**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Quarterly Meeting
March 5 – 6, 2025**

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. both days
Meeting location: Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), 721 Capitol Mall, Room 301, Sacramento, CA 95814

**Draft Meeting Minutes**

*Note: This meeting was held in accordance with California Government Code section 11123. There may be members of the public body who participated in the meeting who were granted a reasonable accommodation per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).*

# SRC members in attendance

* In-person: Theresa Comstock
* By Zoom: Ivan Guillen, Brittany Comegna, Michelle Bello, Shannon Coe, Yuki Nagasawa, Hilary Lentini, La Trena Robinson
* Absent: Gregory Meza

# DOR staff in attendance:

* In-person: Kate Bjerke
* By Zoom: Jessica Grove, Jessica Popjevalo, Carrie Dimas-Espinoza, Della Randolph, Luis Lewis, Cruz Fresquez, Nancy Wentling, Peter Frangel, Megan Davis, Mark Erlichman, Victor Duron, Kim Rutledge

# Members of the public in attendance (by Zoom):

Danny Marquez, Christopher Waltrous, Michael McCullough, Shellena Heber, Michael Love, Sarah Issacs, John Doe, Mary Ruiz, Tiffany Busalacchi

# Wednesday, March 5, 2025

# Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

Ivan Guillen, SRC Chair, welcomed members and guests to the meeting. Kate Bjerke, SRC Executive Officer, reviewed the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act requirements. SRC members, DOR staff, and members of the public introduced themselves.

# Item 2: Public Comment

Danny Marquez, California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies (CASRA),

encouraged the SRC to request information from DOR on training available for counselors, staff, and vendors. He emphasized the importance of consistent, high-quality training amid ongoing staff turnover and changing best practices.

# Item 3: Approval of the December 4–5, 2024 Quarterly Meeting Minutes

It was moved/seconded (Comstock/Coe) to approve the December 4 – 5, 2024 quarterly meeting minutes as presented. (Yes – Comstock, Comegna, Lentini, Guillen, Coe, Bello), (No – 0), (Abstain – 0), (Absent for vote – Meza, Robinson).

# Item 4: Mobility Evaluation Program

Jessica Popjevalo, Chief, DOR Participant Services Support Section, and Carrie Dimas-Espinoza, Manager, DOR Mobility Evaluation Program (MEP), provided information on MEP a high-tech driving program that determines the adaptive driving equipment, vehicle, vehicle modifications, and training a consumer needs to be a safe and independent driver and to achieve their vocational goals (reference [Appendix A](#_Appendix_A:_MEP) for the full presentation). Following the presentation, SRC members had the opportunity to ask questions. Highlights of the discussion included the following:

* The DOR/MEP process includes a clinical and behind-the-wheel evaluation, a comprehensive report, a prescription tailored to the individual’s disability (ranging from low- to high-tech), equipment acquisition and vehicle modification, a fitting session to ensure proper equipment function, 10–50 hours of driver training, resulting in independent driving.
* Low completion rates can be attributed primarily to post-COVID supply chain issues.
* Either DOR or the consumer may purchase the vehicle, but this is determined by the DOR Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Division (VRED) team, not the MEP team.
* MEP offers a High-Tech Driver Assessment Services (HTDAS) fee-for-service program ($1,800) for non-DOR individuals that includes a comprehensive clinical and driver evaluation report, recommendation referrals for prescribed adaptive driving equipment, vehicle selection, fitting assistance and driver training.
* The general timeframe from referral to completion is approximately 9 months to 1 year for low-tech cases, and 1+ year for high-tech or new vehicle cases. Delays are due to vehicle shortages, not internal process issues.
* Questions regarding whether or not the program is income-based do not fall within the scope of MEP, this is a question for the DOR VRED team.
* It was confirmed that the MEP program is open to all DOR consumers, including students.

Public comments:Danny Marquez asked whether receiving a vehicle affects SSI/SSDI benefits. Christopher Waltrous asked if military veterans utilize the MEP program.

# Item 5: DOR Regional Director Workgroup

Della Randolph, Regional Director, DOR Greater East Bay District, shared information on the “Youth in Foster Care” DOR Regional Director workgroup (reference [Appendix B](#_Appendix_B:_Youth) for the full presentation). After the presentation, SRC members had the opportunity to ask questions and engage in an interactive discussion. Highlights included the following:

* Appreciation was given for the workgroup’s structured and expert-driven model. It was suggested that the workgroup could be a model for serving other groups. Randolph emphasized that a statewide approach helps address regional disparities and facilitates shared learning, standardized training, and better data tracking by improving how staff ask youth about foster care history.
* The importance of training DOR Counselors to ask the right questions was highlighted. Many youth are reluctant to disclose their foster care status, so developing trust is essential.
* It was suggested that DOR connect with United Parents, an organization supporting foster families through training and resources.
* It was asked how the workgroup supports students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Randolph explained that programs like DOR’s Transition Partnership Programs (TPPs) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Pre-Employment Transition Services provide individualized guidance, work experience, and career planning. Many students have overlapping barriers (foster care, justice involvement, disabilities), and DOR staff aim to build trust and help youth identify their goals.
* It was asked how SRC could support the workgroup’s efforts. Randolph encouraged SRC members to notify DOR of underrepresented communities that could benefit from DOR’s involvement. She also mentioned promoting National Foster Care Awareness Month.
* Independent Living Centers (ILCs) offer valuable housing and life skills services, which can be a helpful referral for youth with disabilities in foster care.

Public comments: Shellena Heber, Valley Center for the Blind, asked how DOR supports students who have not been successful in school and may need an evaluation to determine if they qualify for services. Michael McCullough, PRIDE Industries, described a program through PRIDE Industries that offers paid internships for foster youth and offered to connect DOR with a contact to explore collaboration. Sarah Isaacs, Disability Rights California, asked how DOR handles cases where individuals do not have access to treatment or records to verify their disability.

# Item 6: 2025 Consumer Satisfaction Survey

Luis Lewis, Manager, DOR Stakeholder Initiatives Office (SIO), provided an update on the development of the 2025 Consumer Satisfaction Survey (CSS). Key points included:

* DOR’s new Stakeholder Initiatives Officer, Gabriella Montano, was appointed in January 2025 and is expected to join the June 2025 SRC quarterly meeting.
* The SIO team is currently revising the CSS to improve accessibility and clarity. The goals are to simplify language, ensure usability, and increase response rates. Teams at DOR are currently reviewing the draft CSS.
* The CSS will indirectly inform the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and the upcoming modification to the VR Services Portion of the Unified State Plan.

Discussion highlights included:

* Timeline and release of the survey (estimated for May 2025).
* Emphasis was placed on the value of the CSS as a tool to assess program effectiveness and identify service gaps.

# Item 7: Fair Hearings and Mediations – Statistics and Decision Summaries

Cruz Fresquez, Appeals Analyst, DOR Office of Legal Affairs, reviewed the fair hearing and mediation summaries, statistics, and the nature of issues and complaints from Federal Fiscal Year 2023/24 (October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024). Fresquez’s presentation included the following information:

* Mediation and fair hearing processes are available for consumers who disagree with DOR decisions. Mediation allows for resolution within 25 days; if unsuccessful or bypassed, consumers may proceed to a fair hearing. DOR contracts with the California Department of Social Services, State Hearings Division for mediation and fair hearing services.
* Case volume and outcomes:
	+ Fair hearings: Ninety-four total requests (84 new, 10 carried over).
		- Outcomes: Twenty-five decisions issued (23 favored DOR, 2 favored consumers). Thirty-eight cases (40%) resolved before reaching a hearing. Nine cases were unresolved (e.g., no-shows). Twenty-two 22 cases carried over to the next fiscal year.
	+ Mediations: seventy-three total requests (67 new, 6 carried over
		- Outcomes: thirty-six (49%) resolved through mediation, 22 (30%) unresolved, and 15 cases carried over.
	+ Most common complaint categories:
		- Counseling Services
		- Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) content and scope
		- Cost and funding of services
		- Other issues (often overlapping or case-specific)
* Fresquez analyzed the 25 decisions from FFY 2023/24 and highlighted recurring themes:
	+ Tuition assistance
	+ Communication issues
	+ IPE disputes
	+ Cost/reimbursement disputes
	+ Consumer non-cooperation
* Fresquez explained that DOR served over 150,000 individuals during the reporting period and the mediation and fair hearing requests represent a very small percentage of individuals served. The issues and trends observed remain consistent with previous years. The review process helps identify recurring problem areas and supports improvements in service delivery and communication.

After the presentation, SRC members had the opportunity to ask questions and engage in an interactive discussion with Fresquez. Discussion highlights included the following:

* Acknowledgement that the small number of hearings shows that DOR is effectively resolving issues at the lowest level.
* Acknowledgement that the California Department of Social Services, State Hearings Division provides a more user-friendly process than the prior contractor utilized by DOR.
* Suggestion that clear communication with consumers could help reduce confusion regarding reimbursements.
* Question regarding the rationale behind consumer requests for large monetary settlements, which seem unrelated to DOR’s remedy scope, and concern that such requests could negatively affect how administrative law judges view a case.

Public comments: Sarah Isaacs, Disability Rights California, noted that some dismissals were due to requests outside the scope of fair hearings, and suggested that improved clienteducation would help reduce misunderstandings. John Doe referenced a specific case (decision #20 regarding maintenance supports) and asked why it wasn’t discussed by SRC members.

# Item 8: Client Assistance Program (CAP) Report Out

Sarah Isaacs, Associate Managing Attorney, Disability Rights California (DRC), and Ivan Guillen, SRC Chair and Senior Advocate Specialist, DRC CAP, provided an overview of CAP’s advocacy efforts, trends, outreach, training, and other initiatives from Federal Fiscal Year 2023/24 (reference [Appendix C](#_Appendix_C:_Client) for the full presentation). After the presentation, SRC members had the opportunity to ask questions and engage in an interactive discussion. Highlights included the following:

* Discussion regarding if DOR provides housing support to individuals with disabilities, and questions regarding housing and emotional support animals.
* CAP and DRC offer free, case-specific advocacy, focusing on employment-related support, including accommodations, self-advocacy, and VR services. Broader systemic or housing issues are handled differently across states and agencies, and individualized analysis determines CAP’s role.

# Item 9: Adopt-a-District Report Outs

SRC members provided report outs from their recent Adopt-a-District meetings:

Ivan Guillen, SRC Chair, met with Jeff Noyes, District Administrator, DOR San Diego District. The District is navigating leadership transitions, as Peter Blanco transferred to the Los Angeles South Bay District to serve as Regional Director. The San Diego District continues to support individuals with disabilities in the justice system and collaborates with Project Rebound. DOR Counselors assist individuals with disabilities recently released from incarceration by conducting assessments to help establish eligibility for VR services. The District’s student caseload continues to increase. The District is collaborating with Project SEARCH internship sites at Legoland, Kaiser and the San Diego Zoo.

Theresa Comstock, SRC Member,met with Brian Winic, Regional Director, and Leslie Webster, Acting District Administrator, DOR Santa Barbara District. The District is almost fully staffed. The District plans to have a meeting with Community Resource Programs (CRPs) to learn about the availability of job coaches in the region. The District employes Graduate Student Assistants to help with the DOR Counselor caseloads. Over 70% of District office staff commute into work between two to three days per week and commute times average 45 minutes to one hour each way. Updates were provided on office locations and recent moves. There has been an increase in successful closures, and several consumers are employed with CalFire.

Brittany Comegna, SRC Vice-Chair, met with representatives from the DOR Van Nuys District. Recent wildfires in Southern California impacted individuals in the District area; however, DOR staff continued to provide services remotely. Four out of the five offices in the District were impacted by the fires. The District continues to make efforts to recruit and hire new staff. A focus of the District is to serve youth with disabilities in the foster care system.

Comegna also met with representatives from the DOR Greater East Bay District. The District has hired new staff and plans to provide professional development for their current and new staff members. The District is collaborating on an event with Diablo Valley College focused on individuals ages 16 – 21. The District is also collaborating with the Office of Youth and Community Restoration. A District Day event will be held on April 18, 2025.

La Trena Robinson, SRC Treasurer, met with representatives from the DOR San Francisco District. Denise Dorsey is the new Acting Regional Director, and Sinaya McCoy is the new District Administrator. The District is implementing a new coverage program to improve operational efficiency. The District launched a new partnership with Episcopal Community Services, which supports individuals experiencing homelessness and individuals with behavioral health disabilities. The shortage of DOR Counselors remains a concern for the District. Barriers include strict degree requirements and the limited availability of a required masters-level “Theories of Counseling” course at colleges and universities.

Hilary Lentini, SRC Member, met with Erwin Petilla, District Administrator, DOR Greater Los Angeles District (GLAD). The District currently has four vacant Counselor positions but hopes to fill three of the positions by March 2025. The District has a strong emphasis on providing onboarding and training to support new staff. The District’s Community Resource Navigator (CRN) is building partnerships to help consumers address barriers like housing, legal issues, and food insecurity. A recent success is the District’s partnership with Disneyland, where six out of ten consumers from a May 2024 cohort secured employment. Through a business-based services initiative, the District is connecting businesses with diverse talent while supporting individuals with disabilities in achieving workforce success.

Shannon Coe, SRC Member, met with Peter Blanco, Regional Director, and Daphne Leake, District Administrator, DOR Los Angeles South Bay District. The District has strong collaborations with community colleges, mental health service providers, Easterseals, and the WorkAbility programs. Due to an increase in applications, District staff have shifted focus from outreach to processing applications. A success in the District is the extension of the Subsidized Transitional Employment Program which provides adults returning to the workforce with a 3-month, $20/hour job experience at the Los Angeles airport, helping them build skills for long-term employment.

Coe also met with Sherri Han-Lam, Regional Director, DOR Orange/San Gabriel District. They discussed cultural barriers to service provision. District strengths include strong internal communication, a supportive management team, and a high retention rate for DOR Counselors. Challenges in the District include recruiting and retaining ASL interpreters due to lower pay compared to the private sector. District initiatives include a partnership with a local community college, participation in the “Pathways to Success” program, specialty caseloads, and a partnership with the Orange County Court system to introduce consumers to lesser-known, well paying career paths.

Michelle Bello, SRC Member, met with Vivian Hernandez-Obaldia, Regional Director, and Sharon O'Sullivan, District Administrator, DOR Northern Sierra District. The District serves nearly 10,000 individuals and has implemented several initiatives to rebuild engagement post-COVID. The District’s focus areas include serving youth involved with the justice system through collaboration with the Office of Youth and Community Restoration, improving service delivery in rural areas, partnering with the Department of Developmental Services, and utilization of the Pathway to Employment program.

**Recess**

# Thursday, March 6, 2025

# Item 10: Reconvene, Welcome, and Introductions

Ivan Guillen, SRC Chair, reconvened the meeting and welcomed SRC members and guests. SRC members, DOR staff, and members of the public introduced themselves.

# Item 11: Public Comment

None

# Item 12: VR Services Portion of the Unified State Plan Update

Peter Frangel, Manager, DOR Policy and Performance Section, provided an update on DOR’s 2024-27 VR Services Portion of the Unified State Plan (reference [Appendix D](#_Appendix_D:_VR) for the full presentation). After the presentation, SRC members had the opportunity to ask questions and engage in an interactive discussion. Highlights included the following:

* Appreciation for details on the $7,000 median wage benchmark, which does not account for the number of hours worked.
* The identification of foster youth is based on self-identification rather than age, and can include individuals who currently are, or were, in foster care.
* Confirmation that DOR Counselors assess and document accommodation needs during the intake process and throughout ongoing interactions, ensuring that accessibility is built into the service provision process.
* It is important to show data that reflect both full-time and part-time employment outcomes, highlighting that part-time work may better suit some individuals. Some consumers may start part-time and gradually move to full-time as they adjust.
* Interest in having data on specific disability groups and their employment outcomes.
* Other data tools like the Consumer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) and Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) can provide for deeper analysis and future goal development.

Public comments: Michael McCullough, PRIDE Industries, shared information on how his organization tracks monthly wages. Danny Marquez, CASRA, asked for clarification regarding a figure mentioned in the presentation.

# Item 13: Use of Public or Private Institutions

Nancy Wentling, Chief, DOR VR Policy and Resources Division, Megan Davis, Chief, DOR Policy and Performance Section, and Peter Frangel, Manager, DOR Policy and Performance Section, presented an overview of Cal. Code Regs. tit. 9 § 7155 regarding the use of public or private institutions (reference [Appendix E](#_Appendix_E:_Training) for the full presentation). After the presentation, SRC members had the opportunity to ask questions and engage in an interactive discussion. Highlights included the following:

* Importance of having consumers attend accredited programs that lead to employment.
* Clarification that merit-based scholarships are not considered when assessing a consumer’s financial aid needs.
* Suggestion that the presentation be given to DOR staff and counselors.
* Discussion regarding the community college, CSU and UC tuition rates.
* Confirmation that required fees can be covered by DOR.
* Personal experience shared of being a DOR consumer in high school and not fully understanding funding options for college.
* The need for collaboration between DOR, colleges and admissions offices to support informed-decision making for students.

Public comments: Sarah Issacs, Disability Rights California, spoke about regulations that support Deaf students in attending out-of-state institutions like Gallaudet University. Michael McCullough, PRIDE Industries, shared information about the Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), Board of Governors fee waivers, and the importance of a well-documented Individualized Plan for Employment.

# Item 14: Policy Committee Report Out

Brittany Comegna, SRC Policy Committee Chair, gave the following report out from the January 9, 2025 and February 13, 2025 Policy Committee meetings:

* The recent SRC Policy Committee meetings focused on identifying policy priorities for 2025. As a result of these meetings, the top priorities for the SRC Policy Committee to address this year are: 1) DOR staffing (discussions to occur in the late spring/early summer 2025), and 2) the phase out of subminimum wage (discussion to take place at the April 2025 Policy Committee meeting).
* The Policy Committee also recommended that the full SRC receive presentations on the following topics, and then the Policy Committee will explore these topics in greater detail:
	+ Serving individuals with disabilities experiencing homelessness
	+ Diversity, equity and inclusion
	+ Public and private schools
	+ Mobility Evaluation Program

Kate Bjerke, SRC Executive Officer, explained that during the February 13, 2025 SRC Policy Committee meeting, a draft recommendation was developed. The draft recommendation to the full SRC for consideration:

*SRC Recommendation 2025.1: The SRC recommends that DOR work to understand and address barriers to attracting and retaining staff.*

It was then moved/seconded (Comstock/Comegna) to adopt SRC recommendation 2025.1 as presented (Yes – Guillen, Comstock, Comegna, Coe, Bello), (No – 0), (Absent – Meza, Lentini, Robinson), (Abstain – 0).

Public comment: Shellena Heber, Valley Center for the Blind, thanked the SRC for their focus on DOR staffing.

# Item 15: Directorate Report

Kim Rutledge, DOR Director, and Victor Duron, DOR Chief Deputy Director, reported on the following leadership and policy topics of interest:

* Possibility of the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration being relocated to the U.S. Department of Labor if the U.S. Department of Education is eliminated.
* Impacts of federal funding freezes.
* DOR’s strong fiscal position due to reallotment funds and program income.
* DOR’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, promoting the value of workers with disabilities, and maintaining access to services for all eligible individuals.
* DOR’s involvement in responding to recent wildfires and impacts to the disability community.
* Elimination of approximately 60 vacant DOR staff positions due to required budget drills.
* Exploration of long-term solutions regarding high caseloads and staffing shortages.
* Updates on the Master Plan for Developmental Services and the Master Plan for Career Education.
* Recent Executive Order requiring that all DOR staff work onsite at least four days per week, effective July 1, 2025.
* Upcoming Senate confirmation for DOR Director Kim Rutledge.
* Potential DOR rebranding efforts.
* Update on executive level vacancies and recruitments.

SRC members then had an interactive discussion with the DOR Directorate. Highlights included the following:

* Importance of using plain, inclusive language when communicating about diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility related work.
* The need to balance strong advocacy for inclusion with the practical need to protect funding.
* Potential role of AI and prioritizing consumer confidentiality and safety.

# Item 16: Election of the SRC Vice-Chair

Kate Bjerke, SRC Executive Officer, explained that on February 11, 2025, the SRC Nominating Committee convened and recommended Shannon Coe for the position of SRC Vice-Chair to serve for the remainder of the term (March 7, 2024 – September 30, 2025), filling the vacancy left by Chanel Brisbane. Bjerke opened the floor to additional nominations; none were received. It was then moved/seconded (Comstock/Robinson) to elect Coe as the SRC Vice-Chair (Yes – Comstock, Comegna, Guillen, Robinson, Coe, Bello), (No – 0), (Absent – Meza, Lentini), (Abstain – 0).

# Item 17: Debrief and Recommendations Discussion

The debrief session began with Kate Bjerke, SRC Executive Officer, providing a

detailed review of the meeting highlights and questions under consideration.

Following this review, SRC members discussed priority topic areas and offered

suggestions for future agenda items and discussions, to include:

* Address follow up questions regarding the Mobility Evaluation Program through the Policy Committee.
* Understand what type of assessments DOR can provide to help individuals with obtaining a diagnosis for their disability.
* Revisit fair hearing decision #20 regarding maintenance supports.
* Suggestion to analyze median wage data by disability group.
* Learn about reasonable accommodations provided to consumers to access DOR services and trainings.

# Item 18: SRC Officer and Member Report Outs

Ivan Guillen, SRC Chair,highlighted recent efforts to revise Client Assistance Program (CAP) publications for greater accessibility using plain language and universal design. Guillen acknowledged the ongoing collaboration between the CAP and the DOR field leadership.

Michelle Bello, SRC member,announced the launch of a new Family Empowerment Center website to improve access to resources. She also shared updates on the Inclusive Access to a Diploma initiative, upcoming Community of Practice meetings on secondary transition, and the February Advisory Commission on Special Education.

Yuki Nagasawa, SRC member, spoke about the upcoming Youth Leadership Forum, during which students stay at Sacramento State to gain mentorship and life skills. Nagasawa plans to attend a transition fair on April 26, which supports students in adult transition programs.

Theresa Comstock, SRC member, highlighted California's efforts to expand behavioral health services, supported by new Medicaid funding categories that include incentives for vocational services through full-service partnerships. Comstock spoke about proposed federal Medicaid cuts which could lead to reduced access to care.

Brittany Comegna, SRC Policy Committee Chair, reported concerns about potential funding cuts affecting programs that serve Deaf and hard of hearing students. Brittany said that the National Technical Institute for the Deaf may need to transition to the U.S. Department of Labor if the U.S. Department of Education is eliminated.

Shannon Coe, SRC member, reported that SB 1384 was passed, giving consumers and small repair shops the right to repair power wheelchairs without needing manufacturer permission. Coe shared that the State Independent Living Council (SILC) is forming a workgroup to review and address equity in the funding formula for Independent Living Centers, especially between rural and urban areas. SILC continues to support the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) and is working with the Department of Aging on the Master Plan for Aging.

La Trena Robinson, SRC Treasurer, reported that SEIU Healthcare Workers is actively campaigning against proposed cuts to Medicaid funding. Their efforts include legislative meetings and town halls to highlight how Medi-Cal is vital to medical and mental health needs, regardless of political affiliation. SEIU will also hold workshops on immigrant rights, privacy laws, and access to health services.

# Adjourn (4:00 p.m.)

It was moved/seconded (Comstock/Comegna) to adjourn the March 5 – 6, 2025 SRC quarterly meeting.

# Appendix A: MEP Presentation

Slide 1 – Department of Rehabilitation, Mobility Evaluation Program (MEP)

Slide 2: What is MEP?

The California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) - Mobility Evaluation Program is a specialized service designed to enhance mobility and independence for individuals with disabilities.

Key Services:

* Driver and passenger evaluations
* Adaptive driving prescriptions
* Vehicle modification prescription
* Adaptive Driver Training

Slide 3: Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team

* Office Technician-Typist
* Adaptive Driving Evaluation Specialist
* Rehabilitation/Mechanical Engineer
* Licensed Occupational Therapist with a Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist credential
* Graduate Student Assistant
* Program Administrator

Slide 4: Team Evaluation in Action (video)

Slide 5: MEP State Fiscal Year Stats

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Referrals | Active | Completed |
| 2024–2025 | 29 | 35 | 8 |
| 2023–2024 | 28 | 18 | 6 |
| 2022–2023 | 27 | 7 | 8 |

Slide 6: Gina’s Story

Slide 7: Exclusive Evaluation Provider

MEP is the sole provider for driver and passenger evaluations, adaptive driving equipment prescriptions, and driver training for DOR consumers. No other vendors are permitted to provide these services within DOR.

Slide 8: MEP Evaluation Overview: “Clinical Evaluation”

* Vision
* Cognition
* Motor Abilities

Slide 9: MEP Evaluation Overview: “Behind-the-Wheel Evaluation”

Key Assessments:

* Equipment functionality and driver adaptability
* Driving performance and safety
* Need for further driver training

Slide 10: Behind-The-Wheel Evaluation

Slide 11: Types of Adaptive Driving Equipment

Slide 12: Comprehensive Driving Evaluation Report

This report includes:

* Consumer’s potential to drive independently
* Or travel safely as a passenger
* Adaptive driving equipment prescription
* Driver Training

Slide 13: MEP Garage

Slide 14: Vocational Rehabilitation Support

* Vocational success of consumers
* Key enabler to increased earning potentials
* Access to expanded job opportunities

Slide 15: Eligibility Referral Considerations

MEP services alone do not constitute vocational rehabilitation services. MEP is a specialized service that supports vocational goals, but additional rehabilitation services may be needed for a comprehensive plan.

* CCR7161(a)(2) - Transportation services cannot be provided as a standalone service, as they are considered a supportive service to enable the consumer to benefit from other vocational services.

Slide 16: Eligibility Referral Considerations (continued)

* CCR7164.2 - Does the consumer demonstrate the ability to operate, maintain, and replace a vehicle after DOR case closure?
* CCR7164(a)(1)(a) - Is the consumer physically unable to use non-adapted or alternate forms of transportation?
* CCR7164(b)(3) - Has the consumer demonstrated evidence that they have or will successfully complete their IPE (Individualized Plan for Employment)?

Slide 17: MEP’s Strategic Importance

* Vocational Success Enabler: Supports consumers’ vocational independence and competitiveness in the workforce.
* Cost-Effective Solutions
* Unique Position within DOR: Supports DOR’s mission of providing comprehensive rehabilitation services that promote independence and employment success

Slide 18: Claire’s Car of Dreams

Slide 19: Question & Answer

# Appendix B: Youth in Foster Care Presentation

Slide 1: Youth in Foster Care

Workgroup Presentation

Presented by: Della Randolph, Regional Director

Slide 2: Our Workgroup Team

* Della Randolph, Lead
* Elizabeth Musgrove, Co-Lead, Statewide Student Services
* Daphne Leake, Greater Los Angeles District (GLAD)
* Bronwyn Rubin, Van Nuys/Foothill District
* Cheryl Tofsrud, Policy
* Marisol Chase, Greater East Bay District (GEBD)/Statewide
* Mary Shelton, GEBD/Statewide
* Subject Matter Experts: Budgets, Fiscal Forecasting and Researc**h** BFFR Staff, Qualified Rehabilitation Professionals, Policy Performance Section, Statewide Community Resource Navigators, Youth in Foster Care, Case Workers, Social Workers, Youth Trauma Specialist, Business Specialist, Service Coordinators, IT staff for AWARE
* Carol Asch, Assistant Deputy Director, Executive Sponsor

Slide 3: Background

* Assembly Bill 2083 (2018/-2019): Language in the Bill requires that each county develop and implement an MOU that outlines roles & responsibilities of various local agencies supporting children & youth in Foster Care who have experienced trauma.
* (Image – arrow pointing down)
* Workgroup Efforts
	+ Training
	+ Strengthen existing partnerships
	+ Children & Youth System Of Care Team
	+ Attend & Participate in Foster Care conferences (ex. CPOC) and
	California Youth Foster Care Education Summit

Slide 4: Intent

The heart and essence of this workgroup is to have a direct and positive impact in our communities of practice that serve youth in foster care.

* Increase partnerships ⇨ education and training
* Increase employment outcomes ⇨ students with disabilities, youth in foster care

Slide 5: Data on Youth in Foster Care

* Untreated chronic health problems
* Untreated mental health issues
* 40% finish high school
* 10% attend college
* Less than 1% graduate from college
* Around 50% are employed at age 24

Slide 6: Deliverables

* Teams channel
* Education and have a seat at the table
* Partner and collaborate
* Resources and services easily accessible in one place
* How California Department of Education, California Department of Social Services, and DOR intersect to support youth in foster care
* Present at statewide youth conferences to inform and educate

Slide 7: Questions?

# Appendix C: Client Assistance Program Presentation

1. Client Assistance Program

* Sarah Isaacs, Associate Managing Attorney
* Ivan Guillen, Senior Advocate Specialist

2. Presentation Objectives

Overview of Disability Rights California

* Overview of Client Assistance Program (CAP)
* CAP Advocacy in 2024 - Common Issues
* Systemic Issues & Positive Trends
* Collaboration Efforts
* Common National Issues and Trends

3. Overview of Disability Rights California

4. DRC Fast Facts for 2023 (2024 to come)

* Advocacy
	+ More than 21,000 individuals served
* Outreach
	+ 1,435 outreaches and trainings (impacting more than 66,000 people)
* Policy
	+ Analyzed 816 bills
	+ Took positions on 156 bills
	+ Sponsored 11 bills

5. Disability Rights California

* Disability Rights California (DRC) is the agency designated under federal law to protect and advocate for the rights of Californians with disabilities.
* Our Mission: Disability Rights California (DRC) defends, advances, and strengthens the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities.
* We work in litigation, legal representation, advocacy services, investigations, public policy, and provide information, advice, referral, and community outreach.

6. DRC Priorities

* + Civil Rights
	+ Education
	+ Employment
	+ Healthcare/Home & Community-Based Services
	+ Housing
	+ Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities
	+ Regional Center Services
	+ Mental Health
	+ Juvenile and Adult Detention Facilities
	+ Voting

7. Overview of the Client Assistance Program

8. Pathways to Work Practice Group

* Provides advocacy services to people experiencing disability-related barriers to employment.
* Client Assistance Program (CAP)
* Services for SSI and SSDI beneficiaries (PABSS)
	+ Understand how to report earnings to Social Security, work incentive programs like Ticket to Work, and other questions about how work affects benefits.
	+ Know the rules about disclosing or not disclosing disability.
	+ How to request accommodations at work.

9. Client Assistance Program (CAP)

* Advise and inform DOR applicants and clients about services available to them.
* Mandated by the Rehabilitation Act to assist clients accessing DOR services.
* Assist and advocate for people applying to, or getting services from, Independent Living Centers.
* Inform people of their rights under Title I of the ADA (employment discrimination laws).

10. CAP Services

* Provide information about disability rights, employment, vocational rehabilitation, and independent living.
* Provide legal assistance and advice.
* Conduct education and training in the community.
* Advocate with state agency administrators and the State Rehabilitation Council to make recommendations on policies and practices.

11. CAP Services

* CAP provides counsel and advice and encourages self-advocacy.
* CAP may provide higher level of assistance: brief service; technical assistance; evaluation and assessment; direct representation.
* When representing clients, CAP will make request at lowest level, as appropriate.

12. To decide if we represent a client directly, we consider…

* The regulations
* The client’s ability to advocate for themselves
* Other advocacy sources
* Whether the problem is a DRC priority
* If DRC has resources to help

13. CAP Advocacy Overview in 2024, Common Issues, Trends & Outreach

14. Common Issues in 2024

* Delays in communication & follow through with service delivery
* Self-employment
* Private vs. public school
* Student Services Coordination
* School accreditation & BPPE
* Housing for school
* Limiting jobs to “entry level” only

15. Systemic Issues

* + Importance of providing quality customer service
	+ Lack of familiarity of key regulations/CCR and RAM not updated
	+ Language Access
	+ Lack of written notice when services are stopped
	+ Under-staffing leading to delays (certain geographic areas more impacted)

16. Systemic Issues

* Lack of vendors to provide services (customized employment, supported employment, AT evaluations, etc.)
* Concerns with wording on Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE’s)
* Need for reasonable accommodations, particularly regarding communication needs
* Concerns with how assessments are conducted

17. Positive Trends

* Increased collaboration with CAP
* DOR more engaging with self-employment requests
* Expedited enrollment
* CPC Card
* Higher education approvals
* Improved customer service - Ombudsman office

18. CAP Outreach in 2024

* Monolingual Spanish speakers/family support groups in the central valley and inland empire.
* Hip Hop Project – Bay area
* National Federation of the Blind meetings
* Collaborations aimed at improving services for justice involved individuals

19. Collaboration Efforts and CAP National Issues

20. Collaboration with DOR - Local Level

* DOR district unit meetings
* Meetings with District Administrators
* Local Partnership Agreement (LPA) meetings
* Counselors contacting CAP for feedback regarding regulations/hypotheticals

21. Collaboration with DOR - Executive Level

* State Rehabilitation Council
	+ Monthly leadership meetings
	+ Subcommittee meetings
* CAP and DOR executive leadership quarterly meetings

22. CAP Common National Issues and Trends

* Self-employment
* Services from two states
* Maintenance support/housing for school
* Implementation of Student Services
* VR support for Post-Secondary Comprehensive Transition Programs

23. Intake: (800) 776-5746

* web: [disabilityrightsca.org](https://www.disabilityrightsca.org/)

24. Questions

# Appendix D: VR Services Portion of the Unified State Plan Presentation

Slide 1. VR State Plan Updates
SRC Presentation
Presented by the Performance Team
Thursday, March 6, 2025

Slide 2. State Plan Background

Mandated

* Sections 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to establish the State's goals and priorities for implementing the VR and Supported Employment programs.

Goals and Priorities: The goals and priorities are based on:

* The most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), including any updates
* The State’s performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA
* Other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Slide 3. Timelines

Program Year Quarters

* Quarter 1: July 1 – September 30
* Quarter 2: October 1 – December 31
* Quarter 3: January 1 – March 31 (we are here!)
* Quarter 4: April 1 – June 30

Slide 4. Our Goals

* Increase the unsubsidized employment rate of participants during the second and fourth quarter after exit.
* Support increased work-based learning including intermediate employment, career technical education, and post-secondary education.
* Expand and improve VR services to those who have been underserved and underrepresented in the VR program.
* Provide effective VR services with quality IPE developments consistent with in-demand workforce needs and sustainable living wages.
* Support businesses in California to employ more individuals with disabilities.
* Improve California state government employers’ parity rate for hiring and promotion of people with disabilities.
* Increase the number of students with disabilities who receive high-quality DOR Student Services.
* Increase the percentage of students with disabilities receiving DOR Student Services who go on to receive VR services.

Slide 5: PY 2023 Performance Rates

| PERFORMANCE INDICATOR | PY 2023ACTUAL | PY 2023NEGOTIATED | PY 2024NEGOTIATED |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Employment Rate (Second Quarter After Exit) | 48.5% | 50.0% | 52.0% |
| Employment Rate (Fourth Quarter After Exit) | 48.4% | 44.0% | 50.0% |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit) | $7,058 | $5,650 | $7,000 |
| Credential Attainment Rate | 41.4% | 27.1% | 44.5% |

Slide 7: WIOA Methodology

* What is the measure? The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program
* SRC Question: $7,000 is less than a living wage, due in part to some consumers wanting to work part-time. For comparison purposes, what is the average salary of people working full-time?
* Earnings 2nd quarter after exit
* Median, not average
* Quarterly earnings, not monthly earnings
* Does not account for number of hours worked
* All participants with IPE after exit regardless of employment outcome

Slide 8: Methodology

Full-time Wages After Exit

* Closed in competitive, integrated employment
* Full-time employment at exit (35+ hours/week)
* Still employed 2nd quarter after exit in PY 2024 reports

Slide 9: Full-Time Outcomes

* Part-time: 40.4%
* Full-time: 59.6%
* WIOA: $7,058
* All CIE: $8,583
* Full-time: $11,338

Slide 10: Full-Time Top 10

* Heavy and tractor
* Office clerks, general
* Customer service representatives
* Helpers-production workers
* Stockers and order fillers
* Social and human services
* Firefighters
* Rehabilitation counselors
* Janitors
* Construction

Slide 11: Full-Time Outcomes (Median)

* Heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers: $14,067
* Office clerks, general: $11,917
* Customer service representatives: $9,003
* Helpers-production workers: $9,376
* Stockers and order fillers: $8,043
* Social and human service assistants: $12,745
* Firefighters: $22,554
* Rehabilitation counselors: $14,499
* Janitors and cleaners; $8,884
* Helpers-construction traders/roofers: $10,976

Slide 12: Average Wages After Exit by Age, 2023-24

* <16: $5,330
* 16 – 18: $5,922
* 19 – 24: $5,774
* 25 – 44: $8,058
* 45 – 54: $8,546
* 55 – 59: $7,302
* 60+: $7,124

Slide 13: Average Wages After Exit by Race/Ethnicity, 2023-24

* American Indian/Alaska Native: $7,453
* Asian: $7,307
* Black/African American: $6,790
* Hispanic/Latino: $7,227
* Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: $8,968
* White: $6,973
* More than one race: $6,326

Slide 14: Average Wages After Exit by Barrier, 2023-24

* $7,391: displaced homemakers
* $6,241: English language learners
* $7,756: Exhausting TANF within 2 years
* $8,533: Justice involved
* $7,815: Unhoused/runaway youth
* $6,576: Long-term unemployed
* $5,632: Foster youth

Slide 15: Contact

Performance Team

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# Appendix E: Training Services; Public & Private Institutions

Slide 1: Training Services; Public & Private Institutions

State Rehabilitation Council

March 6, 2025

Presented by: DOR Policy & Performance Section

Slide 2: Intent of the DOR Employment Program

* Help individuals with disabilities achieve employment goals and live independently.
* Provide support and resources to assist individuals in entering, staying in, and advancing in the workforce.
* Develop plans that are tailored to meet the individual’s unique needs and career goals.
* Encourage long-term success in sustainable, meaningful employment that matches their skills, interests, and goals.

Slide 3: Developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

* Must be designed to achieve a specific employment outcome.
* An outcome consistent with the individual’s unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.
* Take into consideration the labor market.

Slide 4: Exercising Informed Choice

* Employment outcome; the vocational goal
* Employment setting
* Specific services needed to achieve the employment outcome.
* Service providers
* Methods for procuring services

Slide 5: Scope of Services; Vocational and Other Training Services

* Advanced training in, not limited to, a field of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, medicine, law, or business.
* Books, tools, and other training materials.
* Institutions of higher education.
* Maximum efforts to secure grant assistance from other sources.

Slide 6: Training Services

* Facilitate the achievement of the vocational goal.
* Prepare the individual with the skills and abilities necessary to be a competitive candidate for competitive integrated employment.
* Select based on the needs of the individual, timeliness, availability, and cost of training.

Slide 7: Use of Public or Private Institutions

* DOR can provide training in a private institution instead of a public institution when:
	+ Training needs can be better met by a private institution; or
	+ Overall cost to DOR will be less; or
	+ Attendance in a public training program would cause a significant delay in preparing for employment.
* Team Manager has approved a private school for training.

Slide 8: College Level Training; Order of Preference

* For the first two years, Community college.
* For the first two years, a state college or university if overall cost is equal or less than community college.
* After the first two years, a State college or university.
* Private school when:
	+ Essential to the success of the IPE; or
	+ Overall cost to DOR will be equal or less than the costs of public school; or
	+ Consumer agrees to pay additional costs for private school when determined that a public institution will sufficiently meet the needs of the individual in achieving their vocational goal.

Slide 9: Out of State Training

* Out-of-State training may be provided when:
	+ Suitable programs are not available within California; or
	+ The consumer lives near an adjoining state and the out-of-state facilities are more readily available in the adjoining state; or
	+ Undue hardship would be imposed on the individual by participating in training programs in California.

Slide 10: DOR Commitment to Quality

* DOR shall ensure that all training programs authorized support the informed choice of eligible individuals, protect their interests, and have the necessary approvals to operate in California.
* The Bureau of Private and Postsecondary Education (BPPE) protects students and consumers through the oversight of California’s private institutions by conducting qualitative reviews of educational programs and operating standards, proactively combating unlicensed activity, impartially resolving student and consumer complaints, and conducting outreach.
* No private institution training program shall be approved or authorized to provide training services without verification of current, valid BPPE approval, exemption, or registration in the record of services.

Slide 11: Paying for Services; Comparable Services and Benefits

* Financial participation requirements do not apply to training, tutoring, books, and other training materials.
* Comparable Services & Benefits requirements apply for training services, including books, tools, and other training materials.
	+ For an institution of higher education (above the California high school level), the consumer must make “maximum effort” to establish eligibility and secure any similar benefits (i.e., apply for financial aid).
	+ Grant aid is applied toward educational costs and DOR covers the remaining cost of services.

Slide 12: Resources: Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)

* 361.40 Written Policies Governing the Provision of Services
* 361.45 Development of the Individualized Plan for Employment
* 361.48 Scope of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
* 361.52 Informed Choice

Slide 13: Resources: California Code of Regulations (CCR)

* 7006 Comparable Services and Benefits
* 7149 Scope of VR Services
* 7154 Training Services
* 7155 Use of Public or Private Institutions
* 7156 College Level Training
* 7158.8 Out-of-State Training
* 7191 Exemptions from Client Financial Participation

Slide 14: Resources: California Code, Education Code

* Title 3 Postsecondary Education, Division 10 Private Postsecondary and Higher Education Institutions, Part 59 Private Postsecondary and Higher Education Institutions, Chapter 8 Private Postsecondary Institutions, Article 6 Approval to Operate, Section 94886 (CA Educ Code 94886 (2024))

Slide 15: Q & A