State of California

Health and Human Services Agency

Department of Rehabilitation

Disability Advisory Committee (DAC)

Meeting Minutes

February 12, 2024

Department of Rehabilitation, Public Zoom Meeting

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**In-person location**:

Department of Rehabilitation, 721 Capitol Mall, Room 301

Sacramento, CA 95814

This meeting is being held via teleconference within the meaning of Government Code section 11123.2. There may be members of the public body who are remotely participating in today’s meeting that were granted a reasonable accommodation per the Americans with Disabilities Act.

# Attendees

## DAC Members in Attendance:

* Emily Alexander; Deaf/Hard of Hearing
* Miguel Castaneda; Physical Disability
* Lisa Cushman; Mental/Behavioral Disability
* Jonathan De Jesus; Cognitive Impairment
* Chelle Ellis; Heart/Circulatory Disorders
* Anthony Houston; At-Large
* Bonita Wahl; Traumatic Brain Injury
* Michelle Zavala-Pizano; Learning Disability

## DAC Members Not Present:

* Jonathan (Jona) Deguzman; Other Disability
* Jennilee Ruggirello; Blind/Visual Impairment

## Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) Leadership Liaison in Attendance:

* Rosa Gomez

## DOR Staff in Attendance:

* Jasdeep (Jessie) Brown
* Ava Hacopian
* Melanie Luttrell
* Pamela Stegall

## 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.

Public Comment: none

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

Both the December and January minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment: none

# 3) Update to DAC Bylaws

Rosa Gomez, DAC Liaison, led a discussion to approve needed changes to the DAC Bylaws. According to California regulations, the bylaws of each DAC must stipulate that two thirds of the members of each DAC must be people with disabilities (PWD.) DOR’s DAC bylaws required that only 51% of its members be PWD. While at least two thirds of DOR’s current DAC members are PWD, the bylaws language is not in compliance with the statute language. The DAC unanimously approved a change to its bylaws to require that at least two thirds of DAC members be PWD.

Public Comment: none

# 4) Electing DAC Officers

Chelle Ellis, DAC Chair, led the discussion on filling vacant DAC officer positions. Lisa would like to become the State Disability Advisory Council (SDAC) liaison. She has currently been officially serving as vice chair and informally serving as SDAC liaison. Lisa was unanimously elected as SDAC Liaison. This left the position of vice chair vacant. Emily, Miguel, Bonita, and Michelle were nominated to fill the position of vice chair. Miguel, Bonita, and Michelle declined. Emily was unanimously elected to the position of vice chair.

Public Comment: none

# 5) March DORALL Volunteers

Rosa thanked Anthony for taking the lead in developing the February DORALLS that were emailed on February 1. Chelle will develop DORALLS recognizing Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month, Developmental Disability Awareness Month and World Down Syndrome Day. Emily will develop a DORALL for Multiple Sclerosis awareness Month. Bonita will develop a DORALL for Traumatic Brain Injury Awareness month. Miguel will develop a DORALL for International **Wheelchair Recognition** **Day**. Rosa will contact the volunteers to provide them with materials to develop the DORALLS. Once the volunteers are done developing the DORALLS, they will send them to Rosa. She will edit them for brevity, consistency so they appear in a unified voice and then will send for final approval and distribution as a DORALL.

Public Comment: none

# 6) Finalize the discussion of the DAC Work Groups

Rosa Gomez led a discussion about the DAC workgroups. She read the statutory purpose of the DAC from the bylaws. The DAC will discuss reasonable accommodations (RA) at an upcoming meeting. Rosa shared inaccessible timesheets as an example of what prior DACs and types of concerns are addressed by the DAC. Bonita provided an example of some agencies applying overly broad standards of disability that make their parity rates look artificially high as a note of caution for DOR when it releases its next annual disability survey. For example, an agency may consider an individual visually impaired if they wear glasses, even if their corrected visual acuity with glasses is 20 20.

## CAL HHS Playbook Strategies

Michelle led a review of the Playbook for the DAC

### Strategy #1:

* Brief description of strategy: Establish a Person in your Department or Office to Oversee Disability Employment Activities
* Discussion: Rosa will determine the identity of the person who oversees disability employment activities at DOR and will ask them to present at an upcoming meeting.

### Strategy #2:

* Brief description of strategy: Increase Transparency in Hiring Rates
* Discussion: Rosa reported that DOR has met this strategy. Both Lisa and Michelle asked about the annual disability survey that every state agency must conduct. Rosa confirmed that DOR will distribute the disability survey shortly.

### Strategy #3:

* Brief description of strategy: Establish Central Supports- including a separate Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) unit, responsible for creating recruitment and hiring interventions, overseeing RA and training staff on disability inclusion and culture.
* Discussion: Rosa currently serves as DOR’s diversity and Equity advisor. DOR is working to establish a DEI office to support DEI initiatives. Rosa will reach out to have someone present on the implementation of this strategy. Chelle asked if affinity groups fell under this strategy. Rosa clarified that affinity groups are employee ran and are spaces for employees from different communities to come together to raise awareness, celebrate and provide mutual support. The meetings are open to DOR employees and their allies. In her role as DOR’s diversity and Equity advisor, Rosa regularly meets with all affinity groups provide support and if needed assist with any affinity group events related needs and communications flow smoothly. Lisa asked about the existence of RA data. While RA do not specifically fall under this strategy, Rosa responded that DOR has a spreadsheet containing some RA data, however it is not always consistently updated due to limited resources and does not always capture the same data elements in all circumstances. DOR plans to transition to an electronic RA workflow in the near future.

### Strategy #4:

* Brief description of strategy: Create Targeted Recruitment and Hiring Interventions- commit to hiring from Limited Examination and Appointment Program (LEAP) only lists to increase disability parity- Work with DAC to identify entity specific classifications that can be designated as LEAP certified. Commit to hiring a qualified person with a disability as disclosed in the voluntary demographic survey in the hiring packet who is as qualified as other reachable candidates. Make sure that at least 16% of those interviewed for each position are individuals with disabilities. If those individuals apply and are eligible for appointment.
* Discussion: Rosa confirmed that DOR is meeting its parity goals, so this strategy may not be a strategy the DAC wants to focus on. She shared information about the recently created civil service sector, where counselors work with a caseload of consumers who want to enter government service. Lisa asked how DOR could outreach to more PWD who do not know about DOR jobs. Rosa responded that the person who presents on strategy 1 can also present on strategy 4 and the DAC could provide input.

### Strategy #5:

* Brief description of strategy: Create Targeted Improvement Plans
* Discussion: Rosa reported that DOR is meeting its parity goals, so this strategy may not be a strategy the DAC wants to focus on.

### Strategy #6:

* Brief description of strategy: Inclusive State Entity Practices
* Discussion: Anthony asked, and Rosa confirmed, that the parity rates for all state agencies are listed on the CALHR website. Anthony suggested compiling a list of state agencies that are not meeting the parity goal of 16.6% and encouraging counselors to target employment to those agencies. Rosa reminded the members that the DAC reaching out to other deparetments is falling in the area of the DA conducting field work, and that there are already efforts in place to support statewide hiring for PWD, and this strategy is in place for those departments who are not meeting parity. Bonita reported that the Playbook Pathways events are targeted to hiring managers at state agencies and job seekers with disabilities and will be addressing needs to achieve parity. Employees in the Workforce Development section will talk to hiring managers at agencies that are not meeting their parity rates at the events about ways to hire more people with disabilities. Bonita encouraged the counselors in attendance to inform jobseekers about the Pathway events. Rosa suggested that the presenter speaking about strategy 3 also address strategy 6.

### Strategy #7:

* Brief description of strategy: Adopt an RA Policy.
* Discussion: DOR is currently incorporating any elements from the RA policy from CalHR that strengthen DOR’s existing RA policy. Once DOR completes the revision process, the DAC will be able to provide feedback. A presentation about RA will occur at an upcoming DAC meeting.

### Strategy #8:

* Brief description of strategy: Provide Timely RA Requests.
* Discussion: DAC has an RA workgroup and will attend a presentation about RA that will cover both strategies 7 and 8.

### Strategy #9:

* Brief description of strategy: Create Pathways to Employment.
* Discussion: The members discussed the focus of this strategy and how it isn’t specifically focusing on DOR employees. It was discussed that the DAC could benefit from learning about the programs and efforts, and that a presentation can be provided on LEAP, the Paid Internship Program and SIP, Lisa asked if data on the number of internships that lead to permanent employment could be incorporated into the presentation. Rosa confirmed that she could ask the presenter if that data exists to be shared out to the DAC.

### Strategy #10:

* Brief description of strategy: Review Duty Statements and Remove language that creates Unnecessary Barriers to Employment
* Discussion: DAC voted to add language to all DOR duty statements endorsing the promotion and support of employees with disabilities at DOR. As DOR’s diversity and Equity advisor, Rosa share that she has reminded Leadership about the need to clarify essential vs. marginal functions on duty statements. The manager can remove marginal functions if necessary to support a RA, and that up-to-date duty statements in relation to remote work and the return to office move in March is important. She suggested that the DAC could consider advocating for language in duty statements that support RA. The DAC will revisit the efforts that Corey Lemmings, a former DAC member, led to update the language in duty statements.

### Strategy #11:

* Brief description of strategy: Tighten the Description of Disability in the Disability Survey to conform to the definition in the Americans with Disabilities Act rather than the definition of disability in state law, since some state agencies are using the looser definition of disability to make their rates of disability parity artificially high.
* Discussion: Rosa suggested that the DAC investigate the disability definition that DOR uses. Since Anthony wants to continue the discussion of the disability definition, it will be a topic at a future DAC meeting.

### Strategy #12:

* Brief description of strategy: Consult with Subject Matter Experts at DOR.
* Discussion: Since DOR is the agency for which we work, this strategy does not apply.

Public Comment: none

The meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.