



Minutes for VMRC Board of Directors Meeting

December 17, 2025 | 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

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

Board Members Present: Erria Kaalund, Jody Burriss, Dr. Steve, Jessica Quesada, Jeff Turner, Kenneth Huntley, Alicia Schott, Jose Lara, Gabriella Castillo, Candice Bright, Dominique Mellion, Kyle Cox

Board Members Not Present: Crystal Enyeart (excused absence), Marisela Cruz (unexcused)

VMRC Staff Present: Brian Bennett, Christine Couch, Claire Lazaro, Donna Sioson, Emelia Vigil, Mayra Ochoa, Midori Perez, Leinani Walter, Sean Keyes, Lizzie Valerio, Cindy Jimenez, Jason Toepel, Michelle Poaster, Tara Sisemore-Hester

Public Present: Rachelle Munoz, Geri Witt, Dena Hernandez, Tumboura Hill, Marilyn Patacsil, Irene Hernandez, Catherine Blakemore, Kiara Grace, Xavier Chin, Jamie Van Dusen, Ahmad Mahid, Frank (Interpreter), Leticia Reyna, Chelsea – Burgos Behavioral, Erick Thurmond,

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

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

B. Honoring Lisa Utsey

Leinani acknowledged the loss is Lisa Utsey, one of our amazing long time board members and advocates at Valley Mountain. Her celebration of life was held in November hosted by Modesto Valley CAPs, which was beautiful. She shared her appreciation of others who helped make it a beautiful and memorable celebration.

C. Review of the Meeting Agenda

Erria asked if there were any questions or comments on the agenda. Erria moved on to board minutes for approval.

D. Approval of the Board of Directors Meeting minutes of 10/22/25

Erria asked for a motion to approve the Board of Directors Meeting minutes of 10/22/25. Kenneth motioned to approve the minutes, Dr. Steve seconded the motion. The board of directors meeting minutes of 10/22/25 were approved unanimously.

E. Public Comment

1. Marilyn Patascil – Former board and care provider, she operated 7 homes for approximately 30 years. She came to voice her concerns around the world. She expressed gratitude to board members and urged them to not just listen but to actively engage in understanding of underlying issues. She has heard many troubling stories from current and past staff and vendors, she shared a letter that was emailed in October 2025 proposing development of a confidential community survey to encourage communication, so all are heard.
2. Dena Hernandez – California State Council on Developmental Disabilities of North Valley Hills. She thanked Valley Mountain and Popplewell Committee for putting Thanksgiving meals together and delivered them in all 5 counties. She reminded everyone about the Choices Conference which will be on Friday, March 27th at SCOE. Information for art contest for t-shirts/videos are out - Lizzie will add to the newsletter. She echoed Leinani's comments about Lisa Utsey and what a beautiful celebration of life it was.
3. Mary Duncan – VMRC Employee, she thanked the board for quickly ratifying the contract, but the work is not done, we still face challenges. In leading work for the 2026 budget of Local 1021, our mission is empowering individuals and their families with developmental disabilities. The amount of work grows, service coordination, resources development, office assistance, fiscal support – we need to value them all.
4. Tumboura Hill – He reported to be disappointed and frustrated. He has attempted to collaborate with the regional center. He shared different Executive Directors, Leinani being the most recent. He sees the same thing, different group. He reported himself to be retaliated on and feeling discriminated against, especially towards him for doing his job. He reported there are no Black/African American individuals on the Self Determination Program. He read a letter dated January 2023 to the board. Time ran out and he continued to speak

F. Consent Calendar Items

1. Finance Committee Minutes of November 12, 2025.
2. Executive Committee Minutes of November 12, 2025.
3. Consumer Services Minutes of November 19, 2025.

Erria brought as an action item and asked for a motion to approve. Kenneth Huntley motioned to approve committee minutes, Jose Lara seconded the motion. The consent calendar items were approved unanimously.

G. California Public Records Act (CPRA)

Jason Toepel presented policies requiring board approval, prior to January 1, 2025. He reported Regional Centers will be subject to PRA as of January 1, 2025. ARCA has partnered with law firm, BBK to provide trainings to regional centers staff and Board of Directors. The policies were provided in advance to the Board for review prior to the meeting.

- Public Records Act Policy - What is required of regional centers
- Electronic Communication Policy – Guidelines and procedures use of electronic communication (VMRC devices or controlled accounts)
- Record Retention Policy – This was a policy updated relating to retention of records updated by VMRC HR Director, Amanda Verstl.

Erria asked for if there were questions or comments, she asked for a motion to approve the policies. Dr. Jody Burriss made a motion, Kenneth Huntley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

H. Committee Reports

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

Candice Bright reported CLASP made a couple of expenditures: \$2,500 was donated to the Choices Conference and \$1,000 to Lisa Utsey's Celebration of Life.

There were a variety of VMRC reports updated, DDS standard, vendorization portal and discussion of level 7 survey. Day programs had their work group meeting on December 10. There is a lot of discussion BCBA requirements, Brian supported telling them about regulations. Next meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 26 at 10:00am.

2. Self-Determination Advisory Committee

Kenneth reported that there was a meeting on November 20th via zoom and there was a vote to have retreat meeting at the end of January.

At the State SDAC meeting on December 2nd, it was agreed to have the town hall scheduled for February 2026, normally held in December. New member orientation resources are being developed with plain language, co-chairs are working with DDS, bringing issues from LVAC and SDAC meetings.

Aaron Caruthers gave an update from October 2024 to September 2025 over 12,000 training sessions for SDP program and 91,000 people reached. More people with IDD requested technical support, increased assistance at trainings and 23,347 people trained.

SD ombudsperson was helpful for knowing individual rights in the SDP and helped in understanding directives from DDS, how rc's interpret them as well. In February 2026 SSDAC members will host a town hall to gather input for renewal of the SDP waiver, the department seeks feedback from the community prior to renewal.

3. Consumer Advisory Committee

Kenneth read Crystal's report.

- November 4th Sac6 Leadership meet with VMRC Liaison for Sac6 for our quarterly Leadership meeting.
- November 7th Sac6 had their quarterly Area meeting in Stanislaus County. We had VMRC guest speakers Robert, who's presentation was on Employment and Jennifer S. who presented on Affordable Housing.
- On November 12th Crystal attended the VMRC Executive meeting.
- On November 13th Jessica Q. attended the OAHA committee meeting on zoom from 1 pm to 4 pm.
- November 19th Crystal attended the VMRC Legislative meeting and the VMRC Consumer Services meeting.
- November 20th Kenneth H. attended the Self Determination Advisory Committee.
- November 26th Sac6 member Angelina S. attended the Statewide Self Advocacy Chat on zoom.

- On December 13th Sac6 had their quarterly business meeting. At this meeting we had Christine Couch from VMRC give us an update on the VMRC contract performance review, people gave feedback to Christine. We also held our elections for new office positions.

4. Finance Committee

a. VMRC Financial Report

Aiko Blancaflor, CFO read the financial report as of October 31, VMRC has used 34% of purchase of service (POS allocation) and 28.4% of operations funding. The fiscal team is working on implementing rate reform changes, processing retro payments, and completing fiscal year 24/25 CPA audit, which is on track. They are currently monitoring the cash flow and won't be concerned until the towards the end of our fiscal year. Given the retro payments that are a result of rate reform changes, we need to pay close attention. \$2.6 million in retro payments to personal assistants has been issued. \$3.6 million to transportation broker services from April 2022 to September 2025. Based off current projections, we have enough cash flow through February 2026, when we expect to receive additional payments from DDS.

Dr. Steve reported that this comes as a motion, Erria made a motion, Dr. Jody seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Consumer Services Committee

No Report

6. Legislative Committee

Kenneth reported that originally, he shared information about IHSS that is no longer on the website. He is working on creating a schedule with Lizzie for future committee meetings.

7. Bylaws Committee Governance Committee

Erria reported that the Bylaws and Nominating Committee will be combining as the Governance Committee

8. Nominating Committee Governance Committee

Erria reported that at the last ARCA meeting, it was reported that the need for professionals do not need to have developmental disability background. The committee will be holding interviews in January, nominations done in February. The recommendation is to recruit continuously.

a. Nomination to fill a vacancy

Erria reported with the loss of Lisa Utsey, the board secretary she asked for nominations to fill the vacancy, Kyle Cox nominated Dominique Mellion. If there is no objection, she would like to bring to a vote. Erria asked if she accepts nomination of secretary. Dominique accepted the nomination. Erria asked if there was additional discussion, there was none.

b. Election of Board Secretary

Kenneth made a motion to approve, Jose Lara seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Leinani added there are two areas, Valley Mountain is required, per DDS. We need representatives from Calaveras County and secondly, representation from the Asian community. The diverse makeup of our board based off percentage of our community served. We are working to reach out to Asian community partners.

Dr. Jody shared a comment, that the Bylaws were changed to reflect a board member could represent the Mountain Counties, not needing one from each county. Leinani added this is an important change as they have had difficulty in recruiting people from specific mountain counties and is thankful for board members who do come from the mountain counties. Erria added Dr. Steve has been helpful in trying to recruit in the Mountain Counties.

9. Popplewell Committee

Erria reported that for thanksgiving meals were delivered to families. We spent \$5,150.26, there were a lot of donations designated to the Thanksgiving dinner. They received additional donations and total of \$577.36 received afterwards will be designated to 2026 meals. In previous years for Christmas, gift cards were given but this year, departments are giving based of the needs of their consumer.

10. Strategic Planning Committee

Catherine Blakemore thanked the board for all their thoughtful input and appreciated working with board members, community input and staff. She went over the slides in the presentation and reported they could ask questions and then vote to approve.

Erria thanked everyone, especially Catherine Blakemore, for her leadership and everyone who supported as this was a long process. Leinani added she was thankful for our board members and Exec team staff who went out into the community to present and gather information.

Erria asked for a motion to accept the strategic plan. Kenneth made a motion to approve the strategic plan, Dominique seconded the motion. The Strategic Plan passed unanimously.

H. Executive Director's Report

Leinani thanked everyone who helped develop the Strategic Plan. She hopes to come back to the board with objectives in the new year. January we will have all staff to share in which we will share the plan along with the budget. It's been a complex, terrific, and incredible year. At the beginning of the year, we had to go back to past year's audits and current in this year. She thanked Aiko for her leadership, changing how we think about audits, staying current and compliant and getting it all done in 10 months.

Secondly, she thanked the union and its leadership, Amanda, Bruce, and Tara to get the contract done. Recognition of staff longevity, health care contributions, coming to a place of agreement. Without the 600 staff, thousands of service providers and all this board, the families and communities we serve, we couldn't get this work done.

She shared the importance of accessibility, including providing language access for families and developing a new, user-friendly website that is accessible to everyone. She highlighted outreach efforts across divisions, such as diaper drives, clothing drives for unhoused individuals, and turkey dinners, all carried out by staff volunteering their time throughout the year. She shared her appreciation for working with Valley Mountain staff to both improve services for clients and giving back to their own community.

She appreciated the Thanksgiving meal deliveries and the annual tree decorating at the Capital. Thankful to Valley CAPS program participants for contributing beautiful ornaments focused on what they would like their goals to be. The theme was "Reaching for the Stars", ornaments reflecting their dreams of their career future. She

thanked all those who contributed and participated Valley Mountain's tree. It's humbling to see so many regional centers staff and reflect on our statewide community.

She gave thanks to the board for their dedication and service. Whether it's traveling to an outreach event, delivering thanksgiving meals, attending the meetings in person or on zoom, or even travelling to Mountain County to listen in on a meeting with self-advocates. Their support in improving ongoing efforts to VMRC systems, programs and best practices. On behalf of our team and the entire staff at Valley Mountain, thank you for your service and commitment.

1. Presentation – FY 24-25 Performance Contract Year End Report

Leinani went over the year end report, it's a requirement every year that we share our performance with the community. DDS contracts with regional centers and they include performance objectives and every year at the end we share that data.

- Autism continues to be highest diagnosis served
 - Ethnicity served: Other - 22% multicultural as we are seeing increase in clients being made eligible, largest continues to be Hispanic
 - Ages served: 7% - 52 and older, we have more eligible for our services, still a young system, continue to support individuals living in family homes
 - Where people live: 87% live in family home
 - Slight dip than state average, 0.05% decrease of children living with family due to complex needs
 - Independent audits were completed in October, data pulled over the summer (must report if complete)
 - Efforts to get people working is 1. She reported that Valley Mountain received \$50K CPP funding to support supported employment and/CIE projects. Hope to improve next year.
 - Service access and equity: VMRC hired a director to prioritize service access and equity. Increased service access and eligibility for African Americas, Asian and Hispanic individuals 22 and older. ASL resources, making connections, hosting ASL classes
 - Ways to improve Service Access: prioritize language access, plain language, focus efforts in recruitment of diverse service providers speaking other languages.
 - Steps to Improve VMRC performance
 - Timely Audit Compliance (Strengthen internal controls, training for staff), Service Access (fortify new partnerships and expand engagement), Employment Services (CPP Funding, link VMRC staff and community partnerships)
 - Last slide is the Performance Report letter put out in the summer.
- Brian shared we were awarded 3 separate projects from the department for supported employment, \$50K for each start up project. We have 8 applicants, will be deciding soon and hope others continue without the startup.
 - Jose Lara shared he would like to add that we have all heard about Special Olympics. To see all the young adults we serve, having so much fun, it makes it worth being here for them. We are the voices for them. Watching them regardless of their capacity, they were all together and watching them dance was amazing. They are the young ones we are representing, trying to help.

A. Public Comment – Performance Report FY24-25

1. Tumboura Hill – Reported the plan looks like a good plan, hopes employment is reflective of what supported employment is. Will they have certifications, so it's not another component of just sitting inside of a day's program. Excited to hear about Special Olympics, he helped write a program designed for disabled individuals needing opportunities, they run a basketball program vendored through the regional center year-round.
2. Kenneth Huntley – Thanked VMRC for what they have been doing. He would like to see better help with Self-Determination, not just making sure budgets aren't turned in late, also needing a direction in the committee to make it more successful to better serve participants.
3. Dena Hernandez – She wanted to highlight the increase of supported living and independent living. Seeing the number of those living at home and working together to let folks know that it is a resource so if someone is living at home, they can live independently at the age of 18. We can support at home and with the individual we can grow and support families.
4. Brian added one of community resource development plans from last year 24-25, just completed vendorization requirements, within next 45 days they will be providing support for independent living in the Mountain Counties. They are Community Connection Support.

I. President's Report

Erria shared she attended the tree lighting and in the future if any board members can come, it is fun. You connect with other regional centers which is nice. She also shared attending the 1612 apartments which support independent living and thankful for all that has happened this year. She shared Leinani's review is going to start taking place, in early January the board will receive a survey, we hope to have it finalized for the February board meeting. She will be attending the ARCA meeting in January.

J. Next Meeting – Wednesday, February 25, at 6:00pm Hybrid (In-Person and Zoom)

K. Adjournment – 7:37pm