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*(for discussion purposes only – not a notice or commitment)*

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# Recently Requested Agenda Items and Policy Topics/Questions

*(for discussion purposes only – not a notice or commitment)*

Top priorities for the SRC Policy Committee to address in 2025:

* DOR staffing *(discussions to occur in the late spring/early summer 2025)*
* Phase out of subminimum wage *(April 2025 Policy Committee meeting)*

Topics for the full SRC to receive presentations on, and then the Policy Committee will explore these topics in greater detail:

* Housing
* Diversity, equity and inclusion
* Public and private schools *(scheduled for March 5-6, 2025 quarterly meeting)*
* Mobility Evaluation Program *(scheduled for March 5-6, 2025 quarterly meeting)*

## DOR Staffing

* Winter 2024/25: What are the internal and external barriers to attracting and retaining DOR field staff, particularly VR Counselors? How does staffing shortages impact the ability of DOR to provide quality services and good customer service?
  + 2/13/25: What is the impact of staffing shortages across different regions in California?
  + 2/13/25: Receive an update on counselor salaries, vacancies, staffing shortages and impacts in high cost-of-living areas. The relatively low salaries for DOR Counselors likely contributes to the difficulty of attracting and retaining qualified personnel.
* Regarding telework:
  + Winter 2024/25:
    - Learn about the State of California requirement that staff work in the office two days per week.
    - Could increasing virtual services help alleviate the counselor staffing shortage?
    - Does working in the office have a financial burden on DOR staff?
    - Does working in the office present physical and access barriers for DOR staff?
  + 2/13/25:
    - Suggestion to increase telework in areas with high vacancy rates to mitigate staffing shortages.
    - Suggestion to allow for increased remote work in areas where employees are sector-based.
    - Suggestion to allow for increased remote work when a particular vacancy threshold in a region has been reached.
* Winter 2024/25: Is there a shortage of counselors for DOR consumers who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing? How can this be alleviated? 2/13/25: What specific challenges are faced by DOR counselors who are Deaf?
* Regarding recruitment:
  + Winter 2024/25
    - Does DOR recruit by reaching out to VR Counseling programs at colleges and universities?
    - What incentives are available to encourage people to pursue degrees in VR Counseling?
    - Promote the mission of VR by conducting more outreach and highlighting consumer and VR Counselor success stories.
    - Review Rehabilitation Services Administration technical assistance circulars for ideas.
  + 2/13/25:
    - Suggestion to increase the pool of candidates - post DOR Counselor jobs as available statewide, and then the incumbent can work from the DOR office that is located closest to them. Hire DOR Counselors in any location in California to provide services statewide.
* Winter 2024/25: What supports and resources are available to VR Counselors who may be feeling overwhelmed?
* 2/13/25: Suggestion to streamline administrative processes and improve service delivery through technology. AI and automation for routine approvals, such as transportation reimbursements and financial aid verification, could alleviate the burden on counselors. Many consumers struggle with digital literacy, limiting their ability to use existing online portals effectively. The development of training programs could improve consumers’ ability to navigate digital systems and upload required documentation.
* 2/13/25: create a virtual hub for certain services to assist in certain job functions to relieve some issues. (*suggested by a member of the public).*

## Phase Out of Subminimum Wage

* 12/5/24: How many individuals with the most significant disabilities are currently working in California? (*Requested by a member of the public).*
* 12/5/24: Request for disaggregated data to ensure that services are being provided and accessed equitably. Send link to the DDS dashboards to the SRC *(Requested by a member of the public).*
* 12/5/24: Are there advisory bodies, similar to the SRC, that provides guidance to the Regional Centers and the Department of Developmental Services?
* 1/9/25: There is a need for coordinated services and supported employment.
* 1/9/25: Monitor transitions as individuals exit subminimum wage employment settings.
* 1/9/25: Understand how DOR collaborates with the Regional Centers.
* 1/9/25: How can we ensure that individuals are receiving quality vocational experiences and training? Several new programs are being launched and there is a need for quality control.
* 1/9/25: Analyze data on the DDS dashboards to understand if services are being provided and accessed equitability to support individuals transitioning from subminimum wage to competitive, integrated employment settings.
* 2/13/25: How has the phase out impacted individuals that were in subminimum wage employment settings? Are statistics or data available regarding their current employment?
* 2/13/25: Gather more information from staff and vendors/service providers to determine if additional resources are needed.
* 2/13/25: What are the challenges for individuals in accessing services from all the different agencies involved, like the Regional Centers, DOR and local school districts?
* 2/13/25: Are there any programs, initiatives or pilots that will help streamline transitions?
* 2/13/25: Learn more about the Master Plan for Developmental Services and how it ties into the phase out of subminimum wage.
* 2/13/25: Do some individuals prefer subminimum wage settings because it makes them eligible for benefits such as Medicare or Social Security? Does transitioning out of a subminimum wage employment setting affect an individual’s eligibility for these benefits? Are individuals receiving work incentives planning services so they can feel confident working?

## Housing

* 7/18/24: Learn about initiatives and efforts to connect individuals with disabilities experiencing homelessness with VR services and housing. Identify and understand DOR’s position on homelessness prevention for individuals with disabilities.
* 12/5/24: Have a general overview at a quarterly meeting, then have further discussions on this topic at the Policy Committee meetings.
* 12/5/24: Tthe resources and initiatives to support people with disabilities experiencing homelessness will likely be different for youth and adults.
* 1/9/25: Observation that the information on DOR’s website about housing can be confusing, as the guidance states for individuals to call their local Independent Living Center (ILC). It would be helpful if DOR adopted a no wrong door approach to provide “warm hand-offs” to ILCs. Does collaboration and connection between local DOR offices and ILCs need to be increased?
* 1/9/25: Observation that the overall the DOR website is challenging to navigate/not intuitive, and the link to the VR application is hard to find.
* 1/9/25: Suggestion that DOR should increase coordination with behavioral health agencies, as these agencies provide wrap around services that includes housing supports.
* 2/13/25: At the statewide level, DOR is participating on a California Health and Human Services Agency workgroup. Regional efforts occur based on local needs and circumstances.

## DOR Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Division

* 12/5/24: Learn about the DOR IDEA Division and the role of DOR’s new Chief Equity Officer.
* 1/9/25: Understand the IDEA Division responsibilities, policy priorities, and current projects.
  + How are inequities in DOR’s programs and services being identified, and what methodologies can be used to address these equity gaps?
  + What communities are unserved and underserved?
    - Are individuals with behavioral health disabilities underserved by DOR?
    - What data is being used to identify these communities?
    - How is DOR engaging with these communities and what are the outreach strategies?
    - How does DOR staffing impact underserved and unserved communities?
* 2/13/25: Concerns that DEI terminology used by DOR may not align with the current federal administration's stance. Acknowledgment that this issue is politically sensitive but it’s important to remain committed to DEI and its values. Given the current federal administration, will DOR be shifting DEI messaging and strategies?

## Vendor Shortage

* 8/23/24: Learn about the training and tools the DOR Community Resource Division (CRD) team utilizes to support community-based programs that have expressed interest in becoming vendorized. Learn about the vendorization timeline *(Requested by a member of the public).*
* 10/29/24: Learn about what DOR is doing to address the lack of vendors available to provide services.
* Winter 2025: Ask the DOR CRD team to present on the new “mini-guide”.
* Winter 2025: The CSNA includes an assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) within California. Based on public comment and reports from SRC members, the SRC believes there may be a lack of vendors in areas of the state, which leads to service delays for DOR consumers. Use the CSNA to gather feedback on the challenges and issues that DOR service providers, vendors and CRPs experience.
  + Identify where vendor and service provider shortages exist in California.
  + Gather feedback on the challenges and issues that DOR service providers, vendors and CRPs experience through key informant interviews or a service provider/vendor focus group.
* 2/13/25: There are very few options for assistive technology vendors, which leads to delays in consumers receiving their needed assessments.

# Older Requested Agenda Items/Topics

## Maintenance Supports for DOR Consumers

8/6/24: Receive an update on the maintenance supports available for DOR consumers after DOR has analyzed the August 5, 2024 decision from the California Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District.

## Transportation

* 8/23/24: Review public comment read during the August 23, 2024 SRC Executive Planning Committee meeting recommending changes to CCR Title 9, Section 7161(c), Section 7162.5, and Subsection 7162.5(c). *(issue referred to SRC Policy Committee).*
* 6/7/24: Receive an update on DOR transportation/mileage regulations.
* 3/7/24: Transportation has, and continues to be, a barrier for consumers in obtaining and maintaining employment. How can DOR support and encourage employers to incorporate transportation supports into employee salary and benefits packages?

## Self-Employment

12/5/24: Request that SRC receive a copy of the memo that will be sent out to DOR staff that explains the key changes in the self-employment regulations. Suggestion to weave the term “entrepreneur” into resources, information and communication about self-employment.

## Behavioral Health

* 11/30/23: follow up from the November 30, 2023 presentation from Peter Blanco, Regional Director, DOR San Diego District, on DOR’s behavioral health goals, initiatives, and local efforts.
* 9/13/24: receive an update on the following:
  + Employment Services as Part of FSPs - Employment services are required as part of Full-Service Partnerships (FSPs) in all 59 jurisdictions. It would be good to know how DOR's central office, and local VR offices and contractors are involved in planning and implementation with the 59 behavioral health agencies.
  + Performance Outcomes - "Employment" outcomes should be included in the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) Integrated Plan (local 3-year plan) data requirements. It would be good for DOR to be involved in informing this, since DOR has experience collecting and reporting on employment outcomes. (Note: the BH Transformation Quality and Equity Advisory Committee is advising regarding this (facilitated by Department of Health Care Services).
  + Workforce (3% of BHSA annually goes to the behavioral health workforce, education and training, with additional Federal Funding due to the BH CONNECT Waiver) - The CA Health Care Access & Information (HCAI) agency is putting together a strategic plan. It would be good to learn how DOR is informing the planning for workforce, education and training.

## Student Services

* 12/5/24: Request for data – obtain demographic data on the individuals receiving DOR Student Services to learn about disparities in service access.
* 12/5/24: Is there an opportunity for DOR Student Services to collaborate with the Parent Training and Information Centers (PTICs)?
* 12/5/24: Learn about how PTICs are collaborating with DOR. How does DOR connect with parents?

## AB 5, Gonzalez

Worker status: employees and independent contractors

7/17/24: As a follow up to the legislative update given during the July 17, 2024 SRC quarterly meeting, the SRC is interested in learning about the impacts AB 5 has made on the DOR’s utilization of independent service providers (ISPs).

## Integrating Employment in Recovery (IER)

9/12/24: As a follow up to the IER presentation during the September 12, 2024 SRC quarterly meeting, discuss -

* Utilizing the term “reoccurrence” instead of “relapse” or “failure”.
* Explore partnership opportunities with IER/DOR and CalAIM and the Department of Health Care Services.
* Possible policy recommendation: During the September 11 – 12, 2024 SRC quarterly meeting, the SRC received an overview of the DOR’s Integrating Employment in Recovery (IER) pilot program and learned that research shows that individuals with substance use disorders who are employed while in treatment are significantly more likely to successfully complete treatment than individuals with substance use disorders who are unemployed. Most individuals with a substance use disorder have a co-occurring disorder, resulting in a behavioral health disability. *The SRC recommends that the services and supports provided through the Integrating Employment in Recovery (IER) pilot become permanently available to individuals with behavioral health disabilities. provided by DOR and/or by partnering with other state departments and community-based organizations.*

## DOR In-Service Trainings:

* 6/7/23: As a follow up to the June 7, 2023 presentation on the in-service trainings that are offered to DOR employees, are there any gaps and/or additional training opportunities that should be considered?
* 11/30/23: question from member of the public - what training is being provided to DOR counselors on working with consumers with behavioral health disabilities?
* 9/12/24: receive an update on the DOR New Counselor Academy. Is leadership training available for counselors who are interested in promotion opportunities?

## Serving Individuals who are Neurodivergent

7/18/24: Learn about VR services for individuals who are neurodivergent and understand how DOR serves this population.

## Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model:

11/30/23: receive updates on how use of the IPS model is going, along with updates on the mental health cooperative program contract and fee-for-services. *Requested by a member of the public.*

## Connecting with Workforce

11/30/23: learn about how DOR connects with local Workforce Development Boards and America’s Job Centers of California. How can we organize employment demand and re-think the perception of talent?

## Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

11/30/23: follow up from the November 30, 2023 presentation on BEP. How is the BEP training going?

## Limited Examination and Appointment Program (LEAP)

3/7/24: Receive an overview of the LEAP program and its effectiveness.

## Adult Work Experience

Members will receive an update on the availability of Adult Work Experiences for DOR consumers. Work experiences are intended to be temporary placements to gain experience in the workplace.

## Traumatic Brain Injury

* There is a limited number of TBI sites and vendors, and services are not available in all areas. How can access be increased?
* How can DOR improve employment services and outcomes for individuals with TBI?
* How can TBI be more openly included in discussions, both at DOR and with community-based organizations?
* How can TBI stigma be reduced?

## Updates on DOR Initiatives

* VR Connections
* Labor Market Sector Specialty Teams

*Completed Updates*

* Integrating Employment in Recovery (IER) (9/11/24)
* Demand Side Employment Initiative (3/7/24)
* Pathways to Success Project (PSP) (3/8/23)
* State Internship Program (11/30/24)
* CalDOR Payment Card (8/31/22, 6/7/23)

# Ongoing/Standing Agenda Items

## VR Services Portion of the State Plan

* 12/5/24: For the 2026/27 State Plan modification, discuss with DOR leadership the possibility of adding a goal to track the phase out of subminimum wage.
* 12/5/24: Compare pre-pandemic to post-pandemic employment outcome and service usage data.
* 9/12/24: The 2024 – 2027 State Plan, Objective 3.1, sets a goal of consumer quarterly median earnings around $7,000. This is less than a living wage, due in part to some consumers wanting to work part-time. Request that the SRC receive data on DOR consumers who are working and achieve sustainable, living wages. What is the sustainable, living wage for regions throughout California? *(request submitted to DOR Policy and Performance team on 1/7/25).*
* Ongoing partnership with DOR to 1) evaluate the current State Plan goals, and 2) develop future State Plan priorities and goals. The 2026/27 State Plan modification is due in December 2025. The SRC will review a draft in (or around) October 2025.
* The SRC State Plan Committee will convene in April, July, and October 2025 to partner with DOR on the modification.

## Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)

* 12/5/24: Provide the DOR Stakeholder Initiatives Office with direction and suggestions on researching underserved populations. Request disaggregated data to learn more about possible disparities.
* 12/5/24: The CSNA must include an assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) within California. Use the CSNA to gather feedback on the challenges and issues that DOR service providers, vendors and CRPs experience.

## Consumer Satisfaction Survey (CSS)

* Ongoing partnership with DOR on the annual CSS.
* 12/5/24: The SRC offered several suggestions and feedback regarding the 2025 CSS. This feedback will be submitted via email to the Stakeholder Initiatives Office:
  + How will DOR’s name change be incorporated into the survey?
  + Can AI help with analyzing quantitative data?
  + Look into low ratings of counselors and service providers.
  + Ensure translation of surveys is culturally appropriate.
  + In the email that is sent to survey recipients, add a note that 1) only a select number of consumers get this survey, 2) explain that the survey doesn’t need to be completed in one sitting, and 3) state that the survey will only take 5 – 7 minutes to complete.
  + Track survey behavior.
* 9/12/24: The CSS 2024 data indicates that consumer satisfaction is low in the following two areas – need to revisit this data: 1) My counselor treats me with courtesy and respect, and 2) My service providers treat me with courtesy and respect.
* 9/12/24: Consider the various ways different cultures and communities respond to surveys. High context and low context cultures, direct meaning vs. implied meaning, qualitative vs. quantitative questions, listening sessions vs. written surveys.
* Suggestions from the December 4 – 5, 2024 SRC Quarterly meeting:
  + How will DOR’s name change be incorporated into the survey?
  + Can AI help with analyzing quantitative data?
  + Look into low ratings of counselors and service providers.
  + Ensure translation of surveys is culturally appropriate.
  + In email that is sent to consumers, add a note that only a select number of consumers get this survey. State that the survey doesn’t need to be completed in one sitting. Add that the survey will only take 5 – 7 minutes to complete
  + Track survey behavior.

## Coordination with DOR’s Independent Living & Community Access Division

* How can DOR provide coordinated “no wrong door” services to address the whole person whether they enter the systems through the VR or independent living programs?
* 9/12/24: Receive an update on the CalAIM “No Wrong Door” initiative.

## Biannual Updates on California Department of Education Initiatives

* Alternative Pathway to a High School Diploma program
* Standardized Individualized Education Program template (IPE)
* Learn about the new IEP and 504 plans and the intersection with VR services.
* Reporting Requirements – is it possible to update reporting requirements to include the provision of VR services and/or a warm hand-off for VR services (when desired)?

## Annual Review

* Fair Hearing and Mediation Decision Summaries
* SRC Annual Report
* SRC Bylaws
* DOR’s Year End Reports
* Legislative update

# List of Policy Questions

## Order of Selection

12/5/24: If a future Order of Selection is under consideration, analyze why consumers are reopening cases. Consider adding the following question to the application for VR services: “If you have received DOR services in the past, please provide the reasons why you are reapplying for services.”

## Employment Outcomes

12/5/24: From Joe Xavier, for the SRC to consider in 2025: How do we work in California so that more people leave DOR services with a job, and keep that job?

## Stakeholder Engagement

11/30/23: How can the SRC engage stakeholders that are not necessarily professional advocates or identify with the disability community?

* Ensure that stakeholder groups receive the SRC agenda if there are topics that relate to their work.
* Reach out to the California Reducing Disparities Project, which represents underserved populations.

## Community Engagement

DOR welcomes the SRC’s thinking on: how can CalHHS and its departments do a better job of communicating directly to communities that have been historically marginalized and have a reason to be skeptical or suspicious of government. How to reach communities in a way that’s culturally and linguistically accessible?

## CalHHS - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The California Health and Human Services Agency is leading many initiatives to improve DEI and as a result, DOR will likely be asked to develop an equity action plan.

* How can inequities in DOR’s programs and services be identified, and what methodologies can be used to address these equity gaps,
* What communities are unserved and underserved, and how can DOR effectively reach them, and,
* What methods and models should DOR look to and consider to address these inequities?
* Updated data sets on what communities are underserved and unserved – especially from a regional perspective. How does DOR staffing impact underserved and unserved communities?
* What is DOR currently doing in terms of marketing and outreach?
* It is great to have all these DEI ideas and initiatives – but who at DOR is ultimately going to implement them?
* Need for DOR’s language policy to align with CalHHS’ updated DEI language access policy.
* 9/7/23: Update on DOR’s development of a DEI plan and have a representative from one of DOR’s affinity groups come and speak.
* 12/5/24: Suggestion to have “town hall” meetings with the community to explore barriers to accessing services. Use the feedback received through community engagement to develop recommendations.

## Dual Customer Approach

Winter 2023: How can we effectively describe VR services and DOR’s “dual customer approach” that addresses both the needs of VR consumers and the needs of businesses?

# General Policy Questions

## Budget Change Proposal (BCP) Concepts

If DOR was going to make a budget ask, what should that ask be, and why? Requests should be new initiatives, not a request to do more of the same. The DEI analysis requirements in [Executive Order N-16-22](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https:/www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/9.13.22-EO-N-16-22-Equity.pdf?emrc=c11513) should be considered when developing BCP concepts.

## Legislative Policy Change

If DOR had an opportunity to make a legislative policy change, what would that change be, and why should DOR ask for that change?

## SRC Recommendation Review

Which SRC recommendations from the past five years should the SRC revisit and request updates on?

## Information and Data Analysis

What can the data and trends from the DOR’s year end reports, Consumer Satisfaction Survey, fair hearing and mediation decision trends, and Comprehensive Statewide Assessment tell us about the impact of DOR’s programs and the opportunity to improve service delivery?

## Program Development

* Before developing a new initiative or program what are the core, guiding principles that need to be identified and established?
* What are some of the core principles that should guide efforts to integrate health and human services programs?
* What systems and policies are outdated and need to be modernized? Or instead, do we need to let go of them?
* What procedures might be impacting policy?
* DOR is reviewing department controls and policies that may have outlived their use. Consider SRC input before discontinuation.