**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)**

**Policy Committee Meeting**

**June 5, 2025, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.**

Location: Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) Central Office, 721 Capitol Mall, Room 307, Sacramento, CA 95814

*Draft Meeting Minutes*

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, Yuki Nagasawa
* SRC Policy Committee members absent: La Trena Robinson
* SRC members in attendance as members of the public (by Zoom): Shannon Coe
* DOR staff in attendance (in-person): Kate Bjerke
* DOR staff in attendance (by Zoom): Victor Duron, Jessica Grove, Nancy Wentling
* Members of the public in attendance (by Zoom): Michael McCullough, Danny Marquez, Sarah Issacs, John Doe, Patricia Leetz

# Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

Yuki Nagasawa, SRC Policy Committee 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 May 8, 2025 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

It was moved/seconded (Comstock/Guillen) to approve the May 8, 2025 Policy Committee meeting minutes as presented (Yes – Guillen, Comstock), (No – 0), (Absent – Robinson), (Abstain – 0).

# Item 4: DOR Staffing

Victor Duron, DOR Chief Deputy Director, joined the SRC Policy Committee to provide information related to DOR staffing. Duron explained that the information will serve as a high-level overview, providing broad context about efforts related to staffing. The initial overview will be followed by more specific, in-depth presentations given to the SRC Policy Committee throughout the rest of the year. Highlights from Duron’s presentation included the following:

Recruitment

* Recent hiring of DOR’s Workforce Diversity Specialist.
* Use of remote counseling to address staffing challenges in hard-to-recruit areas in California.
* DOR is working to streamline and simplify the Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor-Qualified Rehabilitation Professional (SVRC-QRP) exam.
* DOR has been contributing to state-level conversations about improving the overall recruitment process.
* The number of Limited Examination and Appointment Program (LEAP) eligible positions increased.
* DOR provided guidance to state departments on how to recruit exclusively from the LEAP list, making it easier for individuals with disabilities to access public sector jobs.
* DOR has established a Civil Service Employment Unit composed of SVRC-QRPs who support consumers interested in civil service jobs. This unit not only assists counselors but also serves as a pipeline for future SVRC-QPRs.

Minimum Qualifications

* DOR is re-examining the minimum qualifications for SVRC-QRPs, including possible alternatives or parallel pathways like apprenticeships.

Pay

* The majority of DOR’s workforce, including SVRC-QRPs, are represented staff belonging to labor unions that engage in collective bargaining with the State. While DOR can make recommendations and provide technical assistance, it does not control or negotiate pay directly. Updates can be shared when appropriate and available.
* An example was provided from two years ago when DOR successfully advocated for a salary increase for SVRC-QRPs.

Upward Mobility

* DOR’s newly established Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Division will be launching a comprehensive Upward Mobility program, providing staff with training and resources to help advance into higher-paying roles.
* It was suggested that the IDEA Division present on the Upward Mobility program at a future SRC meeting.

Caseloads

* Although there have been prior recommendations that DOR establish maximum and minimum caseload sizes, a one-size-fits-all approach may be difficult to define as caseload complexity can vary depending on the specific needs of consumers, local job market conditions, and available community resources.
* DOR is reviewing the roles of existing staff to determine whether some support staff could be converted into caseload-carrying positions.
* DOR is considering whether more services can be contracted out to community partners.
* DOR is assessing whether some of the resources currently dedicated to student services could be redirected to VR caseloads.
* DOR continues to explore ways to request new positions.

Leadership Reassignment for Strategic Planning

* Mark Erlichman, Deputy Director, DOR VR Employment Division, has been reassigned to lead a special project to evaluate and redesign service delivery structures.
* By the end of 2025, Erlichman will delivery a comprehensive set of actionable recommendations focused on two main areas, 1) macro-level restructuring and 2) models for how local office teams might be restructured.

Recent SRC Recommendation:

* DOR is working on a response to the SRC’s March 5, 2025 recommendation regarding staffing.

Following Duron’s presentation, SRC members asked the following questions:

* Is DOR considering implementing an order of selection to slow down the number of applications received?
* Is DOR collaborating with the Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) on increasing the behavioral health workforce? The need for coordinated efforts like stipends, loan forgiveness, and curriculum changes to address workforce shortages and barriers was highlighted.
* Is DOR considering the intersection between DOR and behavioral health services being provided at the county level?
* Are SVRC-QRPs receiving education and training on the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model?

SRC members acknowledged that Duron had addressed many of the SRC’s questions and expressed appreciation for DOR’s strategies regarding staffing.

Public comments:

* Sarah Issacs, Disability Rights California, asked about reasonable accommodations for DOR staff, and asked about student service caseloads.
* Shannon Coe, SRC member and State Independent Living Council member, asked about ASL interpreters for DOR staff who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Duron suggested that the SRC receive a detailed presentation on this topic at a future meeting.
* Danny Marquez, representing the California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies (CASRA), highlighted concerns with the length of time it takes for an organization to become a DOR vendor. Marquez said that staffing shortages impact service quality and the role of support staff is often overlooked.
* Michael McCullough, PRIDE Industries, suggested that DOR conduct exit interviews when staff leave the Department. McCullough also asked how many SVRC-QRPs DOR has on staff.

# Item 5: Debrief and Recommendations Working Session

SRC Policy Committee members debrief from the meeting discussions. Highlights included the following:

* Appreciation for Duron’s detailed presentation and the plans for future presentations that will focus on specific initiatives related to DOR staffing, and acknowledgement that these presentations show strong collaboration between DOR leadership and the SRC.
* Concern about the lack of progress in expanding vocational services for individuals with mental illness. State mandates now require behavioral health agencies to provide employment services as part of wraparound care. It was suggested to invite Sarah Candee, Chief, DOR Cooperative Programs Section, to present at a future SRC meeting.
* Suggestion that the SRC learn more about the vendorization process, and a suggestion to bring back Individual Service Providers.

Public comments:

* Sarah Isaacs, Disability Rights California, emphasized the importance of wraparound services. Issacs also raised a concern about the use of psychological assessments.
* Michael McCullough, PRIDE Industries, suggested that an additional Mobility Evaluation Program be established in Northern California.

**Adjourn**

It was moved/seconded (Comstock/Guillen) to adjourn the June 5, 2025 SRC Policy Committee meeting.