



## **Minutes for VMRC Board of Directors Meeting**

**August 27, 2025 | 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm**

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

**Board Members Present:** Erria Kaalund, Jody Burriss, Lisa Utsey, Dr. Steve Russell, Alicia Schott, Jeff Turner, Crystal Enyeart, Jose Lara, Kenneth Huntley, Kyle Cox, Dominique Mellion, Candice Bright, Gabriela Castillo, Jessica Quesada

**Board Members Not Present:** Marisela Cruz (uninformed absence)

**VMRC Staff Present:** Aiko Blancaflor, Amanda Verstl, Brian Bennett, Christine Couch, Claire Lazaro, Leinani Walter, Mayra Ochoa, Tara Sisemore-Hester, Jason Toepel, Lizzie Valerio, Sean Keyes, Donna Sioson, Midori Perez, Gabriela Lopez, Emelia Vigil, Evelyn Ledesma-Solis, Gina Ramsey, Lauren Roseman, Blanca Avalos, Josie Craig, Michele Poaster, Jenne Bielby, Sandra Smith, Victoria Moreno, Bridget Martinez, Maria Pedraza, Stephanie Cavan, Kim Rodriguez, Rafael,

**Public Present:** Irene Hernandez, Isela Bingham, Delia Sanders, Megan (SDS Program), Carolina Arzate, Jeannet Cardenas, Catherine Blakemore, Carolina y Juan de Dios, Maria Elena Diaz, Dora Contreras, Carmen Ponce, Hery, Oscar Mercado, Lisa Culley, Ana Martinez, Jose Flores, Adriana Acuna, Maria Del Rosario, Erika Cibrian, Deissy Vega, Mariana Guerrero, iPhone2093319663, Marcela Sanchez, Griselda Estrada, Maribel Falcon, Heraclia, Beatriz Chavez

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:08pm by Erria Kaalund. Lizzie took roll call, a quorum was established. The board read the Mission Statement.

### **B. Review of the Meeting Agenda**

Erria asked if there were any questions or comments to the agenda. Lizzie informed the board that Amanda Verstl will present a position to the board during Executive Director's report.

### **C. Review and Approval of the Board of Directors Meeting minutes of 6/25/25**

Erria asked for a motion to approve the Board of Directors Meeting minutes of 6/25/25. Crystal motioned to approve the minutes. Kenneth seconded. The Board of Directors meeting minutes of 6/25/25 were approved.

### **D. Public Comment**

1. Emily Orth, VMRC Intake Coordinator (San Andreas) and Union President –

Shared concerns about caseload ratio. She shared struggles of colleagues and asked for support in doing their job, caseload ratio relief and supporting families.

2. Shauna Molotch, SOT (San Andreas)/ part of bargaining team – Shared that the bargaining team sent out a survey to staff. She read anonymous responses from staff regarding satisfactory issues to address.
3. Heather Smith, SC (San Andreas) – She shared that the Mountain Counties (Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne) is often overlooked and forgotten. Limited staff covering the area, reports, services aren't getting requested and follow-up isn't being done in a timely manner. They have limited resources in the Foothills, she would like to see hiring a priority in the Foothills.
4. Jenessa Stone, Children's Unit SC (San Andreas) – Shared Mountain counties are severely underserved. She shared she recently met with a family that is Spanish speaking, and the parent voiced her concern with communication as SC does not speak Spanish, she can offer support with a translator or a Stockton staff member. She relayed that when she took that back to her PM, she was told a barrier to communication with a family is not a valid reason to transfer to Spanish speaking SC. She asked for a priority to have Spanish-speaking SCs, we are under-resourced, and cases are growing every month.
5. Sherri Sally, Early State Intake (Modesto) – Reported to be a mom of 3 and loves her job, able to connect with parents who have concerns with their child. Intake has its own needs, early start intake must be done in 45 days. Flexibility is important, intake portion can be done over the phone with parents and then an in-person component is done in office. They are in the office often and she would like to work from home for initial steps. She understands the request to be 1-day in office to 2-day eventually, but she has to adapt to family needs and cannot always be remote. She is asking for flexibility as it's important to meet the deadline and meet at all offices but in some cases, she can't have her set day.
6. Maria Pedraza, SC (Stockton) – She shared concerns about the direction VMRC is heading regarding remote work policy. Caseload should be 62 but currently at 81, tries to give her families the attention they deserve, often times has to rush which causes risk to create mistakes. She serves children outside caseload range because there is no SC that can cover – unable to provide details to their questions because she is not familiar with the age she has to cover. She mentions new hires are likely backfills, continue to receive additional cases, and now another day in office will cause issues where to sit. She feels an additional day will fix caseloads or improve services. Being remote avoids burnout, frustration and is unnecessary, we may lose staff because of this.
7. Deanna Fantulin – Community Services Liaison (Stockton) – She was in case management prior to her current position and shared an example of case management. When she was in her new position, her previous manager asked her to work out of class and support case management. She was doing two jobs at once to offer support for her old team, she loves VMRC and wants to ensure she helps her old team and families.
8. Casey Robertshaw, SSC (San Andreas) – Read off survey responses.

9. Megan Gaskin, SC (San Andreas) – Shared story about staff who will no longer be working at VMRC, she had a caseload of 80 and is a Spanish speaking SC. All Adults SC were given notice they will have to take over cases. Expectations of caseloads are unreasonable; we are losing amazing people. Additionally, she shared, adults are on quarterly basis, she has 30+ meetings approximately a month: quarterly, annual, IPP, traveling, supporting consumers. She loves her job but wanted to share that information. She read survey responses.
10. Veronica Waldo, SC (Modesto) – Reported her caseload was at 70, she has had situations where she is not able to book rooms. Parents wanted to have an in-person meeting, they are unable to take their child 3-5 years old in the community. She reported meetings are extended as they are unable to meet in a timely manner. It affects us, it looks like we aren't doing our job. She met with coworkers today and discussed a cubicle, 3 people cannot share 1 cubicle, there are not enough spaces in Modesto. She reported that a lot of parents are barely getting diagnosis, not sure what to do, how to take care of a child with autism, they can only do so much.
11. George Lewis, SCDD Northern Hills – Shared they are wanting to complete our state plan for 2027 – 2032, they are asking for input on SCDD.CA.GOV and folks can give input there. Shannel Murray from SCDD, will be presenting a training on August 29 for Medicare and will send out flyers. They are getting ready to send out National Core Indicator surveys via mail for family members, adults, adults in family home and board and care and children ages 3-17. SCDD has a contract with DDS, and he is the representative, he shared a survey measuring outcomes and systems in regional centers are and working with Christine to attend new hire opportunities.
12. Dora Contreras, ICC organization – She reported to the board they have families who cannot access social recreation activities which are needed by the children because they have to pay out of pocket. Some activities they are interested in parents cannot afford the fee, many businesses want the pay before service, 2-3 months in advance. We need an FMS in the area to take them on.
13. Carolina Arzate, ICC member – She listened to what a lot of the service coordinators shared and how it affected us as families. Families report the SCs call them one or two times, and then they don't answer, and families don't hear back, or SC is laid off. It's out of control, trying to contract SCs. We try and help families, if they go to meetings alone, we see no results, it worries us to hear everything on the inside and how it's affecting us on the outside. Another concern is that there is a lot of barriers in Self-Determination, there is a lot of money to spend but they are not using it.
14. Shannon Hernandez HCBS CBO – We're all here for the same reason, the consumers. Reports as a team, if we're broken, we can't help our consumers. Right now, we are hearing "we don't want to come in the office as much, I want more flexibility to work from home". As a QA we go into group homes, our SCs need to go out to the programs more often. If SC had more time, they can see their consumers and the environment they are living in. Reported to be an SC in transition unit started with a caseload of 56 ended with 76, its rough. Let's not lose focus on the consumers.

15. Gricelda Estrada, ICC Member – Families are reporting two behaviors in SCs, opposite from what she has heard this evening. Service Coordinators threaten families if they are not let into family home to see their client, they will not provide services. There is a law that families can request virtual meetings, SCs do not offer this option. She also reported SCs are not answering the calls, although they are bilingual or English, they try to translate the email, and they don't answer. Regarding recreational services, we are dealing with SCs who state that due to budget cuts they can only have rights to three recreational services and not camps, while we are aware cuts have not been reported yet.
16. Oscar Mercado, Self-Advocate, VMRC consumer and 2<sup>nd</sup> year SDP participant – He here's what everyone is saying, he wants to emphasize this system is about collaboration between system and community. He also reported about the Self Determination Program Advisory Committee, which needs more collaboration with CBOs or Grassroot levels organizations, they are working directly with families navigating the system. How do we work best with regional center, graceful resource to support individuals who have specialized needs. We have to collaborate more between systems and CBOs.

## **E. Calendar Consent Items**

1. Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of July 9, 2025
2. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes of July 9, 2025
3. Consumer Services Committee Meeting Minutes of July 23, 2025

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

## **F. VMRC Policy – Mitigating COI for Delegated Conservatorships (Aug 2025)**

Jason reported on the policy for delegated conservatorships, DDS wanted edits made and Jason shared edits in section 4.0 and 3.0.

Kenneth Huntley made a motion to approve the action item, Kyle Cox seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **G. Committee Reports**

### **1. VMRC Professional Advisory Committee, Coalition of Local Agency Service Provider (C.L.A.S.P.) – Candice Bright**

Candice shared she did not receive minutes. The next meeting will be on September 22 at 10:00am.

### **2. Self-Determination Advisory Committee**

Kenneth read his report. He reported Sue Collie is the family advocate for Tuolumne County. Fernandez Gomez from ICC went over numbers of individuals served on the "Expressway pilot project", which is a pilot project to get individuals on SDP, current total of 14 individuals, 119 sessions and 28 total surveys.

Currently there are 129 SDP Participants as of July 10<sup>th</sup>

48 female & 81 males  
Nearly half are Latinos/Hispanic  
39 participants are white  
20 as other  
9 as African American  
7 Multicultural  
79 in San Joaquin County  
41 in Stanislaus County  
9 from the mountain counties

Two people have exited the program since last report, one placed in care home, other per their request, 11% increase in participants since beginning of year

### **3. Consumer Advisory Council, SAC6 – Crystal Enyeart**

August 7th Sac6 members joined the SCDD Zoom on Medicaid Training.

August 8th -Sac6 had their Mountain County Area meeting. Thank you to Brian and Aaron for presenting on Emergency Preparedness Training. Thank you to Christine and all the VMRC team for your support.

August 14th Sac6 Consultant Jessica attended the OAHA on zoom.

August 15th Sac6 consultant Lisa attended the Bylaws meeting on zoom.

Sac6 also RSVP for a table at the VMRC Cultural and Disability Resource Fair for October 10th

Upcoming events:

September 15th Remembrance Day Ceremony.

### **4. Finance Committee –**

- a. Aiko presented the Contract Status and reported that we received funding for fiscal year 25-26, but typically initial funding every year does not cover expected expenses, both on operation and purchase of service side. We are expecting an additional allocation in the coming weeks to cover the remaining funds. There are no known cuts to our operations budget but are spending cautiously as there could possibly be changes in October and January related to the state budget situation.

Aiko reported DDS issued their final report for their audit of fiscal year 22-23 & 23-24 which has been posted on our website and is being shared. There are two buckets of findings, one is credit card charges by employees no longer with VMRC and lack of support for surveys due to staff turnover. Secondly, as everyone is aware the CPA audit by WINDES is close to wrapping up the two fiscal years we were behind. They are working to complete prior to the October board meeting.

Dr. Steve stated it comes as motion. Alicia seconded the motion. This motion passed unanimously, motion carries.

**5. Consumer Services Committee – No Report**

**6. Legislative Committee –**

Kenneth shared it was his first meeting, he was supported by Lynda Mendoza and Dena Hernandez. On July 22, the committee went over the language of Assembly Bill 143, the state budget for the upcoming fiscal year and ARCA's Grassroots Day.

**7. Bylaws Committee –**

Jody shared the bylaws committee met on August 13<sup>th</sup> and went over proposed changes to the Bylaws. She went over sections that had edits made which include language edits, combining committees, clarifying board limit terms.

Jody reported it comes as motion. Board Members were called one by one for a vote. 9 - Yes, 2 – No, 1 – Abstain, 2 - Unaccounted for. This motion passed unanimously, motion carries.

**8. Nominating Committee –**

Erria is working on recruiting for board members.

**9. Popplewell Review Team –**

Will start meeting in September \$21,073.11. No activities we are coming up. We are going to receive holidays requests for meals soon.

**H. Executive Director's Report**

Leinani shared she attended ARCA meetings in Irvine, CA she will bring policy changes and bring back to the board. The budget was a topic of discussion for the state of California for Medi-Cal State Budget Deficits. We are bracing for whatever may come in January or October revise. We at VMRC needed to be conservative with challenges that we are in compliance with our audits. Intake rate has increased at all 21 centers, and we cannot keep up with new consumers coming in. This is not easy work, I appreciate all the voices we heard tonight. Where we go as a system will require us to figure out budget challenges but also high need and increase of people served. She shared the Strategic Plan to share the survey with SAC6 leaders, State Council leaders, day programs, families, staff and different communities. We hope it will help implement challenges. Catherine Blakemore thanked the Board Members and Strategic Planning Committee for all their help and support. She shared the intention is to go out to the community and vote with plain language. A complete version will be on the website and there will be an outreach to different stakeholders groups for input.

Amanda shared that as of January 1, 2026, RCs will be subject to the CA Public Records Act, allowing the public to request non-private information regarding policies, procedures, and service provision. A job description was developed that aligns with standards and other regional centers who have recently hired for the PRA work as well. VMRC is requesting approval for this position. Once approved, HR will move forward with recruitment and hiring.

The motion carried.

## **I. President's Report**

Erria shared they will be going out to meet in the community for the Strategic Committee. If board members can join in person or zoom to help engage. She attended ARCA meetings takeaway were that the onboarding and competency report was ratified by ARCA. They send out appreciation to board members and executive directors. ARCA Academy will be November 13-15. Three focus areas will be service and support for people with disabilities and their families for the 25-26 year, support for a viable provider network and how regional centers to better support their community.

## **J. Next Meeting – Wednesday, December 10, 2025, at 6:00pm Hybrid (In-Person and Zoom)**

## **K. Adjournment**