**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)**

**Policy Committee Meeting**

**May 8, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

Location: Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) Central Office, 721 Capitol Mall, Room 407, Sacramento, CA 95814

*Approved on June 5, 2025*

Note: This committee meeting was held in accordance with California Government Code section 11123.5. There may be members of the public body who participated in meeting who were granted a reasonable accommodation per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

In attendance:

* SRC Policy Committee members in attendance (by Zoom): Ivan Guillen, Theresa Comstock, La Trena Robinson, Yuki Nagasawa
* SRC members in attendance as members of the public (by Zoom): Michelle Bello
* DOR staff in attendance (in-person): Kate Bjerke
* DOR staff in attendance (by Zoom): Stephanie List, Marcy Martin, Jessica Grove
* Members of the public in attendance (by Zoom): Peter DeHaas, Michael McCullough, Ligia Andrade Zúñiga, Danny Marquez

# Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

Ivan Guillen, SRC Chair, welcomed attendees to the meeting. Kate Bjerke, SRC Executive Officer, reviewed the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act requirements.

# Item 2: Public Comment

None.

# Item 3: Approval of the April 22, 2025 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

It was moved/seconded (Comstock/Guillen) to approve the April 22, 2025 Policy Committee meeting minutes as presented (Yes – Comstock, Guillen), (No – 0), (Absent for vote – Robinson), (Abstain – 0).

# Item 4: DOR Collaboration with Regional Centers and School Districts

Item 4 began with Jessica Grove, Deputy Director, DOR Vocational Rehabilitation Policy and Resources Division, introducing the discussion topic. Stephanie List, Associate Governmental Program Analyst, DOR Policy Performance Section, and Marcy Martin, Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor-Qualified Rehabilitation Professional, DOR San Marcos Branch Office, provided information on the employment services that are available and how DOR coordinates with regional centers and other partners, including school districts. Presentation highlights included the following:

* Services are coordinated through approaches such as: attending adult transition resource nights, attending resource fairs, receiving referrals from regional centers, collaborating with regional center coordinators and counselors, offering services through the We Can Work Contracts, meeting with students in adult transition programs, offering work experience and internship opportunities, providing supported employment job coaching services, and the Project Search program.
* The State Internship Program and the California Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment Project are examples of supported employment services that are available.
* Challenges for individuals with accessing services from all the different agencies involved include: the limited availability of programs and staff/resources to serve consumers, the length of time it takes to receive services, the wait list for customized employment services, and difficulties that supported employment vendors experience with finding qualified staff.
* If an individual is a DOR consumer, then DOR provides benefits planning.
* The Achieving Critical Employment Skills pilot program is an example of an initiative that will help streamline transitions.

After the presentation, SRC Policy Committee members and DOR representatives discussed the following:

* Initiatives and projects vary throughout the different DOR districts. The Paid Internship Program and State Internship Program are available statewide.
* Adult transition programs are provided when an individual is still in high school. Day programs are funded by the regional centers.
* Vendors need to receive specific training in order to offer customized employment.
* Ideas on how to boost the workforce and capacity for vendors.

Public comments:

* Peter DeHaas asked if starting a small business is a pathway to self-employment for consumers.
* Danny Marquez asked about the connection with the regional center for customized employment services.
* Michael McCullough spoke about benefits planning.

# Item 5: DOR Staffing

The SRC Policy Committee members reviewed and prioritized questions and topics related to DOR staffing in preparation for the June 5, 2025 SRC Policy Committee meeting. SRC Policy Committee members highlighted the following questions:

* Has DOR made efforts to negotiate with AFSCME to change job requirements or language that could make the SVRC-QRP position more appealing?
* Is it a federal requirement for DOR SVRC-QRPs to have a Master’s degree? If it’s not a federal requirement, DOR should consider other options (background, experience, education) to fill the workforce needs.
  + Several California colleges no longer offer vocational rehabilitation as a degree option, and Master’s-level courses such as “Theories of Counseling” (a requirement for the SVRC-QRP position) are becoming increasingly difficult to find. Given these changes, how is DOR adapting its qualification requirements to align with current academic program offerings?
  + Why is a Master’s degree required for the SVRC-QRP positions, but not for the SSM-I Team Manager positions?
  + What loan forgiveness programs and incentives are available to support individuals pursuing a degree in vocational rehabilitation?
* Can anything be done from a legislative perspective to help with the staffing issues?
* A possible staffing solution could be having California’s behavioral health agencies provide vocational rehabilitation services and integrated services for individuals with behavioral health disabilities.
* Is DOR still using the team model to serve consumers? There is a need to increase the administrative staff workforce who support the SVRC-QRPs.
* What upward mobility and promotional opportunities are available to SVRC-QRPs and how are staff made aware of these opportunities?

Public comments:

* Danny Marquez spoke about the need for administrative support, the possibility of behavioral health agencies hiring counselors, and having DOR staff from other parts of the state support regions that are impacted.
* Michael McCullough suggested that DOR conduct exit interviews for staff leaving the Department.

# Item 6: Debrief and Recommendations Working Session

SRC Policy Committee members held a quick debrief on the meeting topics. Members agreed to continue discussions on priority policy topics in future meetings.

# Item 7: Identification of New Policy Committee Chair

Yuki Nagasawa was selected as the new SRC Policy Committee Chair.

# Item 8: Adjourn

It was moved/seconded (Comstock/Guillen) to adjourn the May 8, 2025 SRC Policy Committee meeting.