forming to create a space where people could share experiences and hold an open space for discussion.
* Meetings are held monthly for support, to provide resources and to plan annual events
	+ The ideas for events come from the experiences that members provide. The affinity group takes cues from the members.
	+ The meetings are loosely organized, tasks are taken from upcoming recognitions. The group then works on identifying speakers and assigning tasks.
	+ The LGBTQIA+ Affinity Group conversations are kept light --and members are informed that if an issue of serious concern does come up in conversation, that affinity group leadership is required to report it.
	+ The group also uses the time to celebrate life events of the members.

Q: What is needed for the affinity groups to get up and running?

A: The group must have executive sponsorship, most often, an individual in DOR Leadership sponsors it.

* The affinity group needs a Chair or Co-Chairs to lead the group
* The group should come up with a mission statement, it does not have to be extensive, simply outlines the purpose is of the group.
* The group then asks the executive sponsor to send out a communication to the entire department that publicizes the group and invites new members.
* Willing participants are needed for any affinity group. A lot of our activities come from the employees who are willing to participate. We maintain the practice where the participants drive where we will go as a group.
* We want to be a community-based organization run by volunteers where there is no being “voluntold” what to do.
* It’s essential to create space for everyone in the room, always be intentional that it is a space for everyone.
* Think of a title that shows that everyone is included.
* There is a component of service as well, but an affinity group is also an opportunity to simply share.
* We have members from across the state, we intend to remain virtual to encourage statewide participation.
1. **DAC Work Group - Next Steps Discussion**

Rosa Gomez, DAC Leadership Liaison, led a discussion to finalize Work Group topics and identify next steps.

* A Brief History of the DAC Subcommittees and their work including:
* Reasonable Accommodation
* Recognition of regular events on the DOR calendar
* Recognition of Other Events not usually called out related to disability community interests
* Outreach to Other DACs
* Training and Education Events
* Other Topics Brought Forward in the December 2023 Meeting
* Advised to complete and turn in a DR 160 to a manager or other leadership if there is an incident related to hostile work environment or age discrimination experienced.
* Volunteers Needed to work on monthly DORALLs – Anthony
* Digital Timesheets for Improved Accessibility - Lisa
* Expediting Employment to DOR Jobs for People with Disabilities – Miguel, Bonita
* Marketing and Outreach (Recruitment) – Lisa, Michelle
* Career Development for Current DOR Employees with Disabilities - Emily
* Disability Awareness Training – Jenilee, Jona
* Digital Accessibility – Lisa, Anthony
* Career Advancement – Jona, Michelle
* Main Event Recognitions- Chelle

Public Comment: None

### **6) Round Table**

Members will continue to work on DAC Subcommittee topics in DAC Work Groups.

Michelle Zavala-Pizano suggestion that the DAC review the CHHS Playbook at the February meeting, perhaps during the Round Table, to identify other guidelines the DAC needs to focus on.

Public Comment: None

## The meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.