



## **Minutes for VMRC Board of Directors Meeting October 22, 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, Dr. Jody Burriss, Dr. Steve Russell, Jeff Turner, Crystal Enyeart, Jose Lara, Kenneth Huntley, Kyle Cox, Dominique Mellion, Candice Bright, Gabriela Castillo, Jessica Quesada

**Board Members Not Present:** Lisa Utsey (excused absence), Alicia Schott, (excused absence), Marisela Cruz (uninformed absence)

**VMRC Staff Present:** Aiko Blancaflor, Amanda Verstl, Brian Bennett, Christine Couch, Claire Lazaro, Mayra Ochoa, Tara Sisemore-Hester, Lizzie Valerio, Sean Keyes, Donna Sioson, Midori Perez, Aaron McDonald, Emily Orth, Jackie Borges, Shana Molotch, Mary Duncan, Maria Pedraza, Veronica Waldo, Kennitha Montgomery, Sherri Sally, Victoria Moreno, Kalleann Sokbour, Cindy Jimenez, Danielle Wells, Julie De Diego, Christina Yanez, Stephanie Cavan, Blanca Avalos, Michelle Poaster, Nereida Briseno, Josie Craig, Deanna Fantulin, Jenne Bielby, Olivia Held, Erin Martin, Lorraine Rodriguez, Heather (last nme illegible), Melissa Sales, Melissa Gully, Christina Tunquero, Mel Sanders, Balbina Arroyo, Rafael Arroyo, Janina, Annabella, Avril Giussi, Obed Rivera, Lauren Watkins, Christina McGaughy, T. B (illegible), K (illegible), Wanda Johnson, Chanthou Min, Noelia Candara, Ryan Lee, Giselle Simpson, Terry Simpson, Gregoria Gonzalez, Deanna Wagenman, Advian Gonzalez, Mireya Gonzalez, Alyssa Waldo Gonzales, Quetzalic Gutierrez, Alejandro (illegible), Veronica Waldo, Sherri Sally, Xinh Nguyen, Jordan Bettencourt, Yakima Florez, Carlos Hernandez, Jacqueline Alvarez, Cecilia Gutierrez, Aaron McDonald

**Public Present:** Irene Hernadez, Isela Bingham, Evelyn Ledesma-Solis, Steve Taylor, Dena Hernandez, Gina Castiano, Gia McElroy (Break the Case), James Ford, Erandeni Lopez, Oscar Mercado, Gricelda Estrada, Jeanette Cardenas, Hery, Tumboura Hill, Xavier Chin, Heraclia Perez, Blanca Mercado, Maribel Falcon, Shannon Hernandez, Marcela Sanchez, Erika Cibrian, Arely, Dora Contreras, Doug Bonnet, Lucia Espinoza, Daniel Boah, Monique Guerrero,

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm 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 there would be an addition to the Consumer Services line item. Brian Bennett will share an update.

### **C. Review and Approval of the Board of Directors Meeting minutes of 8/27/25**

Erria asked for a motion to approve the Board of Directors Meeting minutes of 8/27/25. Kenneth motioned to approve the minutes. Jose seconded. The Board of Directors meeting minutes of 8/27/25 were approved.

#### **D. Public Comment**

1. Steve Taylor, Behavior Analyst working with VMRC and Care Homes for over 20 years. He reported an incident that took place on October 8th at a residential facility in Modesto. We violated HCBS rules. He asked how much everyone knew about HCBS and began asking, "If I work in a group home questions." The incident he shared was in regard to a female client wanting her boyfriend (molester) to stay overnight in the home and staff told her no.
2. Dena Hernandez, SCDD reported to have mailed public comment to Lizzie. She is leaving handouts for the Medicaid watch from SCDD and self-advocacy network. Monday, October 27, 2025 for Employment Disability Awareness Month.
3. Emily Orth, Intake Coordinator and Chapter President for SEIU. She discussed ongoing challenges with caseload ratios and workload, while there are new hires, there are still high attrition rates, they're losing seasoned service coordinators. It takes a year to really know what to do. She also shared concern about unfilled positions from a previous expansion plan under Tony, with no current plans to fill them. Additionally, she mentioned that families are struggling, they received raises while Tony was here but that's eaten up with inflation, and they are now asking for a fair contract.
4. Gina Castiano, Parent. She shared she values the front line workers – they advocate for their families and for those that can't advocate for themselves and teach parents how to be advocates. She is her son's in-home healthcare provider and finds it hard to believe VMRC workers make roughly \$5 more than her. She is an executive board member of SEIU local 2015 in San Joaquin County, serving 8,000 members and maybe 3,000 are parent providers/relatives that have a client served by VMRC. She voiced her support giving staff a fair contract, they are vital to the community.
5. Jackie Borges, Fiscal VMRC. She reported staff are underpaid and overworked while the agency spends on Apple computers instead of raises. Health insurance and gas costs have increased, yet staff are still required to be onsite daily and purchase specific work clothing. Concerned about losing seasoned staff and having to fill gaps with new hires.
6. Shana Molotch, Senior Office Technician. She shared that although she has a full-time position with VMRC, plus a weekend part-time job and Instacart to cover basic expenses. She now holds three jobs just to afford her living costs and survive
7. Mary Duncan, VMRC Staff of 15 years. Reported she has spoken to the Board multiple times, citing differences in compensation compared to nearby regional centers (CVRC & RCEB). Appreciates new hires but caseloads are still going up and wants fair pay and fair contract.
8. Maria Pedraza, VMRC Service Coordinator. Caseload currently at 85. Reports being overloaded and stressed trying to meet client needs. Supports the bargaining team and hopes for improved support.

9. Veronica Waldo, Service Coordinator. Struggles to find private meeting spaces for families, often meeting in public or scheduling multiple appointments. Loves working with children but finds it hard to meet everyone's needs. Requests more staffing, support, and better pay so staff can have quality time with their own families after work.
10. Kennitha Montgomery, VMRC Staff. Reported having been with the agency for almost 18 years, they are overwhelmed and overloaded. She reported to be valuable as well as her colleagues, they have to fight in the world and fight at work for what is right. As far as caseloads, she makes sure her team doesn't feel overwhelmed, she takes up the majority of the burden, she hopes they reconsider the need for a fair contract and wages.
11. Sherri Sally, VMRC staff, reported they advocate social recreation for consumers but cannot afford similar activities for her own child. She felt in the past it was an open-door policy where she could provide ideas or provide open dialogue no matter what the position. She doesn't want to work for an agency where there is a fear component of speaking or advocating for myself. She does not feel valuable, a mindset she is easily replaceable. She met with families today via phone calls and reported she felt parents felt heard, comfortable and peace – parents are in good hands.
12. Gia McElroy, parent. She represents a parent advocacy group called, Break the Case, for adults with moderate to severe autism in residential care settings or needing residential care. She expressed concerns about violations of client rights and medical protocols, lack of meaningful activities, limited therapy and exercise, inadequate personal care, and minimal engagement with residents. She noted the growing rate of autism, noting that when her son was diagnosed, the rate was 1 in 500, whereas it is now 1 in 31. She shared her contact information (209) 914-2658. She welcomes professionals, therapists, and parents to join this grassroots group.
13. Tumboura Hill, a former VMRC shop steward, advised service coordinators to review the Welfare and Institutions Code. He stated that the last contract ended in 2021 and that DDS cannot negotiate a new one until VMRC meets service coordinator hiring requirements. He claimed VMRC is contracting out-of-state workers for union shop roles and raised concerns about overtime pay for hourly employees. He also noted that AB1147, effective January 1, 2026, will place VMRC under the Public Records Act.

## **E. Human Resources Update**

Amanda provided an update on union contract negotiations, noting the current contract ends October 31 and that 22 of 32 sections have tentative agreements since talks began in August. She emphasized the need to balance fair pay and staff support with long-term fiscal stability, given budget uncertainties.

From a fiscal standpoint, audits are complete and efforts continue to improve efficiency. Since January, 30 staff have been hired, including 23 service coordinators, with more hiring planned as resources allow.

She acknowledged rising caseloads and family needs, explaining that the core staffing formula, which determines funding for operations, has been frozen since the 1990s and no longer reflects current workloads. ARCA data shows all regional centers face similar shortages (one noted in public comment today, needs 113 service coordinators).

Amanda stressed this is a statewide, systemic issue, and VMRC will keep advocating for updates to the staffing formula while continuing recruitment efforts.

## **F. Calendar Consent Items**

1. Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of September 10, 2025
2. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes of September 10, 2025
3. Consumer Services Committee Meeting Minutes of September 24, 2025

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

## **G. Committee Reports**

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

Candice reported that their last meeting was on September 22<sup>nd</sup> and the next one will be October 27<sup>th</sup>. They are held on 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of each month. There were no CLASP updates. They are working to look for people to work on their provider conference.

There are currently 81 paid members.

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

Kenneth shared that August – October SDAC meeting, Fernando Gomez and Elizabeth Barrios of Integrated Community Collaborative shared an explanation of what their company wants to do for VMRC Self-Determination Program. They want to expedite and reduce wait time from 6 months to 60 days using their new program, Project Expressway. In October, the committee gave VMRC approval the rest of the funding to the program and a day long workshop we committee members are clear on the goals and guidelines are for committee members. In 2026, another self-determination conference will be held to learn about the self-determination program as committee members shared the same, VMRC has the lowest number of participants versus other regional centers.

Jose Lara shared that an issue people are having is getting paid and that is a reason why a lot of families don't want to go. Families have to pay out of pocket and wait for reimbursement. Kenneth reported that it is a VMRC staff question.

Brian added that Financial Management Services, "the bank" for families in SDP, all regional centers commonly share financial management services through courtesy vendorization. It is a challenge, we are actively looking for new FMS providers in our region. Mayra added there are a few FMS providers our families have access too. We heard at our learning sessions that there is a need for independent facilitators.

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

- September 3rd and 4th Sac6 member Crystal attended the SSAN meetings.
- September 4th Sac6 members had an ARCA training on zoom.
- September 10th Lisa U attended the VMRC Finance and Executive Meetings in person.
- September 13th Sac6 had their quarterly Board meeting.

- September 15th was Remembrance Day Sac6 worked with VMRC, SCDD and DRC hosting two locations, one in Stockton and one in Manteca, both had great turn outs and guest speakers.
- September 16th and 18th Kenneth attended and chaired the Self Determination Advisory Committee meeting
- September 24th Sac6 members attended the Statewide Self Advocacy Chat on zoom and the Consumer Services meeting on zoom.
- September 25th Kenneth attended the Self Determination Leadership meeting.
- October 2nd Kenneth attended the SDAC work group planning for Self Determination events in 2026.
- October 7th Sac6 had their quarterly Leadership meeting.
- October 8th Kenneth worked the Sac6 Office hours at the Stockton office; this was his first time.
- October 10th Sac6 had a table at the Cultural fair and advocates talked to peers and family members about unmet needs. Forms were completed and turned into our Liaison.
- Upcoming events:
- Sac6 Area meeting November 7th from 10 am to 2 pm at Cornerstone Church in Turlock. Guest speakers will be Jennifer Stone on affordable housing and EJ on Employment

#### **A. Early Start Update**

Tara shared an update on the Early Start team. They received their measures data, and the team is exceeding goals for the state of California, in areas of social-emotion, and learning. She shared the team has been doing a great job meeting performance measures.

#### **4. Finance Committee –**

Dr. Steve reported there are three items that will be discussed which Aiko will present on.

- VMRC Finance Reports:** Aiko reported they received their second allocation for current FY 25-26, which is expected to cover remaining expenses. As of September 30<sup>th</sup>, 24.3% of purchase of service allocation and 21.2% of operations allocation has been used. She anticipates needing additional funds for POS funding due to implementation of rate reform. This has been communicated to the department, and it has been informed VMRC will need an additional \$6.1 million to cover funds.

**WINDES Audit Report:** At the October 8 Finance Committee meeting, audit reports for FY 22–23 and FY 23–24 were presented. The only finding was a delay in submitting a single audit report as they are due 9 months after the fiscal year ends. Additionally, VMRC transitioned from CalPERS to FASB valuation standards, requiring restated FY 21–22 statements but ensuring proper compliance moving forward. Reports have been posted on our website and submitted to DDS and our bank. Currently they are working on FY 24-25, which we are anticipating to be reported to the board in the February 2026 meeting.

Dr. Steve reported this to the board as an action item from the committee. Erria seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- b. Increase Line of Credit:** Aiko reported the current \$15 million line of credit expires on November 30, 2025, and a request has been made to increase it to \$25 million to ensure provider payments if funding is delayed. The line of credit was not used last year, avoiding interest costs.

This is an action item, first to extend their line of credit for another year and second to increase from \$15 to \$25 million. She reported line of fees: the bank will charge 0.15% for fees, which is equal to \$37,500 plus an additional \$695 in loan processing fee.

Dr. Steve stated we have a motion to accept this. Erria makes a motion to accept, Kenneth seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **5. Consumer Services Committee**

Crystal shared the next committee meeting will be on November 19, 2025.

#### **6. Legislative Committee –**

Kenneth shared the next committee meeting is November 19, 2025, from 2:30 pm – 3:30 pm.

Brian shared an update on approved Community Resource Development and Community Placement Plan. Several plans were submitted and approved – posted on website and will be shared on social media.

- 3 Early Start Intervention in Mountain Counties at startup amount of \$75,000
- 3, 4 – bed Children’s specialized children’s residential home startup amount \$250,000 (1 – Mountain County, 1 – San Joaquin, 1 – Stanislaus County),
- 3 Employment programs in Mountain Counties startup of \$50,000
- 2 – 4 bed homes for forensic needs (court involved) RFP includes substance use disorder support

Dr. Steve asked if the clients in the Mountain Counties do not have access to the forensic housing. Brian reported, that have access and be referred to them if services meet their needs, by experience they are closer to natural resources, behavioral health services than in the Mountain Counties.

#### **7. Bylaws Committee –**

Jody reported there was nothing to report.

#### **8. Nominating Committee –**

Erria has not met, in the process of recruiting.

#### **9. Popplewell Review Team –**

Erria reported that they are in the process of getting pricing for Thanksgiving meals. Prices have gone up for each meal. They would like to increase meals by 5, if possible. Working on setting up a meeting in early November. Dr. Steve asked how to donate. Erria reported on the website, you can donate and ask that funds are designated to meals.

### **H. Executive Director's Report**

Mayra reported on behalf of Leinani as she is out on medical leave.

Leinani thanked the board, staff, and community partners for their support of VMRC’s strategic plan listening sessions and collaboration across programs, the board room, and online. Special thanks were extended to SAC6, ICC, People First, Arc of Amador

and Calaveras, Families United, Escuchen Mi Voz, FRN, VMRC staff, and board members Erria Kaalund, Dr. Steve, Dominique Mellion, and Kyle Cox.

September 15<sup>th</sup>, VMRC honored individuals with developmental disabilities who lived and passed away in state hospitals at a remembrance ceremony in Stockton and Manteca. She thanked Kimo for his commemorative painting which is now displayed in the hallway and to Erria Kaalund and Alicia Schott for attending.

September 24, she attended Special Olympics event at Edison High (Stockton Unified), celebrating inclusion and athletes and incredible talent from all athletes. She was very appreciative of board member Jose Lara for supporting this wonderful event with his family.

September 26<sup>th</sup>, Leinani and herself attended the 58<sup>th</sup> Annual California Native American Day at the Capital. We're thankful for connecting with many DDS staff and tribal liaison, Jordan Martinson and our Native American community partner, Season Goodpasture or Acorns to Oak Trees.

On October 10, VMRC hosted one of its most successful cultural disability resource fairs on our Stockton campus. We welcomed over 1,100 individuals with disabilities and their families across our five counties along with more than 85 vendors and community-based organizations providing resources, information and giveaways. Our microbusiness fair showcase beautiful, creative artwork for everyone to enjoy. This event highlights what makes VMRC special with over 70 VMRC staff who worked tirelessly over the past several months and on the day of the event. We appreciate board member Erria Kaalund and Kenneth Huntley for tabling and sharing what you do. She appreciated everyone who attended and contributed to bringing our mission to life.

Mayra added a quick special shout out in addition to Leinani's report, she thanks the Cultural Fair Planning Committee Christine, Gaby, Aaron and Lizzie – Thank you for all your work.

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

Erria shared updates from the ARCA meeting in San Diego, highlighting key discussions on CalABLE, continued funding for Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, and legislative updates—all 16 bills on the Governor's desk were approved. Pete Cervinka spoke with them about strategic thinking for ARCA and uniform all 21 boards to have the same standard and encouraged them to work with their DDS liaison, succession planning for Executive Directors, and streamlining public comment registration.

Erria congratulated Dominique Mellion, who was named Woman of the Year by Assemblywoman Liz Ortega. She also attended the fair and thanked everyone for all their work, it was amazing, one of their best turn outs. It was the first time it was held on Friday, and it allowed more consumers to attend.

Additionally, Erria represented VMRC at the Lions Club event, met with Assemblywoman Rhodesia Ransom, and attended BWOPA, advocating for legislation supporting people with developmental disabilities and their voting rights.

Jeff Turner asked for reference to Nomination and Bylaws Committee update, in the last Board of Directors meeting it was voted they would become a combined

committee. He asked if the updated bylaws had been signed yet and if not, when will they be and who has been assigned to chair the new Governance Committee. Erria will get information and updated to the committee.

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

**K. Adjournment at 7:18pm.**