



Minutes for VMRC Board of Directors Meeting

February 26, 2025 | 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Valley Mountain Regional Center, Stockton Office, Cohen Board Room and via Zoom Video Conference

Board Members Present: Alicia Schott, Erria Kaalund, Lisa Utsey, Dr. Steve Russell, Crystal Enyeart, Jessica Quesada, Jose Lara, Liz Herrera-Knapp, Jody Bussis, Kenneth Huntley, Marisela Cruz, Kyle Cox

Board Members Not Present: Jeff Turner (Informed Absence), Gabriela Castillo (Informed Absence)

VMRC Staff Present: Aiko Blancaflor, Amanda Verstl, Leinani Walter, Aaron McDonald, Gabriela Lopez, Midori Lopez, Emelia Vigil, Christina Couch, Tara Sisemore-Hester, Mayra Ochoa, Claire Lazaro, Brian Bennet, Jennifer Stone, Corina Ramirez, Nathan Sioson, Athea Jurado, Lizzie Valerio, Mary Duncan

Public Present: Rachelle Munoz (facilitator), Irene Hernandez, Isela Bingham, Doug Bonnet, Dena Hernandez

A. Call to Order, Roll Call, Reading of the Mission Statement

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 by Alicia Schott. Lizzie took roll call, a quorum was established. The board read the Mission Statement.

B. Review of the Meeting Agenda

Alicia asked for a motion to approve the Board of Directors meeting minutes of 12/11/24. Erria motioned to approve, Crystal seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

C. Review and Approval of the Board of Directors Meeting minutes of 12/11/24

Alicia asked for a motion to approve the Board of Directors Meeting minutes of 12/11/24. Kenneth motioned to approve the minutes. Lisa seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. The board of directors meeting minutes of 12/11/24 were approved.

D. Public Comment

1. Doug Bonnet-Introduced himself as the new Services Provider Manager for DRAIL in Stockton – San Joaquin County. DRAIL (Disability Resources Agency for Independent Living) is a private non-profit with an office in Stockton and Modesto and services in the same counties as VMRC. They provide services to people with intellectual & developmental disabilities, mental health condition and physical disabilities. Services consist of helping with SSA paperwork, referrals to other agencies, assistive technology, loaning walkers/wheelchairs. There is also a program WIPA work incentive planning and assistance – educating people who are on public benefits and being able to work without losing benefits.

2. Dena Hernandez-State Council of Developmental Disabilities shared two fliers left from DRAIL: Shared events/fliers that are taking place in the next couple of months
 - DRAIL Fundraiser for Giants Tickets for \$15 May 2
 - Autism Awareness Night at the Stockton Ports tickets
 - Choices Conference registration fliers are available, \$30 per participant, free for micro business
 - In collaboration with office of Clients' Rights Advocacy there is a "Make Your Microbusiness Go Viral" free training in person and online
 - Save the Date for Self-Determination Advisory Committee Resource Fair which will be held on April 28, 2025.
 - The Statewide Self-Advocacy Network is hosting a webinar "The Choices we Make Together" on Thursday, March 27, 2025.
 - March 10, Lastly the State Council will be hosting with The ARC of Amador & Calaveras a zoom event where people can share their stories and possibly Congressman McClintock can hear how proposed Medicaid cuts will impact people.
3. Mary Duncan- Now Vice President and Chief Steward for VMRC chapter if the union and treasurer elect of SEIU 1021. Reported an issue when reconciling contract and salary schedule, a position previously paid the same rate as another position now had a higher salary, the increase was made in September. There was no information available as the people involved are no longer with VMRC. This is a clear violation of the contract and bad faith bargaining. The Union is not planning to grieve, but we are not ruling out other options. Moving forward with bargaining the contract this year, we expect the regional center to bargain in good faith and give members a fair contract.
4. Spanish translation requested. Griselda Estrada Vice Chair for Self-Determination Local Committee Advisor, she would like to report GT FMS has not paid the vendor or the workers January 2022 until November 20, 2024. I would like to know who will be responsible for those salaries for those wanting to get paid. I want to know what the regional center's responsibility is and what the solution. I have been trying to contact SDP coordinators and have not gotten a result. I was sent to get vendorized, it has been 2 ½ months waiting for a resolution.
5. Vivian Nicholas, chair for the local advisory committee for SDP and an independent facilitator working with several VMRC families. She shared she has spoken with VMRC and leadership. There needs to be improved communication and transparency, there have been changes in budget, rates have been inconsistent. Clients transition into renewal years and increases that were removed, budgets changed, not allowing time for spending time. We know there is restructuring, department leads and staff taking dual roles. There is a gap in services, and she has requested to meet with VMRC SDP and leadership to see improved systems.
6. Erica Cibrian- mom of a young son with autism and in Self-Determination. My budget was only approved for 6 months, and it expired in November. In November another 6 months were added in the fiscal team, she does not know if fiscal sent authorizations to my FMS GT because it has been 3 months. One of my workers has not received payment and she is afraid he will not want to work with her son. If someone can help me with that process she would appreciate it.

7. Jeannet Cardenas - Mother of a client of this regional center, my son is self-determination. I as well as other parents have the same problem with GT FMS did not apay a couple of invoices. I am asking you to have a meeting with Mayra Ochoa and Gabriela Lopez to listen to us and our barriers we are having. This process is delayed and the team is not answering emails. I am an independent facilitator as well and I have families on hold for the same reason. We have given the information, the budgets and are not getting help. Families are without services, this impacts your client, Valley Mountains focus should be on the clients. Asking to focus on this program, not sure what's happening with the team, we need support. She is here to collaborate with anyone who would like to and will leave her email.
8. Maribel Falcon, mother of a child with Autism and in self-determination. It's a great program but the new team for SD is not responding to emails. We are in the process of change in certain situations, possibly the new team is busy, if we can have some kind of communication, the prior team was very professional and responded. I would like the team to respond, give some acknowledgement that the email was received. The delay is a lot, it's not fair for the kids. The program is helpful and as Marisol said prior, I support her comment, here to collaborate any way.
9. Carolina Azarte would like to express something about Self Determination. As an independent facilitator I have had many barriers to being able to complete this process. It's been months waiting for a budget, I know the department doesn't have adequate personnel, I want to know how regional center can help the department to make this process faster.
10. Oscar Mercado- A self-advocate and Outreach Manager for ICC – stated he loves the program, many self-advocates that I've met have shared similar opinions about the program, a life changer. With that amazing program comes systematic barriers (bureaucratic), the delay in the process for people to really enjoy fruits of SD program, biggest barriers, budget FMS agencies when regional center oks it and papers are signed but have to wait for FMS to respond. My FMS agency has yet to respond even though he's been waiting since the beginning of February. I want to see for VMRC SDP team can help families navigate with these agencies. To avoid future stress for participants and families. It's essential for FMS agencies to get things done quickly, not sure how VMRC SDP can help with that. Suggests VMRC helps families navigate that project to get things done.
11. Maria Granados – along with other folks giving comments, I am in the same situation. I have 2 children with disabilities; one is in self-determination and have had the same barriers are others. In an instance I had to reimburse out of my own pocket because FMS didn't pay. I would like to know how regional center can help us so our services don't stop. Maria mentioned she is having a hard time as there is interpretation on zoom and Gaby is translating live in the board room. Maria shared she had to return the money; they were pressuring the person who already provided service to my sons. How can regional center help us so GT can notify us when there are no funds to in our budget, no longer available and stop service. She used to track in GT portal, remaining balance now longer updating budget. Also, vendors for example for swimming lessons, vendor removed her from the program – time ran out.

E. Calendar Consent Items

1. Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of January 8, 2025

2. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes of January 8, 2025
3. Consumer Services Committee Meeting Minutes of January 22, 2025

Alicia brought as an action item and asked for a second to approve, Erria seconded motion to approve. The consent calendars items were approved unanimously.

F. Committee Reports

1. **VMRC Professional Advisory Committee, Coalition of Local Agency Service Provider (C.L.A.S.P.)** – Liz Herrera Knapp possibly lost connection. Meeting notes will be added afterwards.

CLASP Report to the VMRC Board of Directors 2.26.25

- CLASP had 2 meetings since the last board meeting: 1/27/25 and 2/24/25
- We have \$23,793.52 in our account
- 82 paid members
- VMRC Departments each gave their report to our membership covering HCBS, Rate Reform, Residential Services Orientation, upcoming trainings, and open office hours.
- CLASP has a public page in FB & IG, if you want to post something there, send to Kirsten via email: ksea9@aol.com
 - Instagram: @CLASP.VMRC
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CLASP.VMRC> and
 - Our private member group: "CLASP - VMRC (MEMBER GROUP)" - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2310077552557091> When joining our private member group, please be sure to answer the membership questions to be approved into the group.
- Choices:
 - Self-Advocacy Council 6 flyer- Feb 21, 2025 at Eagle Hall- RSVP deadline is Feb 7- The CHOICES t-shirt and video winners will be announced. Christine & Erin will be giving info on the new IPP template and The Advocates will be performing. There will be lunch for those who RSVP. Flyer on SAC6 Facebook page and was sent out to CLASP.
 - CHOICES Conference is April 11, 2025. Cost is \$30 for ALL. Sponsorships are still open
- **Residential Home Workgroup**
 - March 5th at 10 am is next meeting, info will follow.
- **Day Program Workgroup-**
 - Spent time discussing rate increase, mostly in a waiting pattern to find out requirements.
 - Transportation issues with daily rate to hourly, should not be done until transportation is more stable.
 - Discussion about BCBA requirements.
 - Will be starting these meetings quarterly hybrid meetings.
 - Our next Day Program Work Group is scheduled for Wednesday, March 26th at 9am. It will be Hybrid in person at CVTC Stockton West: 7603 Murray Drive, Stockton CA 95210 and via zoom
 - <https://zoom.us/j/95071697470?pwd=OVEqXNSsNaGP4r7fMEusilVPm d0bm y>

Next CLASP Meeting: March 24th @ 10 am via Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/97743137353?pwd=Faa0NdcCGtfJzbxkxBqd5fQggZRWOObQ>

Meeting ID: 977 4313 7353

Passcode: 875470

2. Self-Determination Advisory Committee

VMRC SDP Updates:

We had a best practices and LVAC roles and responsibilities training in January as part of our LVAC meeting that was facilitated by Chris Arroyo of SCDD.

Upcoming Projects/Updates:

- LVAC Leadership will review bylaws and suggest any needed updates regarding attendance, conflicts of interest, and other.
- SDP Resource Fair-April 28th (see attached Save the Date)-this was also shared in the last VMRC newsletter.
- RFP's to be developed for IF training for self-advocates/consumers
- The committee voted and passed a proposal where ICC will be providing coaching support to members of the Latino community through person centered planning coaching and transition supports as part of a 2-part project-contract for such services is in process.

Statewide SDAC-Statewide meeting was held in February 2025, the following was discussed:

- DDS working on standardizing practices and processes for FMS's, IF's, Individual Budgets and Spending Plans
 - o On January 16, 2025, the DDS issued its annual letter to regional centers offering guidance on the use of the implementation funds, which includes the collaboration between regional centers and their local volunteer advisory committees (LVACs) to determine funding priorities.
 - o Priority areas for funding:
 - Recruitment and training for person centered planning/funding-Increasing the number of available person-centered planning and SD Support providers. This could include, but is not limited to, recruitment, development and/or provision of training, translation/interpreters, etc.
 - Collaborative groups/workshops
 - Employer readiness training workshops- Training for participants, families, and providers should focus on employer readiness, educating participants about their roles and responsibilities in the co-employer or sole employer model.
 - Joint training
 - Support/coaching for transition to SDP
 - Initial spending plan development
 - Additional identified needs
- Core Projects: In January 2025 the SSDAC Workgroup collaborated with CORO Fellowship in Public Affairs participant David Delgado to create a process map aimed at identifying and addressing unnecessary administrative burdens within the SDP budget development process. I aided in this process and presented the budget process map to address steps undertaken in creating a budget
 - Priorities for 2025:
 - o Providing more Service Coordinator Training for SDP-workgroup to discuss next steps
 - o Survey's to be sent to members outlining priorities and select top 5 by rating
 - o Review progress on prior years' priorities:
 - Creating a platform to share best practice: SSDAC is live and workgroup continues to review and approve content, as needed project will be ongoing
 - Engaging in disparity outreach and/or develop training/educational video targeted at ethnic disparities-evaluate RC outreach methods and update best

practices platform; provide direct feedback to DDS and outreach plan development for RC's

LVAC Committee Membership & Leadership: Still vacancies on the committee from representation from Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne counties. We also took nominations for Assistant Secretary vacancy and will vote in next month's (March) meeting.

SDP Enrollment-See attached.

3. Consumer Advisory Council, SAC6 – Crystal Enyeart

February 6th Sac6 members Catrina, Minette, Jessica, Angelina and Jessica attended the Supported Life Conference Planning Committee on zoom from 4 pm to 6 pm.

On February 13th Jessica Q. attended the OAH (Office of Administrative Hearing) Committee. Also, Catrina attended the Legislative meeting where the group prepared for Grassroots day.

February 19th Sac6 members had their quarterly Finance Committee.

On February 21st Sac6 had their quarterly area meeting. It was held in Stockton, we had about 180 self-advocates RSVP. Christine Couch gave great information on the new IPP Process and had advocates involved by sharing feedback on how their IPP meeting went. She also showed some cool videos. THANK YOU CHRISTINE.

February 25th Catrina, Lisa and I attended the Legislative Group meeting on zoom, where we talked about our who were going to have the opportunity to talk to on Grassroots Day. We will be sharing our personal stories on our services.

4. Finance Committee –

A. VMRC Financial Reports

- Dr. Steve reported there are two action items, he states the first would be presented by Aiko.
 - i. Aiko reported that the ask of the Contract Status Report and Service Expense by category be a combined report. Listed allocation of current 3 open fiscal years as of December 31, 2024. Key things look at is the decrease of CPP funding largely due to closure of all but on Developmental Centers. We are still on track for Operation to use all funding we have left, POS General and CPP projections are above allocation, expected to receive amendment. DDS confirmed allocation is expected to be received next week.
- Dr. Steve stated this is an action item and asked for a second. Kenneth seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Approval of CCP/CDRP Contract

- Dr. Steve shared the next time is a presentation by Jennifer Stone and Corina Ramirez
 - i. Jennifer reported she will give a brief presentation on the 1612 apartments project (hotel renovation) in Modesto. It is in

collaboration with Stanislaus Regional Housing Authority. VMRC requested \$1.6 million from DDS Gap Funding to reserve 16 units of 144. These are rent restricted, project-based vouchers (\$450-\$470 per month, depending on income levels set by HUD), residents can be up to 2 per unit, couple, mother and child for example.

- ii. Shared demographics of the area as well as photos.
 - iii. Application for interest has been created; new email has been housing@vmrc.net. Applications are being submitted to Jennifer who is working with HUD, she is encouraging applicants to talk to their service coordinators, VMRC screen committee will review applications.
- Jennifer asked if there were any questions. Kenneth Huntley asked since it's a VMRC and Housing Authority project, why are there no elevators? He mentioned disability debilitate over time and Jennifer let him know, Housing Authority has the ability to add an elevator but all units for VMRC would be accessible on the first floor.
 - Erria Kaalund asked when they can tour the facility. Jennifer informed the board that the project is still under construction, anticipating it to be ready at the end of April or May and starting the leasing process. Once she has information she will inform the board about a tour.
 - Alicia Schott shared she would like to copy and paste and place in multiple locations (Stockton, Modesto). This is great, she would love to see more of these projects! Jennifer let her know to contact her. She has brought up the idea to multiple counties.
 - Brian shared in the coming months and new fiscal year, they will be making a request, Jennifer is one person doing housing for all 5 counties, he would want to grow, multiple people working with housing.
 - Jose Lara confirmed that the monthly rent amount is \$400, Jennifer clarified \$450 -\$ 470 asked if the property owner would be taking a tax deduction, \$400 for rent is beyond reasonable and for units set aside for VMRC or is someone supplementing the rent. Jennifer let him know the Housing Authority is giving us project-based vouchers at a 30% median, voucher is attached to the unit not a person, they have the tax credits and multiple funding sources. The money we are contributing is netting us the units at 30% for our individuals to be able to afford for 55 years. Alicia asked if there was a time limit. Jennifer let her know they can stay as long as they wanted, if they leave HUD will let her know and Jennifer can continue to follow the list she is.
 - Leinani added these are extremely difficult to develop, to have 16 units in our catchment is extremely rare. We would love to duplicate; regional centers would want to work with housing authorities and have a Jennifer to get this resource.
 - i. Corina asked if there were any questions, if not we are presenting the contract at \$1.6 million
 - ii. Dr. Steve asks for a motion to approve, Jose makes a motion to approve, Erria seconded. The motion carries unanimously.

5. Consumer Services Committee –

There was no report.

- 6. Legislative Committee –** Erria reported Grassroots big week is coming, we will be starting at 2pm followed by dinner at 6pm. We will be meeting at 8:30am with the

legislators, first meeting is at 9:30am, our team is ready. She as, we talked to members about attending

7. Bylaws Committee –

Jody reported that the committee is looking to set up a meeting, no report.

8. Nominating Committee –

Erria reported that in late March, we will be ironing out all issues, nominating will come up hopefully end of April, hoping to invite board members to join. Advocating if you know anyone who would like to be on the board, involved in the community, from all 5 counties. Leinani also added that Mayra has drafted a flyer for our Southeast Asian community and will translate in 10 top languages – one of the areas we need to fill vacancy in Asian communities.

9. Popplewell Review Team –

Erria mentioned only one request for birth certificate was approved.

G. Executive Director's Report

Leinani shared she has officially been at Valley Mountain for a year as of February 14, 2025. It's been an amazing experience, a learning experience, grateful for number of changes – can be challenging, but can lead to new opportunities. We have terrific new leaders learning from our team. I am thankful to move into 2025 and end of this fiscal year. Thank you to the team! Thanked Aiko for training held earlier and budget overview. Appreciated leadership from Brenda Crisler and Pete Tiedemann, Brenda officially turned in everything yesterday, thankful to have left VMRC in a good fiscal space for Aiko to lead, thankful for their support. I appreciated Tara and Amanda for their leadership in union contract negotiations. Fiscal was one of the efforts she wanted to focus on, equity is an important component – master plan and moving forward, thankful for Mayra and her years of experience working with individuals around the state and her kindness. Thanked Christine for passing the baton to Mayra, Christine's leadership has been invaluable. Thank you for having all leaders step up and lead this agency in a positive and impactful way. She shared her brother and was served for almost 20 years, parents were recipients of Valley Mountain and benefited services, there is no other lens than the services for families that need services. Thank you for your patience, I value everyone's respect and contributions made in this last year.

H. President's Report

Alicia shared ARCA had their meeting last month, she shared they are supporting Grassroots, legislative committee is spearheading on our behalf, Crystal and Lisa are going. Amy Westling addressed rapid population growth, regional centers will be working on workforce sustainability and rate reform. ARCA delegates are working on onboarding board members. The board retreat is on April 26, 2025, part of the purpose is to work on the strategic plan with Catherine Blakemore. Looking to meet with Erria prior to the board retreat for, it's an important time for board members to be active, show up and contribute.

Leinani added one more thing, the last but most difficult thing has been rate reform. Brian and his team have been leading with a lot of work and time, listening to service providers, it's a difficult area to navigate, Appreciate Brian and his team for their work on one of the biggest changes in our systems history in terms of rates.

I. Next Meeting – Wednesday, April 23, 2024, at 6:00pm Hybrid (In-Person and Zoom)

J. Adjournment – Alicia Schott